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Åpningsinnlegg på Arctic Frontiers. Forskerkonferanse

Mr. Chairman, dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to open this part of the conference. Most of us have been here for a few days already. Not only to welcome the sun, which has been absent for two months, but also to listen to and take part in discussions on important research issues. These are issues at top of both the political agenda and the research agenda. I look forward to participating in today's discussions, and in those which will take place throughout the week. From now on, the presentations will be more of a scientific nature, presenting significant and interesting research findings.

Tromsø has a long history of attracting scientists and polar explorers, and is therefore nicknamed "the Gateway to the Arctic". The city's unique position has contributed to making it an important centre for research in a broad range of topics. Two

of them are on the agenda today: Arctic Ocean Governance and Marine Ecosystems.

Lysark 2 – Priorities of the government

This government has put the High North, integrated management of the Barents Sea and efforts to reduce climate emissions on top our political agenda. Research is of course a crucial contributor in advancing these issues. I therefore welcome Arctic Frontier's initiative in bringing policy makers and researchers together, as has been done for the third time here in Tromsø this week. I am impressed by this year's program's quality and diversity. Our Minister of Research has invited researchers to take part in the public debate, in order to demonstrate good examples of the societal value of research and scientific evidence for policy making. You certainly fulfill her expectations.

The term "Age of the Arctic" was first mentioned by professor Oran Young more than 20 years ago. By the way, Young is an Arctic expert and researcher, but lives in Santa Barbara, California! With this term he suggested the idea of an arctic region where security issues, economic interests and environmental concerns would gain an increased importance.

This has decidedly turned out to be the case: the region is host to a number of environmental issues. The drive for an extended exploration of the petroleum resources and new security concerns combine to raise a major debate on the governance of the region. Both in general, and on the Arctic Ocean in particular. Indeed, the title of this conference has proven quite illustrative.

As the Norwegians present in the audience will know, the government is working on a new white paper on research. The premise for the white paper is that science is both a prerequisite and a tool to face global challenges such as climate change, environmental issues and sustainable development. The white paper will address how Norwegian research policy can contribute in facing these challenges. We must ensure that our research system is equipped to address these issues, in terms of quality, organisation, human resources and international cooperation.

Lysark 3 – Strategy for the High North

This government has made the High North one of our main political priorities. In December 2006, we launched a High North Strategy, the first one ever made. The key words of this strategy are *presence*, *activity* and *knowledge*. *Presence* and *activities* on land and at sea. *Knowledge*, including scientific research, of

environmental conditions and resources, of people living in the northern areas and of international relations. Thus, both marine ecosystems, climate change and governance of the Arctic Ocean are important elements in this strategy.

These issues must be solved through international cooperation. This is something I will return to. But it has also been essential for us to build on, and further develop, important research institutions which are based in the north. As we learn this week, these institutions are attractive partners in broad international networks because of the quality of their research.

The goal of this strategy was never to finish the work within one electoral mandate. However, a lot of activities and projects have already been generated, with more to come. The University of Tromsø has played an important role in taking this strategy forward. Rector Jarle Aarbakke has chaired the strategy's expert committee, giving valuable input. As a result of the strategy, it more research funding has been committed to central areas of the strategy, such as marine bioprospecting. Altogether, almost one billion kroner, (100 million Euros) has been set aside in order to follow up the 22 initiatives presented in the strategy so far.

Lysark 4 – Climate change

The challenges of climate change is a central part of the High North strategy. These challenges have been a main priority for this government. We want to take a leading role in the environmental politics, by working for an ambitious agreement at an international level. We want to reduce emissions at home, and to develop new technology.

Again, this strategy is funded on research. We have increased research on renewable energy resources and on carbon capture and storage. We are now strengthening climate research even further, and have established a strategic advisory council for climate research. This will enable us to reach our goal of becoming an active international partner, contributing with important knowledge on the effects and necessary adaptations.

Our strategy will require active collaboration between researchers, policy makers and the private and public sector. The development of environmentally friendly technology is essential. Again, we have to build on extensive international cooperation and networks.

A report from the Arctic council in 2007 proved that climate change has a higher impact in the Arctic than in other areas of the world. For example, temperatures in this region have risen more than anywhere else. This report formed an important platform for our chairmanship in the Arctic Council. Dialogue on climate change and how to take on the challenges that are made evident from this report forward, have been our priorities. For the moment, the secretariat for the Arctic Council is located in Tromsø.

Lysark 5 IPY and International cooperation

Our national focus on the High North and on climate change coincided with the International Polar Year.

Arctic Frontiers is organized in cooperation with the Norwegian IPY secretariat. During this conference, several of the first findings of some of the IPY projects will be presented and analyzed. This will thus also be an occasion for discussions on how projects from this great research effort can be further developed. I guess a majority of you have been active in research projects within the IPY. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your work.

It has been my great pleasure to observe all the different activities that has come as a result of IPY. It has been one of the most significant mobilizations of international research on Arctic issues in our time. I am glad to say that Norway has been one of the most active countries, and that we have also been an important financial contributor.

Svalbard has been a central location for research activities during IPY. This government places great emphasis on developing Svalbard as a major platform for international polar research cooperation. The infrastructure already in place, including satellites and radars, The University Centre (UNIS) in Svalbard and the international presence of research stations in Ny-Ålesund, is in my view unique.

I am delighted that two important new infrastructures of great importance for Svalbard and the High North are included on ESFRIs list of new European large scale infrastructures. It is particularly positive that these are broad international projects where partners find each other in mutual interest, and commit to joint funding. In this case the European Union acted as facilitator, in addition to providing some additional funding in the initial phase.

EISCAT is an organisation that I assume most of you are familiar with, and an EISCAT radar is actually located just kilometres away. A modernisation of the installations will be an important contributor to the other project included on the list, which was initiated by Norway. Together with international partners we will make Svalbard a centre for an Integrated Arctic Earth Observing System (SIAEOS). This will contribute to an improved use of data, and higher quality of research and education.

To sum up, our strategy for the High North, our white paper on research, our efforts to tackle climate change, IPY and the improved use of infrastructures at Svalbard, all underscore the international dimension. None of the challenges that society and researchers are faced with today can be tackled by one country alone. This same knowledge was the reason why politicians and researchers on particle physics decided to build CERN. I assume that we can agree that the research carried out there have made valuable contributions to advancing science in their fields. Sometimes there is a momentum that push you towards acting together.

The strong international presence on this week's conference demonstrates the international nature of our agenda. Partnership with other countries in the North, and with other countries interested in polar research, such as China, India, Poland and South Africa, is thus essential in making scientific advances.

I have mentioned our joint efforts in the Arctic Council, that Minister Støre also elaborated on on Monday. The presence of a European Commissioner illustrates the weight the European Union is placing on these issues; the Arctic, marine resources, energy and climate. I very much welcome EUs maritime strategy. The ideas put forward here, are very much in line with Norwegian thinking and policy. The Arctic strategy of the European Union is also very interesting to us. I assume it's focus on arctic governance will be discussed later today.

The EUs framework programme for research is the main instrument for funding research that will enable us to tackle these issues at the top of the political agenda. This is an important part of Norwegian research policy, as it is a platform for international cooperation, which addresses common challenges. Norwegian researchers cooperated with researchers from more than a hundred different countries through the sixth

framework programme. Several projects were conducted on Svalbard, and the issues we discuss today are important priorities in the seventh framework programme.

Common to all knowledge based societies is the need to attract the best talents to research. We therefore welcome EUs initiatives to work to improve recruitment opportunities and career mobility. Even if we all maximise our efforts to attract the best talents, I believe it is in the interest of the researchers that we cooperate to raise our standards.

During the period of this government, recruitment of researchers and their career opportunities have been main priorities. This will also be reflected in the new white paper on research.

I therefore welcome the work done by our hosts ARCTOS, which is a network of institutions in marine research, to focus on researcher's training by establishing the Young Scientist's Forum. This is in line with this government's wish to further improve and develop the structure of the Ph.d. programmes. The combination of through research training and a broader community focus is highly beneficial. In addition, the Young Scientist's Forum works as an international network, preparing the ground for international cooperation in the years to come.

Lysark 6 – Tromsø – conference

Dear colleagues,

as some of you might know, I take great personal interest in participating on this conference. Before I was appointed state secretary, I was a researcher in fisheries management at the University of Tromsø. Last week, Tromsø attracted a major cultural audience, hosting the nineteenth (19.) Tromsø International Film Festival. This week, we attract top-international researchers, as well as hosting the Northern Lights Festival for classical music, as we experienced last night. And all this takes place in the darkest period of the year! I hope you will enjoy the rest of the programme and your stay in Tromsø.

Thank you for your attention!