

## Governance in the Arctic

Chair, arctic parliamentarians, honorable guests.

My main message here today is that governing and decision-making in the Arctic is not only an international or national concern – it is first and foremost a concern for the inhabitants of the north.

But let me start with underlining the importance of the international cooperation in governing the Arctic, and by celebrating the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council is a success. In its relatively short time of existence – 18 years – it has been instrumental in establishing the Arctic as a zone of cooperation. The Arctic Council has been innovative in its governance structure, by having the states and the indigenous peoples, known as Permanent Participants in this context, at the same table, and with a strong link to the science community which delivers world class assessments.

The Arctic science community has developed new ways to include traditional knowledge of the indigenous peoples in their assessments. By combining western science and traditional knowledge, the working groups under the Arctic Council have delivered reports which have been the basis for the state representatives in their decision making.

The overall and common goal for all Arctic states is to maintain the High North and Arctic as a peaceful and stable region. The Arctic Council has played a key role in establishing a broad understanding of that it is the UNCLOS – The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which constitutes the legal framework for governing the Arctic in an international perspective.

And now the Arctic Council has got new observers – which are eager to contribute to further development of the Arctic. I am sure that the Arctic Council again will rise to meet the challenge, and find good ways to utilize this opportunity.

The Arctic Council has played a key role in governing the Arctic the last 18 years.

Geopolitical leadership cannot, however, only be based on national and international perspective. One must also bear in mind that it is not only one Arctic.

There are huge differences between the different parts of the Arctic. Therefore the real experts of the Arctic are the people living in the Arctic.

The overall goal is to use the opportunities that are emerging in the Arctic in a sustainable way, so it serves both the local communities, the national interests and our international responsibilities. The inhabitants of the north, including local and regional authorities, have to get the opportunity to provide knowledge and premises for further development of the Arctic.

In Norway it is not the oil and gas, the minerals or the international pension fund, which is the largest part of the national fortune. The most important resource in Norway is the people living there. The Norwegian treasury department calculates that about 85 percent of the national fortune is the value of our future work. It is a fair assumption to say that this goes for the whole Arctic also – and the people of the arctic are therefore the most important resource.

It is now time to focus on how the inhabitants, local and regional authorities can strengthen their participation in processes which affect their future.

We discussed yesterday the ban on seal products in Europe. For me, that's an example of how wrong it can go when you try to govern without involving the people and lacking knowledge.

Humankind faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities from climate and environmental change, changing economic conditions, food and water security, energy and socioeconomic development, national security, and changes in population and shifting demographics. While these trends are global in character, they disproportionately affect the Arctic region which provides both major challenges as well as new socioeconomic development opportunities. Climate change makes the Arctic more accessible and integrated within the global economy, with extensive socioeconomic implications.

We are now in a phase where there are strong focus on utilizing the possibilities for business in the Arctic. The presentations from the mining industry yesterday are one example. And we all have met representatives from the oil and gas industry, presenting their projects.

The social benefits and costs are potentially huge in many of the development projects in the Arctic, especially related to exploitation of the natural resources. The impact for small societies when new industry is opening up, with potentially thousands of workers, is dramatic.

So, how do we meet this?

The term sustainability is central in our discussions. And it will also be central in empowering the people in the north. The term sustainability is not only about ecological sustainability. It is also about economic and social sustainability. The best prerequisite to ensure all of these regards are to ensure that the people living in the area get to participate in the decision making.

**Let me share a few thoughts on business development.**

For me there are two key factors in developing the business opportunities in the arctic. The first is about benefits.

It is important that the local communities gain from the new activity. Developing the natural resources includes additional risks to the local environment and to the societies. For the local people to accept this risk as worthwhile, they need to see benefits from the activity. We cannot go into the North, take out the resources and ship away without any gain for the people living in the Arctic.

We must also make sure that when the resources are exhausted, the company must be responsible for leaving the land in best possible shape for future generations who are still going to have the area as their home.

The second one is about corporate social responsibilities. Companies' moving into the region operates under demanding conditions. There often harsh conditions, fragile environment, lack of infrastructure, conflicts with traditionally ways of living and relatively small communities. Therefore the 10<sup>th</sup> conference of the arctic

parliamentarians in Akureyri in 2012 called for ways to ensure corporate social responsibility in the region.

To concretize this I argue that we should develop business activities in the north in accordance with the principles of the UN Global Impact initiative.

I believe and hope for a closer cooperation between the Arctic Council and the Arctic Business community. Involving and including the local people in the economic development in the Arctic, will help to build strong communities, where people live their lives. I am looking forward to see the new Arctic Economic council take an active role in ensuring this.

**In the Decision-making processes we have to establish better ways to hear local and regional voices.** It is possible to argue that the development in the Arctic the last years has been driven with an international and national perspective, and not so much with a local and regional perspective.

We cannot, and do not wish to, dictate how the different countries in the Arctic govern their land. They are all sovereign nations. But we can promote the exchange of good practices. There are a lot of good examples, and I know you all are eager to share them across national borders.

We will keep on encouraging governments, companies and others who operate in the Arctic to continue to explore new ways of involving local and regional stakeholders in decision making.

And we will continue to work to secure the possibilities for the indigenous peoples to be heard. Therefore it is important that the permanent participants have enough resources to fully participate in the Arctic councils activities.

### **[culture] [bilde 1]**

Culture is an essential component in building capacity in communities to deal with environmental, economic, cultural and social challenges for the benefit of sustainable development in the Arctic region. The population must have access to the cultural heritage, opportunity for the cultural self-expression, protection and development of the cultural tradition. International cultural cooperation is an

important tool and promotes the active exchange of cultural experience of the Arctic nations. The role of the culture is important for the economic development of the Arctic region.

We should provide for favorable opportunities for development of the cooperation in the circumpolar region. The role of other northern regional organizations in promoting dialogue among members of the cultural community, inter-complementation and synergy of applied efforts is also worth of highest appreciation.

**[Bilde 2]**

This summer a new initiative was launched in my county, Nordland, in the northern Norway called SALT. I will use the opportunity and a few minutes to present this as an example of an interesting cultural project.

SALT is designed to stir the imagination of its visitors by use of the nature and history of the Arctic. It is a framework for art and culture, and an ecological statement that insists on respect for vulnerable Arctic environments.

For thousands of years people have followed the movement of animals and the seasonal rhythms in the Arctic landscape. Footprints are few. SALT is inspired by and moves in that same Arctic landscape with care and respect.

**[bilde 3]**

SALT consists of several structures that take their form from the fiskehjelle (fish rack), a strong symbol of the livelihoods of the people of the north. Within these simple and portable structures the audience is invited in to experience extraordinary art projects, concerts, theatre, readings and local food cultures.

**[bilde 4]**

Mankind has inhabited the Arctic landscape for ten thousand years. Arctic nomads wandered with the ice, taking advantage of available resources from coastal areas and a mountainous countryside. Their concern for and close relationship to nature means that archaeologists are able to find few remnants of their culture. This is the essence of the Arctic indigenous people's philosophy and the guideline for

SALT's ten year long journey, which will be a cultural platform focusing on our common future, lifestyle and on environment and climate changes.

**[bilde 5]**

SALT begins its journey upon an Arctic beach on the mountainous island of Sandhornøya, south of Bodø, Northern Norway. The goal is to travel across the northernmost part of our planet, making a home in Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Ireland, Scotland, Spitsbergen, Alaska and Russia. Let us hope they succeed in their ambitions. Let us hope this project can contribute to involving inhabitants of the arctic in discussing their future and giving people in other part of the world an opportunity to learn more about the Arctic.

The Arctic is a new geopolitical hotspot with great opportunities for the world.

But the Arctic must also in the future first and foremost remain a home for us who live there. We shall see to that.