

Political platform

for the Norwegian Government, formed by the Conservative Party, the Progress Party, the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party

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1 – Introduction

Safeguarding Norway for the future - a sustainable welfare-based society

The aim of the Norwegian Government formed by the Conservative Party, the Progress Party, the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party is to ensure that people can live free and independent lives. The Government firmly believes that when you show confidence in people, they take responsibility.

A free society with respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law is not created and maintained on its own. We are dependent on well-functioning communities, and common values and institutions such as the rule of law, protection of privacy, freedom of speech, mutual trust, independent media, the market economy, property rights and voluntary activities. Our Christian and humanist heritage and traditions have given us values such as human dignity, compassion and stewardship and ideals such as equality, freedom, responsibility for oneself and others, and respect for the natural environment. The Government will defend these values and protect the institutions that underpin our society.

Our policy is based on the view that all individuals have unique, innate and inalienable value, and that everyone is equal in dignity regardless of their background, abilities and qualities. The Government will promote equality, equal rights and respect for the individual's freedom of choice, and will combat discrimination, injustice, and unreasonable constraints on individual liberty. Children are independent individuals with individual rights, and the Government's policy will be based on the need to protect the best interests of the child.

Norway is a country with a high degree of social equality and trust, and a high level of security and stability. We must safeguard this social capital. The Government will strengthen the crucial sense of community at the heart of our society, and continue to build society from below by distributing power and enabling individuals, families and local communities to manage their daily lives and shape their own futures. The Government will seek to unleash the creativity and energy to be found when people come together in the workplace, in families and in voluntary settings. Families and individuals must be given the space to take responsibility for the part they play in society, in a way that gives them different options and promotes personal freedom. Engaging in shared activities and being part of a community gives people the space to realise their potential and take responsibility for their own lives. Starting and running companies, for example, creates jobs and value, and brings people together. Local and national ownership is vital for the development of the entire country.

Only by building a fair and sustainable welfare-based society in which ability and effort count more than background and heritage can we ensure opportunities for all and give people the freedom to live their own lives. The Government will work to ensure that the nations of the world join forces to tackle the major challenges of our time. In order to succeed, we must work together to fight poverty, promote security and peace, and address major climate and environmental problems. Norway will shoulder its international responsibility and will promote international cooperation through NATO and the UN, and under the EEA Agreement. Norway will be a champion of free trade, human rights and the international legal order. In the Government's view, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an essential framework for meeting our global challenges. The Government will pursue a sustainable immigration policy that is both restrictive and responsible and that ensures due process.

The Government will address the major challenges facing Norway by:

- Building a sustainable welfare-based society. The Government will continue to build a sustainable welfare-based society by restructuring the Norwegian economy, promoting growth and creating jobs, improving infrastructure throughout the country, supporting the transition to a green economy and ensuring diversification. The fact that more people are living for longer is positive, but if our welfare system is to be sustainable, we are dependent on more people being in employment and on new solutions. We must be more successful when it comes to integration and we must ensure that immigrants are able to find employment more quickly.

An inclusive labour market is essential in this respect. New technology offers significant opportunities for creating new jobs, empowering people and enhancing efficiency, but at the same time poses challenges to certain jobs and creates a need for new skills.

- Implementing an ambitious climate policy. An ambitious climate policy is essential for promoting ecological sustainability so that future generations can enjoy the same opportunities as us.

Norway must fulfil its climate commitments and shoulder its share of the responsibility for combating climate change. Our new labour market must be green, smart and innovative. To create new opportunities, we need to promote greater investment in new green technology, apply the 'polluter pays' principle, and develop markets for zero-emission technologies. Norway must diversify its economy to reduce climate-related risks.

- Ensuring social sustainability. A high degree of social equality and trust between people, and a low level of poverty are essential for achieving social sustainability. When people are marginalised, their opportunities to create a good life for themselves are reduced. A good school system and relevant knowledge and skills are crucial if we are to create opportunities for all. International migration is unpredictable and poses a major challenge, and we need to maintain a high level of preparedness to be able to respond to sudden changes in the situation. We must respond to developments with measures that combine to form a restrictive and responsible immigration policy that ensures due process. In order to build strong communities, we must reduce poverty, strengthen our efforts to promote integration, and build a society where people can live free and independent lives.
- Safeguarding security. It is not possible to have freedom without security. New forms of crime are creating insecurity. That is why the security and safety of the population must be safeguarded by the rule of law, a strong and effective police force and a credible defence.

In the view of the Government, this political platform addresses these challenges, setting out measures that can be implemented in the next two years, while at the same time maintaining a commitment to renewed restructuring efforts and reforms in the longer term.

This political platform describes how the Government will work to achieve the political goals that have been identified. How far it succeeds in this will depend on the economic situation and the funds available.

16 – Foreign and development policy

Development policy

The main aims of the Government's development policy are to reduce poverty and promote economic development and welfare in developing countries. The Government will contribute to the efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and will support developing countries in their aim to become independent of aid.

The Government will maintain the four cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development policy: anti-corruption, climate change and environment, women's rights and gender equality, and human rights.

An unprecedented number of people have been lifted out of poverty in recent decades. Developments over the past few decades have shown that a market economy and international trade are essential in the fight against poverty.

The Government will base its policy on the principle that universal rights apply to all people and that states must safeguard these rights. The Government will therefore intensify its efforts to promote fundamental human rights.

The Government will work to combat violence and oppression, and will give priority to vulnerable groups such as women, children, religious minorities, people with disabilities and sexual minorities.

Robust institutions, economic and political transparency, a strong civil society, the division of power, a well-functioning state based on the rule of law and a private sector that ensures significant value creation are the keys to achieving economic development and building a sustainable welfare-based society. An equitable distribution of resources helps to ensure that economic development benefits everyone, including the poorest sections of society.

The Government will work to improve conditions for private sector development in developing countries. Norwegian investments and expertise are sought after in many developing countries. Closer cooperation with the Norwegian business sector will create more jobs, help to reduce poverty and promote economic growth.

The Government will further develop Norway's leading role in the fields of global health and education. Education and health are both vital for enabling people to realise their potential, to be aware of and exercise their rights, and to contribute to society. In order to reduce poverty, it is essential that developing countries invest more in their own populations. Efforts to safeguard the right to education, particularly for girls, must continue.

The Government will play a leading role in efforts to promote clean and healthy oceans. Sound management of marine resources will create value, and provide new jobs and more food for a growing population. Priority will be given to efforts to combat marine litter and microplastics. Improving waste management will be vital in this context.

Climate change and the environment will be key priorities in Norwegian development policy. There will be an increasing emphasis on climate change adaptation and on targeted and cost-effective mitigation initiatives such as efforts to develop renewable energy.

Many developing countries have abundant resources that the world needs. It is important that these resources are developed in a sustainable way that ensures respect for fundamental rights.

It is estimated that around 90 % of the financing needed to achieve the SDGs must come from domestic resources. The Government will therefore seek to enhance domestic resource mobilisation through capacity- and competence-building programmes under the Knowledge Bank and through efforts to improve tax systems and increase the tax base by promoting job creation and business development.

Aid provided by Norway must be flexible, effective and results-oriented. The Government considers it important that all aid programmes have clearly defined objectives.

The Government will actively promote the use of new technology and digitalisation, with a view to increasing aid effectiveness, improving the results of development programmes and enabling developing countries to benefit from modern technology.

The willingness of national authorities to promote development and take ownership of development processes is a condition for receiving aid from Norway. The principle of leaving no one behind is at the core of the SDGs, and the Government will therefore strengthen the focus on fighting poverty. For this reason, the proportion of aid allocated to the least developed countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, will be increased in the period up until 2021. Aid provided to states affected by conflict and fragility will be targeted towards the countries with the highest levels of poverty and instability. Our efforts to ensure the thematic and geographical concentration of aid will continue in line with current guidelines.

The aid budget has increased substantially over the years. This makes sound aid management all the more essential, and it is vital to ensure that we have the necessary grant management and development policy expertise. There is a need for an integrated centre of expertise to ensure the quality of Norway's aid efforts. The Government will therefore reform the administration of development policy with the aim of bringing together, maintaining and strengthening international development expertise in Norway, avoiding duplication of efforts, and ensuring that Norway's diplomatic and consular missions also have a high level of expertise in this area.

The aim is to enhance the quality of aid management, increase effectiveness, and significantly improve coordination between Norway's substantial development efforts at multilateral level and Norway's efforts at country level. A new results portal will also be established to improve the use of results-based management and our ability to make use of lessons learned.

The Government will:

- Allocate 1 % of Norway's gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance (ODA) each year.
- Follow up the policy coherence reform by pursuing a development policy that is guided by the SDGs and that ensures that our various initiatives pull in the same direction as far as possible. The annual reports on policy coherence for development are to be based on regular external evaluations.
- Ensure that support is not provided to organisations that incite violence or encourage hate speech, racism or anti-Semitism, including those in Palestine.
- Step up efforts to combat modern forms of slavery and combine these efforts under a separate development programme on this issue.
- Continue and raise the profile of the partner country initiative in Norway's development cooperation, for example by drawing up a country strategy for each partner country.

- Give priority to capacity building and technical assistance, for example by further developing the Knowledge Bank.
- Strengthen cooperation with the Norwegian business sector, with a view to promoting job creation and increasing investment in developing countries.
- Give greater priority to vocational training in Norway's development cooperation by supporting efforts to strengthen education opportunities in the countries concerned, so that young people receive training and skills that are relevant to the local market.
- Intensify efforts to protect the environment and fight environmental crime.
- Increase aid for food security and climate-resilient agriculture, and draw up an action plan to promote sustainable food systems that takes an integrated approach to food security, agriculture and nutrition.
- Draw up a strategy to ensure that the needs of marginalised groups, such as religious minorities, LGBTIQ people and people with disabilities, are taken into account in relevant initiatives.
- Contribute to the establishment of a support fund for victims of sexual violence in wars and conflicts.
- Implement an international initiative to promote energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy in developing countries, and contribute to efforts to phase out coal.
- Draw up a renewable energy strategy, and in this connection consider the establishment of a guarantee scheme and other measures to phase out coal.
- Further develop cooperation with civil society organisations with a view to furthering the aims of Norwegian development policy and building a strong civil society in developing countries.
- Play a proactive role in efforts to combat marine litter and microplastics.
- Strengthen Norway's global health efforts, particularly in the areas of vaccines, child health and sexual and reproductive health and rights, including health education for girls and maternal and child health.
- Work to ensure that the OECD's definition of official development assistance is not expanded to include security measures and the military sector in developing countries.
- Ensure predictability and a long-term approach in important areas of development policy such as health, education, business development (including agriculture and food security) and climate, environment and renewable energy, and draw up long-term political strategies for efforts in these areas.
- Ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the areas where the needs are greatest, including forgotten conflicts and disasters, increase the use of innovative solutions in humanitarian action, and improve coordination of humanitarian aid and long-term development efforts.
- Set clear requirements for countries that receive Norwegian aid as regards progress in the areas of democracy, civil society development, anti-corruption efforts, respect for liberal principles and the rule of law, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression and gender equality.
- Ensure that Norway is at the forefront of efforts to promote free trade, through both international and bilateral free trade agreements.
- Increase trade with poor countries. Promote trade facilitation and imports from developing countries.
- Launch an international initiative to combat gendercide (systematic gender-selective killing of, and violence against, girls), which has led to a shortage of women in a number of countries.

Foreign policy

The Government will pursue a value-based foreign policy. The primary aim of Norwegian foreign policy is to safeguard and promote important Norwegian interests. These include strengthening international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reducing international tensions, and promoting security and stability, peace and reconciliation, global free trade, economic growth, liberal values and respect for human rights.

The world around us has become more unpredictable. Fundamental values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law are under pressure, as are international institutions that regulate cooperation between states. The Government will work actively to defend, maintain and strengthen these values and institutions.

The main features of Norwegian foreign policy will remain unchanged. Norway will be a predictable, reliable and credible partner. The Government will base its policy on binding international cooperation. Norway will play an active part in the UN, NATO, the WTO and other international organisations. The Government will maintain and strengthen its cooperation with civil society in Norway in its efforts to achieve its foreign policy goals.

Norway's closest ties, in terms of shared interests and values, will continue to be with the Nordic, European and Atlantic communities. The Government will also engage in global activities and seek to cooperate with new partners. However, changes in the political, economic and military balance of power make it essential to reinforce our commitment to the values and political orientation of our Western community of neighbours, allies and trading partners.

The Government will:

- Give priority to Norway's neighbouring areas in its foreign policy.
- Develop and strengthen Nordic cooperation and better exploit the potential for increased cooperation in areas where this will bring greater benefits to people living in the Nordic region, to the Nordic business sector and to the Nordic countries.
- Pursue an active Arctic policy and strengthen cooperation both between the Arctic states and with the EU to prevent and limit natural and man-made disasters.
- Support efforts to modernise the UN and make it stronger and more effective, and target Norway's efforts and financial support towards the parts of the UN system that deliver good results and whose work is in line with Norwegian priorities.
- Make use of international negotiations to promote Norwegian interests.
- Work actively to provide appropriate assistance to Norwegian citizens and businesses abroad.
- Strengthen efforts to promote human rights, through international forums, development policy and support for civil society development.
- Give priority to efforts to promote civil and political rights, health and education, and women's rights.
- Seek to strengthen international efforts to combat illicit financial flows, tax evasion, the black economy and corruption.

- Support international efforts to promote transparency surrounding capital investments and capital movements between countries and to ensure more effective and fairer taxation of global companies.
- Cooperate with other countries in implementing economic and political sanctions in the event of serious and sustained violations of international law.
- Examine how Norway can contribute to the development of a common European sanctions regime against individuals on grounds of gross human rights violations.
- Cooperate with vulnerable democracies on economic and democratic development, particularly in the Western Balkans and in Europe's neighbouring areas.
- Strengthen international efforts to combat the illicit arms trade, drugs trafficking and human trafficking.
- Strengthen Norway's peace and reconciliation efforts, and contribute to UN peacekeeping operations.
- Work to promote the inclusion of young people and women in peace talks and peacebuilding efforts, particularly in processes where Norway is playing an active role.
- Maintain and strengthen efforts to promote freedom of religion and belief.
- Support the International Criminal Court and work to ensure that more countries accept the Court's jurisdiction.
- Take a balanced approach to the Middle East conflict, actively support the goal of a two-state solution that allows Israel and Palestine to exist side by side within secure and internationally recognised borders, and support democratic development in the Middle East.
- Facilitate increased research and development cooperation, trade, and cultural exchange with Israel, and promote tourism between Norway and Israel. It is the Government's view that a boycott of Israel will not foster dialogue, understanding and peaceful development in the Middle East.
- Clearly condemn all forms of anti-Semitism and counter any form of financing of terrorism, including payments to prisoners convicted of terrorism.
- Maintain Norway's efforts to ensure the continuation of nuclear clean-up programmes in Russia, and work to reduce the environmental threats from the Kola Peninsula.
- Be at the forefront of international efforts to clean the oceans of plastic, and work towards the goal of eliminating all marine litter.
- Use Norway's position, for example as an aid donor, to secure return agreements with more countries, and increase acceptance of the principle that all countries have a duty to readmit their own citizens.
- Establish a funding scheme for Norwegian organisations working in the fields of peace and disarmament.

Europe

The European countries and the EU are Norway's close neighbours, friends and most important trading partners. Access to the internal market under the EEA Agreement ensures predictability for the Norwegian business sector and gives Norwegian companies the opportunity to sell their goods and services. This is vital for ensuring economic growth and welfare in Norway. This is why Norwegian foreign policy must begin in Europe. The Government generally takes a very positive view of binding international cooperation.

The EEA Agreement and Norway's other agreements with the EU form the framework for Norway's relations with Europe. The Government will work to improve the existing arrangements within the framework of the EEA Agreement and will pursue an active European policy aimed at increasing Norwegian influence over decisions that affect Norway's interests.

It is vital to restore confidence in the management of Europe's external border, and the Government will support EU efforts to find good solutions to common challenges relating to migration. The Government is of the view that Norway must contribute to these efforts. The development of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy also benefits NATO as an alliance. The Government takes a positive view of EU defence cooperation and will seek to ensure that third countries are able to participate.

The Government will:

- Participate in the development of common European solutions in the areas of justice and home affairs, migration, and climate change, and promote the implementation of joint climate policy within the framework of the EEA Agreement.
- Safeguard Norwegian interests by participating at an early stage in EU processes and the development of EU policy.
- Safeguard Norwegian interests before, during and after Brexit by maintaining close dialogue with the EU and the UK.
- Actively support the EU's policy to promote the rule of law in Europe.
- Seek to deepen bilateral relations with key European countries.
- Support efforts to restrict the export of social security benefits, for example by working to promote acceptance in the EU of the need to adjust social security benefits in the various countries to take account of purchasing power differences.
- Ensure that the EEA and Norway Grants promote democracy, the rule of law and sustainable economic growth in Europe.
- Participate in formal and informal European forums, particularly those Norway has access to under the EEA Agreement.
- Strengthen coordination of the management of European issues across the government administration, with a view to ensuring that issues relating to Europe are dealt with effectively and to enhancing Norwegian participation in relevant processes.
- Involve the Storting at an early stage in important EEA processes.
- Follow up the Government's proposal to the EU on strengthening efforts to combat work-related crime.

Security policy

Norway's security environment is changing. The situation in our neighbouring areas and in Europe's neighbourhood has become more difficult, and a combination of traditional geopolitics and new, more unconventional challenges is further complicating the situation. Global developments are also affecting us more directly than they did in the past. The Government will give priority to promoting security and stability in Norway's neighbouring areas. We must build our security through cooperation with others, based on our membership of NATO and our close transatlantic relations. The best way to safeguard peace and stability is to promote the broadest possible security policy cooperation.

In the area of disarmament, the main focus is currently on nuclear disarmament verification. The Government is seeking to work with other countries to develop concrete solutions that enhance the capacity of both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states to monitor the destruction of nuclear warheads. The Government's aim is a world without nuclear weapons.

The Government will:

- Give priority to enhancing security and stability in Norway's neighbouring areas in its foreign and security policy.
- Pursue a security and defence policy that helps to ensure that NATO continues to be a strong and credible alliance and enables Norway to remain a predictable, reliable and credible ally.
- Seek membership of the UN Security Council for the period 2021-2022.
- Further strengthen our transatlantic relations and our cooperation with key European allies and partners.
- Further develop Norway's dialogue with the EU on security policy issues, and seek to participate actively in EU security and defence policy forums, while at the same time fulfilling our obligations as a NATO member.
- Maintain a strict, clear, stable and transparent export control regime for all defence-related products that is in line with Norway's international obligations, and ensures predictability for Norwegian manufacturers in both the long and the short term. Assessments of export licence applications must always take into consideration issues relating to human rights and the risk that the product(s) in question will be misused in a conflict situation or used for internal oppression in the recipient country.
- Participate actively in international arenas to build agreement on standard formats and common norms for end-user documentation and re-export certificates.
- Review the Norwegian export control regime (acts, regulations and guidelines) with a view to making it more accessible for exporters.
- Cooperate with allies on intensifying efforts to achieve balanced, mutual, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- Further develop Norway's leading international role in the area of nuclear disarmament verification, with a view to ensuring genuine disarmament and increasing confidence in disarmament agreements.
- Strengthen efforts to enforce the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions and encourage more countries to ratify them. Norway should play an active part in the clearance and destruction of cluster munitions.
- Give priority to efforts to combat new global security threats such as terrorism, organised crime, irregular migration, cyber threats and disinformation activities.

Norwegians abroad

The Government's goal is to minimise red tape and make it as easy as possible for Norwegians to visit or live in other countries, particularly EEA countries, and to return to Norway after a stay abroad.

The Government will:

- Provide assistance to Norwegian citizens and businesses abroad and ensure that consular services are of a high quality.
- Review the customs duties and taxes that Norwegians have to pay when they move back to Norway.
- Continue the work to develop a joint digital ID system for Nordic citizens.
- Simplify the process by which marriages between Norwegians and other EEA citizens are recognised in Norway.
- Maintain support for the Norwegian Church Abroad.