

# THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT'S HIGH NORTH STRATEGY

Abstract



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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# Foreword

One of the Government's most important priorities in the years ahead will be to take advantage of the opportunities in the High North.

It is in the High North that we are seeing the most rapid developments in our immediate neighbourhood.

■ We will continue to build on our good neighbourly relations with Russia, which were resumed at the end of the Cold War.

■ We will continue to exercise our responsibility for combating illegal fishing and managing the renewable fish resources for present and future generations.

■ We will take advantage of the opportunities the Barents Sea presents as a new European energy province in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

■ We will take environmental and climate considerations into account in everything we do.

■ We will improve living conditions, opportunities and the quality of life for all those who live in the High North, and we will exercise our particular responsibility for safeguarding indigenous peoples' rights.

All this will require us to give our best as a nation.

This is more than just foreign policy, and more than just domestic policy. It is a question of our ability to continue our tradition of responsible management of resources, predictable exercise of sovereignty and close cooperation

with our neighbours, partners and allies. But it is also a question of a broad, long-term mobilisation of our own strengths and resources in the development of the entire northern part of our country. We are not talking about a project for the High North alone, but a project for the whole country and for the whole of northern Europe, with consequences for the whole continent.

There is growing recognition of the importance of the High North for Norway as a whole. New political working methods are taking shape. Sustainable development in the north is not just a regional policy aim; it is of strategic importance for the entire country. The focus has been mainly on marine resources, and the Norwegian High North tends to be primarily associated with the opportunities and challenges relating to the sea. But it is on land that people live their lives. The Government's policy is to take a broad approach to settlement, employment, value creation, education, culture and cross-border contact in the north.

The Government has had a sharp political focus on the challenges and opportunities in the High North ever since it came into power in October 2005. We have continued to build on the foundation laid out in the white paper *Opportunities and Challenges in the North* (Report No. 30 to the Storting (2004-2005)), which won broad support in the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament). We set a new foreign policy agenda for Norway's efforts to draw attention to

the importance of the High North through broad contact with our neighbours, partners and allies. We put a spotlight on traditional policy areas and indicated that these too must be given a stronger High North perspective. And we invited the nation to join in a concerted effort in the north.

During the course of the past year, the High North has been placed firmly on the map of Europe. Decision makers in other countries have become aware that the High North has significance that extends far beyond Norway's borders. Take, for example, the living marine resources that are provided to European consumers from a unique and vulnerable natural environment. Or global climate change, which is becoming so clearly obvious in the Arctic. The High North also has international significance because of the Norwegian and Russian petroleum resources in the Barents Sea and future opportunities for transporting energy resources. In addition, the Norwegian-Russian cooperation in the High North has developed into an important channel for European dialogue.

The main purpose of the Government's High North strategy is to coordinate efforts in all fields relating to the development of the High North. We have mobilised the whole government apparatus in order to give our overall policy a clearer and more coherent High North focus. Ministries and government agencies have focused on further developing and intensifying efforts in their policy areas.

The High North strategy outlines a framework for action, which the Government will strive to fill in the coming years. It is not a catalogue of measures, although it does mark the launch of a number of forward-looking efforts.

The strategy sets out two potential new measures for Norway's cooperation with Russia: firstly, the Government is proposing an exchange programme for Russian students, and secondly it will consider a proposal for an economic and industrial cooperation zone, which would include both Norwegian and Russian territory in the High North. The High North grant and exchange scheme will encourage students and researchers conduct part of their studies and research work at North-Norwegian institutions. The cooperation zone would serve as a laboratory for practical Norwegian-Russian business cooperation in the north.

An inter-ministerial committee, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has coordinated the work on the strategy. Additional expertise has been provided by an external committee of experts chaired by the Rector of the University of Tromsø, Jarle Aarbakke, who has drawn on the knowledge and experience to be found in the High North. We have also maintained close contact with a large number of groups and institutions in the High North, and with regional authorities and the Sámidiggi (the Sami Parliament).

A long-term perspective and predictability are important features

of Norway's High North policy. They will be at the core of our efforts over the next few years. As we increase our activities, Norway's policy in the High North will continue to be consistent.

The key words for the strategy are presence, activity and knowledge.

- It is our ambition to ensure a *presence* in the High North both through maintaining settlements and through being present in the areas under Norway's jurisdiction including Svalbard, our sea areas, coastline, and settlements and towns on land.

- It is our ambition to be at the top of the league in key areas of *activity*, from fisheries and other industries to tourism and newer endeavours such as marine bioprospecting, i.e. searching for valuable biochemical and genetic resources from living marine organisms.

- And it is our ambition to be a leader in *knowledge* in all these areas. Knowledge is at the core of our High-North efforts: building people's knowledge and experience so that we can show the way, utilise existing opportunities, discover new ones, and attract other countries that want to take part, invest and share knowledge. Our focus on knowledge will include further developing our capacity to safeguard Norway's foreign policy interests in the High North.

Our High North policy has given rise to optimism and high expectations. A number of initiatives have

been taken in recent years that are based on a real will to develop the opportunities in the High North. Most of these initiatives have originated in the north, but there is also growing interest from other parts of the country and from our neighbouring countries.

This strategy sets out the framework for our efforts in the High North. The Government will act as prime mover and facilitator, and has already invested considerable resources in major programmes in the north, including research and efforts to implement the integrated management plan for the Barents Sea-Lofoten area. But a modern partnership has room for a wider range of actors: from the public and private sectors as well as other Norwegian and international partners.

The Government will follow up the strategy in coming budgets and through carefully targeted measures. We are inviting others to take part in fruitful partnerships, so that a wide range of actors gain ownership and a sense of responsibility and are able to take advantage of existing and new opportunities.

Therefore this strategy is also an invitation to everyone with an interest in the High North.

Oslo/Tromsø December 1 2006



Jens Stoltenberg

# Summary



In its policy platform, the Government states that it considers the High North to be Norway's most important strategic priority area in the years ahead. In this strategy, we stake out the course for our High North policy, seeking to improve coordination and to maximise the effect of our efforts.

The overall objective of the Government's policy is to create sustainable growth and development in the High North. This requires a framework that will enable people in the region to build up viable local communities, where there are promising employment opportunities in the long term, good health care services and educational opportunities, and opportunities to enjoy varied natural surroundings and cultural events.

The High North policy also focuses on utilising opportunities for more extensive international cooperation on the use of natural resources, environmental manage-

ment and research through closer contact with our neighbour Russia and our European and North American partners.

Norwegian interests in the High North will be safeguarded primarily by strengthening our presence and increasing the level of activity in a number of policy areas at both national and international level. These include education and research, environmental and resource management, safety and emergency response systems, energy, fisheries, tourism and other economic activities, health, culture and gender equality.

The main political priorities for the Government's High North strategy are as follows:

**1** *We will exercise our authority in the High North in a credible, consistent and predictable way.*

By maintaining its presence, and exercising its sovereignty and authority, Norway is making it clear that it takes its international and national obligations seriously. Therefore, the presence of the armed forces, the police and the prosecuting authority continues to be of great importance. The presence of the armed forces is also vital for meeting national security needs and maintaining our crisis management capacity in the High North. The close cooperation between the Norwegian Coast Guard, the prosecuting authority and the police on resource management in the High North helps to prevent conflict, and maintain predictability and stability. This cooperation will therefore be fur-

ther developed. The Government also intends to continue its focus on Svalbard in accordance with the objectives of Norway's Svalbard policy.

**2** *We will be at the forefront of international efforts to develop knowledge in and about the High North.*

Knowledge is at the core of the High North strategy, and is closely linked to environmental management, utilisation of resources and value creation. As a nation, we need more knowledge to fully seize the opportunities ahead and meet the challenges we are facing in the High North. Norway has internationally leading centres of excellence in the fields of petroleum, maritime transport, utilisation and management of marine resources, environmental protection, climate and polar research and research on indigenous peoples. The Government intends to strengthen the knowledge infrastructure in the region.

**3** *We intend to be the best steward of the environment and natural resources in the High North*

We will promote value creation through sustainable use of resources while maintaining the structure, functioning and productivity of the ecosystems of the area. The Government will set strict environmental standards for all activities in the High North and will establish a framework to protect particularly valuable and vulnerable areas against negative impacts. The Government will also

strengthen international cooperation to limit anthropogenic climate change and reduce environmental pressures in the High North. Norway intends to play a leading role in monitoring climate change, environmentally hazardous substances and the marine environment in the region.

Svalbard is to be maintained as one of the world's best managed wilderness areas. The strict environmental legislation and comprehensive protection measures will be continued and further developed to meet the challenges that will arise as economic activity expands. In the event of a conflict with other interests, environmental considerations will prevail.

The Government's fundamental premise is that the management of living marine resources is to be based on the rights and duties set out in Law of the Sea, and that it is to ensure the maximum sustainable yield from these resources. The integrated management plan for the Barents Sea–Lofoten will be a useful tool for clarifying the overall principles for the management of the resources in the High North.

**4** *We will provide a suitable framework for further development of petroleum activities in the Barents Sea, and will seek to ensure that these activities boost competence in Norway in general and in North Norway in particular, and foster local and regional business development.*

The Snøhvit development shows how local spin-off effects can be created by petroleum activities in North Norway. The prospects for the petroleum industry in the north are good, and several new developments are being considered.

The Government will seek to encourage operators of fields in the High North to establish qualification schemes for local and regional contractors. The authorities will play an active role in promoting local and regional spin-off effects of petroleum developments in the region. We will also start a project to establish the likely spin-off effects of petroleum activities in the High North on the basis of the experience gained so far.

**5** *We intend the High North policy to play a role in safeguarding the livelihoods, traditions and cultures of indigenous peoples in the High North.*

Indigenous peoples are stewards of cultural values and have specialised knowledge of ways of making a living under difficult conditions in subarctic areas. These will be useful assets in the implementation of our High North policy, and the indigenous dimension is an integral part of the policy. Integrated resource management in the High North includes the protection of the natural resource base used by indigenous peoples for their economic activity, of their traditional knowledge, and of reindeer husbandry areas. It also includes protection of the environment along the coast and of traditional

sea-water and salmon fisheries. The Government will develop existing and new forms of economic activity as a basis for Sami settlement patterns and to safeguard the Sami culture. We will also promote capacity and competence building in Sami institutions, and these institutions will be encouraged to take active part in international cooperation.

## **6** *We will further develop people-to-people cooperation in the High North*

People-to-people cooperation is an important part of Norway's High North policy. Health, education, culture, sport, child and youth work and volunteer activities are key components. Opportunities for people to come together to take part in joint activities in these areas foster mutual understanding and trust which again foster stability and development in the High North. The Government will seek to ensure that the Barents Cooperation continues to play an important role in creating meeting places and networks for people in the High North.

## **7** *We will strengthen our cooperation with Russia*

In the context of our High North policy, it is vital to maintain close bilateral relations with Russia, which is both a neighbour and the country with which we share the Barents Sea. A number of the challenges in the High North in areas such as the environment and resource management can only be solved with Russia's engage-

ment and Norwegian-Russian cooperation. Russia is undergoing rapid economic development. The changes that are taking place in the country's economy, society and politics do not affect the objectives of Norway's policy, but developments will be followed closely and instruments adapted accordingly. The Government's policy towards Russia is based on pragmatism, interests and cooperation.

## **In following up the main priorities of the High North strategy, the Government will:**

- further develop the active dialogue with neighbours, partners and allies on High North issues;
- raise the profile of Norway's High North policy in regional and international forums and ensure that this is done in a coordinated manner;
- further develop petroleum activities in the Barents Sea area through an active licensing policy that takes into account the need to follow up exploration results and the need to open up new areas for exploration ; the Government will also encourage geological surveys in the High North;
- draw up a proposal for an economic and industrial cooperation zone, which would include both Norwegian and Russian territory in the border areas of the High North;
- identify further measures to facilitate border crossing between Norway and Russia;
- examine the need for a new, ice-class research vessel with a view to increasing the year-round Norwegian presence in northern waters;
- strengthen knowledge building and research in and about the High North through the Research Council of Norway;
- increase maritime safety in the waters around Svalbard is to be

increased by such means as applying the Harbour Act and introducing a mandatory system requiring the employment of local people with thorough knowledge of the waters around Svalbard to pilot vessels sailing in these waters;

- strengthen cooperation with the authorities in Russia and other countries in the fight against illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in the Barents Sea;

- build up efforts to implement the integrated management plan for the Barents Sea–Lofoten area through surveys and monitoring of the marine environment, and on research on the ecosystems and how they are affected by human activities;

- intensify surveying, monitoring and research efforts relating to climate change and environmentally hazardous substances in the High North;

- continue Norway's engagement in efforts to ensure nuclear safety and emergency preparedness in the High North;

- increase research and development efforts to develop environmental technology for and in the High North;

- initiate more knowledge-generation and development projects within the framework of the Barents 2020 programme;

- establish a grant scheme for studies at North Norwegian institutions, which will be funded via the Barents 2020 allocation;

- develop closer cultural cooperation in the High North, especially with Russia;

- consider measures to increase the recruitment of competent and qualified labour to the High North from other countries;

- promote bioprospecting activities and the development of new products derived from marine organisms;

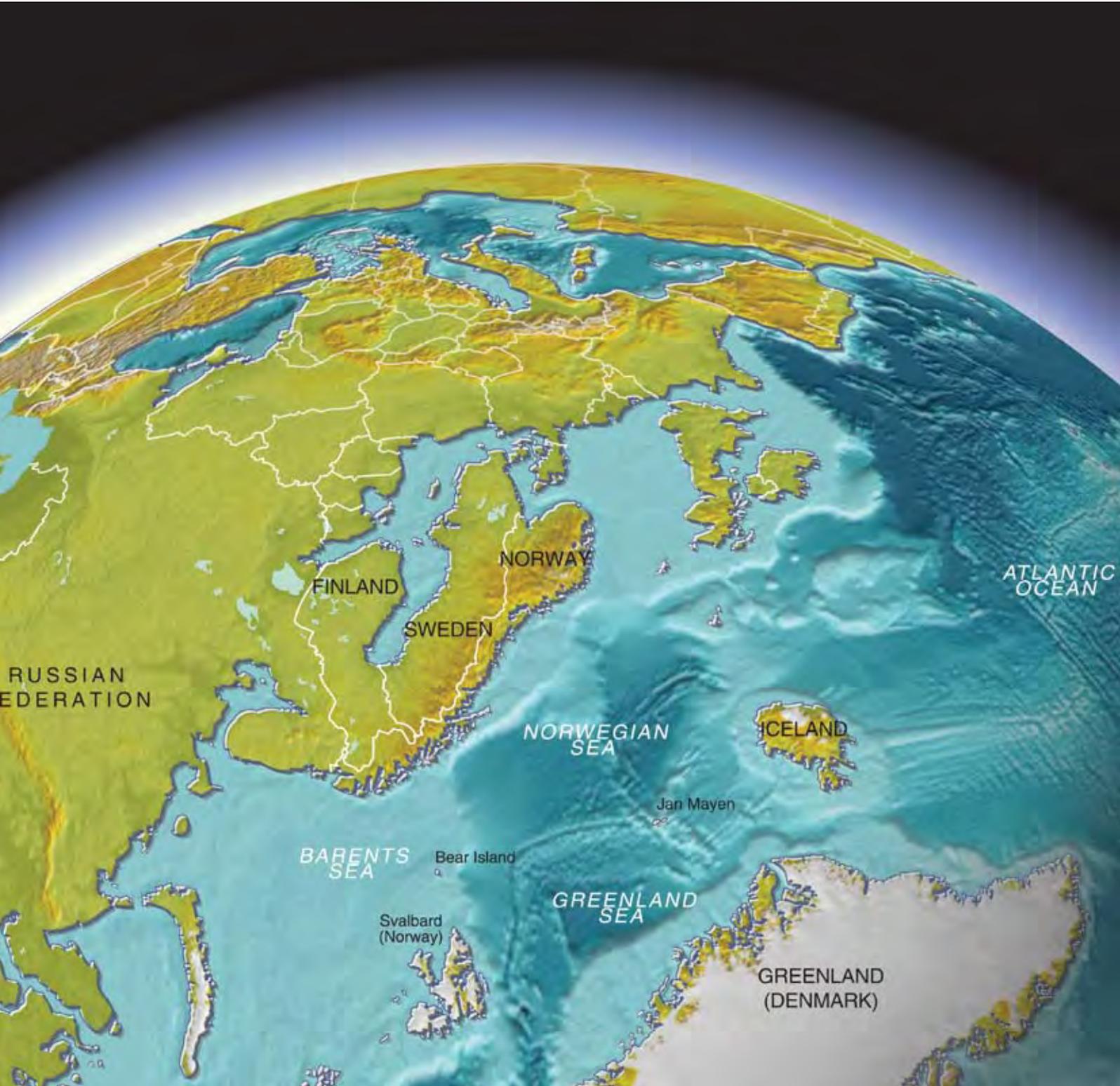
- provide a suitable framework for a greater research effort on farming cod and other marine species of interest;

- consider supporting efforts to start up goods traffic along the Northern East–West Freight Corridor, which is an initiative to provide a transport solution from Central Asia to North America through the port of Narvik;

- consider whether there is reason for the Government to assess new transport solutions such as a railway from Nikel to Kirkenes, and whether there is a commercial basis for setting up new flights within the High North;

- carry out a broad analysis of the existing transport infrastructure in the High North and future needs in connection with the preparation of the National Transport Plan 2010–2019.





# PART 1

## A new dimension of Norwegian foreign policy

**P**redictability and a long-term perspective are essential aspects of Norway's High North policy, which is an important part of our foreign policy. They have been the hallmarks of Norway's policy in the north for many decades.

Norway will continue to take a consistent approach that is readily recognisable for our neighbours, partners and allies. We have shown firmness in exercising our sovereignty and in fulfilling our responsibility to control resource use, but also openness in seeking solutions in response to new developments through cooperation. This pattern is being continued with the introduction of the High North as a new dimension of our foreign policy.

This new dimension includes increased activity and a stronger strategic focus on maintaining longstanding Norwegian interests, developing cooperation with Russia, and gaining acceptance for the importance of sound resource management and efforts to protect the environment and address climate change. The focus on the High North will make it easier to see these issues, and how they are interrelated, in the context of our foreign policy vis-à-vis other countries and in international forums.

The High North is a broad concept both geographically and politically. In geographical terms, it covers the sea and land, including islands and archipelagos, stretching northwards from the southern boundary of Nordland county in Norway and eastwards from the Greenland Sea to the Barents Sea and the Pechora Sea. In political terms, it

includes the administrative entities in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia that are part of the Barents Cooperation. Furthermore, Norway's High North policy overlaps with the Nordic cooperation, our relations with the US and Canada through the Arctic Council, and our relations with the EU through the Northern Dimension.

This means that many of the arenas in which Norwegian foreign policy is conducted will be influenced by the priority we are now giving to the High North.

### **Stronger focus on energy and the environment**

There is growing interest in the High North as an arena of international cooperation. This is particularly due to developments in areas such as energy and the environment.

The resource potential in the north and the associated opportunities for cooperation have made energy a key dimension of the High North dialogues Norway has been conducting with the European Commission and with countries such as Germany, France, the US, Canada and our Nordic neighbours. The High North is emerging as a new petroleum province, and as much as a quarter of the world's undiscovered oil and gas resources may



Session of the Arctic Council, 26 October 2006 in Salekhard, Russia.

be located in Arctic areas.<sup>1</sup> According to the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, more than two thirds of the undiscovered resources on the Norwegian continental shelf are located in the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea.

The focus of Norwegian energy policy is thus continuing its historical shift towards the north. At the same time, energy issues are acquiring a foreign policy dimension as energy supply and security become increasingly important in international relations. In many countries, energy is becoming more clearly defined as a part of security policy.

The main lines of Norway's petroleum policy are well established. However, we must be aware of and respond to the increased importance of energy issues as we implement our foreign and security policy. So that our relations with other countries better reflect the prominent role energy has acquired, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, will therefore strengthen its capacity to handle energy issues.

The High North is increasingly being seen as a barometer of global climate change. The temperature rise is about twice as fast in the Arctic as in the rest of the world, and this will have major consequences for people living in the north. Moreover, environmentally hazardous substances from other parts of the northern hemisphere

end up in the High North. The increasing awareness of climate change and pollution is creating a need for closer international monitoring of the Arctic environment.

The problem of climate change is at the top of the environmental policy agenda. Climate issues must, however, also be reflected in foreign and development policy because it is clear that climate change will have an impact on the security of countries and people all over the world. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment will intensify their cooperation to ensure that Norway fulfils its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and plays an active role in efforts to achieve a more ambitious climate agreement for the period after 2012.

Svalbard is therefore gaining importance as an international environmental and climate research platform. It provides unique opportunities for a wide range of experts to build up knowledge of climate change and the environment, and raise awareness of this major global problem. It is vital for Norway to maintain the important role of this meeting place.

The Government considers it important to continue its efforts in Svalbard in line with Norway's policy on Svalbard: consistent and firm enforcement of sovereignty, proper compliance with the Spitsbergen Treaty and control to ensure compliance with the treaty, maintenance of peace and stability in the area, the protection of its distinctive wilderness character

and maintenance of Norwegian settlements on the archipelago.<sup>2</sup>

Developments in the High North have become more dynamic as a result of the stronger international focus on energy and the environment. The static Cold War situation has been replaced by a vision of broad international cooperation.

These changes have figured prominently in the High North dialogues Norway has been conducting with key Western countries. The purpose of the dialogues is to explain Norway's interests and positions in order to gain acceptance for our views of the opportunities and challenges in the High North, and to identify new areas and forms of cooperation.

The first phase of general briefings has now been completed. In the next phase, the idea is to explore in greater detail the issues of most common interest, with a view to identifying specific cooperation projects that can give the dialogues more substance.

### **Regional forums**

The Government intends its High North strategy to direct more attention towards Norway's interests and to ensure better coordination of how they are presented in different forums. We consider regional forums particularly valuable in this connection.

Norway will give High North issues a higher profile in Nordic

<sup>1</sup> US Geological Survey, 2000

<sup>2</sup> Report No. 9 (1999-2000) to the Storting, Svalbard



cooperation bodies. In close cooperation with the Storting, these issues will be raised in the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. So far these forums have concentrated on the Baltic Sea Cooperation. It is, however, important that this perspective is supplemented with a stronger focus on the High North. In this connection the Government considers it important to continue the dialogue with each of the Nordic countries.

The Government also intends to step up its efforts to focus attention on its High North policy in European institutions such as the European Parliament. This will be done in close consultation with the Storting and Norwegian organisations that participate in these cooperation bodies, including the social partners.

We will also fully exploit the potential of the Barents Cooperation.

This cooperation was a pioneering initiative when it was launched in 1993. It is still a unique forum for cooperation across old dividing lines in the north, with a strong people-to-people dimension, in which the indigenous peoples' interests play a key role. The Government intends to provide favourable conditions for the county authorities in North Norway, the Sámediggi (Sami Parliament), other public institutions, NGOs and private individuals to continue to strengthen the Barents Cooperation.

With a view to increasing the efficiency of the Barents Cooperation, Norway has taken the initiative for the establishment of an international secretariat in Kirkenes. The international secretariat is to be operational from 1 January 2008, and will be in addition to the national Barents Secretariat, also in Kirkenes. The Barents Institute was established in the same town to boost knowledge about cross-border and

other regional issues. Knowledge about the indigenous peoples in the region will be developed, for example in cooperation with centres of expertise in Kautokeino.

Norway will chair the Arctic Council from 2007 to 2009. We will use the chairmanship to gain support for our High North policy. We have drawn up an ambitious programme for our chairmanship, with particular emphasis on sustainable resource management and efforts to combat climate change. Through the Arctic Council we will also seek to increase international understanding of the urgency of addressing climate change.

In connection with Norway's chairmanship, an Arctic Council secretariat, which is planned to be operational from 1 January 2007, will be established in Tromsø. Sweden and Denmark have agreed that the secretariat should continue its work through their chair-

manship periods, i.e. until the end of 2013.

We have had good experience of inviting decision-makers from other countries to the High North. This will be stepped up in the years to come, with priority being given to guests from the US, Canada and Russia. Due to its research infrastructure, particularly in the field of climate research, Svalbard is of particular interest in this connection.

#### **Conflicts of interest**

Our vision is that the Barents Sea should become a “sea of cooperation”. Even during the tension of the Cold War, relations between the countries of the north were orderly and correct. Although there are sometimes differences of opinion on certain legal questions and points of international law, Norway has been commended for its stewardship in the north, and this is something we will continue to build on.

There is potential for closer cooperation in the High North, but there are also real conflicts of interest related to the utilisation of fisheries resources and future offshore petroleum resources.

There is excess capacity in the fishing fleet, both worldwide and in Norway’s neighbouring areas. The world’s recoverable energy resources have also diminished. As a result, it is becoming more challenging to ensure responsible resource management and the conservation of biodiversity and particularly vulnerable eco-

systems. These factors together with economic interests are also putting increasing pressure on the Barents Sea.

Norwegian resource management combines active use of national regulatory authority with credible enforcement of legislation and international cooperation. Under current international law there is a wide range of instruments that Norway can apply in its efforts to develop knowledge- and performance-based resource management. In contrast to the situation in many other areas, the combination of effective coastal state management and extensive cooperation with other states has made it possible to rebuild important but vulnerable fish stocks such as cod and herring in northern waters.

We have a historic responsibility to continue this.

Norway takes a systematic, methodical approach to the opening of new areas for petroleum activities and for later awards of exploration and production licences, based on clear rules for the authorities, companies and other actors.

Our sound regulatory framework and predictable and effective management have ensured that impact assessments are drawn up, based on the precautionary principle, and the need to adhere to strict environmental standards. They have also ensured transparency and participation by international oil companies and contractors with broad experience and expertise in large

and complex developments on the Norwegian continental shelf. We have thus created conditions conducive to long-term, large-scale investments, while at the same time maintaining full transparency and sound control processes, and facilitating coexistence between very different but important users of these sea areas.

Norway has submitted documentation to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the extent of its continental shelf, based on the provisions of the Law of the Sea and international cooperation. The same approach has been taken to the delimitation of the continental shelf and the fisheries zones in the area between Greenland and Svalbard, which has now been settled, and to the delimitation of the continental shelf in the Norwegian Sea. It is also being used in dealing with the unresolved questions related to the delimitation line between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea.

The delimitation of the continental shelf and the 200-mile zones in the Barents Sea is an essential basis for the exploration and exploitation of petroleum deposits in the area of overlapping claims, which covers an area of 175 000 square kilometres. The principal purpose of a delimitation line is to determine which state has jurisdiction over an area for specific purposes. Agreement on a delimitation line will thus make it possible to establish the predictable framework that is necessary for economic and other actors, and also for cross-

border cooperation schemes in the petroleum sector.

The issue of the delimitation of the continental shelf and zones in the Barents Sea can only be resolved through political agreement between Norway and Russia. Agreement on a delimitation line would release considerable potential for cooperation between Norway and Russia in the petroleum sector.

There are differing views on the geographical scope of the Spitsbergen Treaty. Norway's position has always been that the treaty, in accordance with its wording, only applies to the archipelago and the territorial waters. With potential economic interests in mind, other states have claimed that the treaty also applies to maritime areas outside the territorial waters. This was one of the reasons why Norway decided in 1977 until further notice to establish a fisheries protection zone rather than a full economic zone. One of the purposes was to ensure the protection and sound management of the living resources.

The Norwegian management regime in the Fisheries Protection Zone has generally been complied with in practice. However, Norway's right to regulate fishing and exercise jurisdiction over the continental shelf in this area is not undisputed. For example, Spain, Iceland and Russia have disputed this right with reference to the provisions of the Spitsbergen Treaty.

Norway's position is clear and has a firm basis in international law: as a coastal state we have the right to unilaterally establish maritime zones around Svalbard, and an obligation to prevent over-exploitation of the fisheries resources.

Norway will continue to fulfil its responsibility in a transparent and predictable way. We expect other actors to comply with national and international rules and regulations. The High North is at the top of our foreign policy agenda, and we will seek the support of our allies and partners to ensure that Norway is able to address the real challenges we are facing in the High North.

#### **Cooperation with Russia**

Russia is both our neighbour and the country with which we share the Barents Sea, and consequently our relations with Russia form the central bilateral dimension of Norway's High North policy.

Today we are dealing with a different Russia from the one that emerged in the international arena in the first few years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia is currently undergoing rapid economic development, due in particular to large revenues from the energy sector and also to a number of reforms.

After decades of authoritarian rule and isolationism, Russia is now finding its place in the European cooperation between democratic states. As a neighbouring country, Norway welcomes this development.



Norwegian and Russian Coast Guard officials in a debriefing on board the Norwegian vessel *KS Andenes*, following the Barents Rescue 2006 exercise.



The rig *Deepsea Delta* drilled and tested well 7 in the Shtokman field in the Russian part of the Barents Sea in the autumn of 2006, in cooperation between Gazprom and Hydro.

It is, however, still unclear how Russia will develop in a number of areas of interest to the surrounding world. This applies particularly to key issues such as the rule of law, freedom of expression and human rights. The changes that are taking place in the country's economy, society and politics do not affect the objectives of Norway's policy, but developments will be followed closely and measures adapted accordingly. We will maintain a candid dialogue with Russia and will be clear about Norway's views on human rights, the principles of the rule of law and political rights.

Norway's policy towards Russia is based on pragmatism, interests and cooperation.

We can only ensure sustainable use of resources and sound environmental management in the Barents Sea with Russia's engagement and Norwegian-Russian cooperation. The Government therefore intends to strengthen cooperation with Russia on ecosystem-based management of the whole Barents Sea, both in the Joint Norwegian-Russian Commission on Environmental Protection and in the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission. This cooperation includes measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The preparation and ongoing implementation of the integrated management plan for the Barents Sea–Lofoten area has given Norway valuable experience. We cannot expect a Norwegian plan to apply to the entire Barents Sea,

but the principles and approaches set out in the plan may, in cooperation with Russia, be applied to the whole sea.

Our fisheries cooperation with the Soviet Union started as far back as 30 years ago, and has been instrumental in ensuring sustainable harvesting of the fish stocks in northern waters. Our joint management of living marine resources is based on nearly a century of Norwegian-Russian marine research cooperation.

It is the Government's ambition that Norway should develop close cooperation with Russia on sound exploitation of the petroleum resources in the Barents Sea. Both the former and present Norwegian Government accepted President Putin's invitation to forge a strategic partnership between Norway and Russia in the north. Part of our efforts related to the High North will be aimed at giving substance to this partnership – or vision.

In this connection the Government intends to draw up a proposal for an economic and industrial cooperation zone which would include both Norwegian and Russian territory in the border areas of the High North. The zone would help to promote Norwegian-Russian onshore cooperation relating to the prospective petroleum activities in the Barents Sea.

In this connection, it will be important to assess to what extent existing instruments can be applied. Once Norway has prepared a proposal, it intends to present it to

the Russian authorities. It could then be further developed by a Norwegian-Russian working group established for this purpose.

Norway will advocate ambitious environmental goals in both countries and seek to promote the establishment of high health, safety and environmental standards for the petroleum activities in the whole of the Barents Sea. Cooperation on health, safety and environmental issues will be further developed together with the Russian authorities, the petroleum industry and the social partners in both countries. We will also build further on the existing cooperation with Russia on maritime safety, oil spill response and emergency and rescue services.

Norway intends to encourage stronger ties with Russia at all levels by reducing costs and simplifying the procedures involved. We have therefore negotiated a visa agreement with Russia. This agreement, which is expected to enter into force in the first half of 2007, will simplify visa procedures for many categories of Norwegians and Russians. It is particularly useful that the agreement will make it easier to obtain multiple-entry visas that are valid for longer periods of time.

Agreement has also been reached on extending the opening hours at the Storskog border crossing, and the Government will facilitate their speedy introduction. The Government will also carry out a broad review of existing rules and procedures with a view to facilitating

border crossing between Norway and Russia at Storskog. In this connection the practice followed by other countries in the Schengen area, and particularly Finland, will be studied.

#### **Presence of the Norwegian Armed Forces**

The changes in the north are also affecting the role of the Norwegian Armed Forces. By strengthening capacity, the Government has made it possible for the Coast Guard vessels and the Orion aircraft to spend more time at sea and in the air, respectively.

Most of the security challenges in the High North are cross-sectoral, and require close cooperation between the civilian and military authorities. The armed forces have an important role to play, because they have a clearly-defined leadership structure and chain of command, and other capacities that can be put to use as required.

One of the primary tasks of the armed forces is to provide background information for national decision-making through up-to-date surveillance and intelligence. Given the challenges in the north, it is very important that Norwegian authorities have up-to-date information on the situation at their disposal at all times, both as regards natural resources and the environment and as regards civilian and military developments. Surveillance and intelligence will continue to be a key task for the armed forces in the north.

It is important to maintain the presence of the Norwegian Armed Forces in the High North both to enable Norway to exercise its sovereignty and authority and to ensure that it can maintain its role in resource management. The presence of the armed forces increases predictability and stability, and is decisive for our ability to respond to emergencies in the High North.

By taking action on breaches of the rules designed to protect natural resources, Norway is making it clear that international and national obligations are to be taken seriously. Infringements of Norwegian fisheries legislation will therefore be acted upon in a credible, consistent and predictable way. With this in view, the already close cooperation between the Norwegian Coast Guard, the prosecuting authority and the police will be further developed. The cooperation between the Norwegian Coast guard and the Russian Coast Guard will also be further developed in order to ensure optimal coordination of the fisheries control in the Barents Sea.

The Army's activities are to a large extent concentrated in North Norway, and nearly all training of national servicemen now takes place there. The Army has key units in Troms, which will continue to play an important role in the future, and South Varanger Garrison in Finnmark is another high priority unit.

For many years we have been cooperating closely with allied

countries on military activities in the north, mainly in the form of joint exercises and training. These are valuable because they make our allies familiar with the conditions in the north, and ensure greater general coordination in allied operations. The Government will seek to maintain our allies' and partners' interest in the north, and will encourage increased participation in military exercises and training in the region.

Defence cooperation between Norway and Russia is also building mutual trust and increasing our capacity for joint problem-solving. The *Kursk* and *Elektron* incidents demonstrated how valuable established contact between regional military authorities is when emergencies or delicate situations arise. We will make active efforts to intensify our defence-related dialogue with Russia.