

STATSMINISTER ODVAR NORDLIS ÅPNINGSINNLEGG UNDER MØTET MED
KOMMISJONEN I DET EUROPEISKE FELLESSKAP, MANDAG 10. NOVEMBER 1980

Mr. President,

I am very pleased indeed to have this opportunity to carry forward the political dialogue between Norway and the European Community.

Norway attributes great importance to an intensification and broadening of its relations with the Community. These relations have to be based, of course, on the conclusion reached in the Norwegian referendum on membership in the Community.

This referendum was preceded by comprehensive debate and intensive campaigning. For the foreseeable future its

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outcome will determine the baseline for our mutual relations.

Let me emphasize here that the outcome of the referendum settled the specific issue of membership. It did not amount to, and should not be interpreted as amounting to, a rejection of European cooperation and an active Norwegian role in that connection.

We are intent on playing an active and constructive part in the process of cooperation in Europe. Norway is a European country, and our future is very closely linked with the future of Europe in political, economic and cultural terms.

Through our Trade Agreement with the Community we have become members of a large European free-trade area encompassing more than 300 million people. Our economic

cooperation with the Community has grown in dimension and scope. Some 70 percent of our exports go to the EC countries, while 50 percent of our imports originate with the Nine.

Our economies are interwoven and to an important degree complementary in nature. I need only mention the cooperation now developing between my country and Community member-states in the fields of industry and energy. The Community is also the most important market for Norwegian shipping.

As a follow-up of the 1977 EFTA summit and the positive reactions of the Community to the Norwegian proposals, cooperation between Norway and the Commission has been strengthened and extended to new areas.

New links have been constructed in areas outside the scope of the Trade Agreement, such as environmental questions,

energy, *transport* and economic policy. My Government attaches particular importance to contacts on economic policy between European countries in view of the alarming growth of unemployment and inflation.

In view of these increasing contacts between Norway and the Community, my Government would welcome annual high-level informal meetings with the Commission, as suggested by you, Mr. President. If it is agreeable to you we would be prepared to make arrangements for the first such meeting in Oslo this coming spring.

Norway attributes great importance to the continued evolution of a strong and open Community in the broader context of the political order in Europe.

In East-West terms we consider the Community a stabilizing influence, as well as a force for increased cooperation on our continent.

In terms of the future of European society we consider the Community a vital expression and guardian of the democratic way.

Finally, in terms of Atlantic relations, we consider a dynamic and progressive Community a precondition for the future evolution of equitable and harmonious cooperation.

In recent years European political cooperation has gained in momentum and substance. As a result the diplomatic process has gained a new influential voice. In our view this voice has led to enlightened and constructive approaches and we have found ourselves in agreement with most of the positions taken.

At a time of rising turbulence outside Europe and a *worsening* of detente inside it, the European voice is sorely needed.

Norway does not take part in the political cooperation among the Community member-states. On the other hand we need to be kept abreast of developments and at the same time to bring our own views to bear on issues discussed within European political cooperation. For this reason, Norway has intensified its bilateral relations with Community member-states both at the Governmental level and between officials.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I wish to *repeat* Norway's strong interest in and commitment to European cooperation. My visit here today is inspired by this attitude and reflects Norway's desire to give it concrete expression.

Thank you, Mr. President.