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NORWAY AND EUROPE

To do justice to the title Norway and Europe one would have to go back a couple of thousand years and guide you through our history. Clearly, Norway is part of Europe and our history is part of European history. For the sake of brevity today, I will concentrate on our present quest to join the European Union, why not each and every Norwegian is equally enthusiastic about the idea, and what the Government wants to achieve by membership as regards foreign policy and the future of Europe.

In November this year, we will hold a referendum which will decide the issue. By late November, we may be in a situation where it is clear that Austria, Finland and Sweden will become members. If the Norwegian people then say no, the border between the European Union and Norway will follow our border with Sweden and Finland. Recent public opinion polls show that a majority would vote against membership if we had a referendum today. Support for membership is at present somewhat higher in the three other applicant countries. I am often asked why this is so.

The skepticism in Norway can partly be explained by looking at our history as an independent country. Although Norway is old as a nation, we are relatively young as a fully sovereign nation state. We were ruled by Danish kings from the fourteenth century, and ceded to Sweden as part of the post-Napoleonic reorganization of Europe. We dissolved - without war - what was a union with Sweden in 1905. Five years of occupation during the Second World War further strengthened our collective commitment to stand united behind our sovereignty and independence. The aggressive Soviet post-war policy led us to join NATO as a founding member.

Our quest to join the EEC in 1972 together with the UK, Denmark and Ireland failed largely because Norway is a country that depends to a great extent on its natural resources. The referendum resulted in a no majority. Many people felt that we did not receive sufficient assurance from the EEC that we would be able to retain our traditional fishing rights or maintain our agricultural production. Vast petroleum deposits had recently been discovered on our continental shelf. Many felt uncertain as to whether EC membership would influence on our rights to manage these resources. We felt reasonably economically secure in EFTA and through the free trade agreement we obtained with the EEC, and we felt militarily secure in NATO.

There were several reasons why we applied again in 1992.

As early as 1986, we began to respond more actively to the new challenge of the emerging single market. Norway was already more integrated into the European economy than many of the present EU member states. Our economy would have faced new insecurity if new barriers had been erected between our economy and that of the EC countries. Therefore, the EC and EFTA countries concluded the EEA Agreement in 1992, an agreement which extended the single market to all EFTA countries with the exception of Switzerland.

However, social, economic and political change in Europe, the globalization of the economy, technology and information, and the quiet revolution in the former communist countries meant that we too had to rethink our political and economic relations with the EU. Being part of a single market is not in itself sufficient political tool when we, together with all the other European countries, are facing the challenges of actively creating new jobs, of working more effectively to improve the environment and of pursuing the vision of a broader European political cooperation which had been held hostage by the East-West divide.

All nations, small and large face an opportunity deficit if they try to achieve their ambitions by acting on their own. By way of example, we experienced how any effort by Norway to pursue a national interest rate policy would be shattered within seconds by interest rates decisions made in other European countries.

We made great progress in curbing pollution originating in Norway, but 90 per cent of the rain as acidic as vinegar which pollutes our lakes and forests originates in other countries.

Even security and foreign policy issues were increasingly being dealt with in fora in which we did not participate, in the EU and the WEU.

It was actually the desire to increase our sovereignty that led us to the decision to apply for EU membership. Membership requires us to surrender a small part of that sovereignty, formally speaking. But the purpose is of course to achieve the greater benefits that come from collective action. We have experienced how forces that operate across borders cannot effectively be governed by national political decisions alone.

I shall not dwell on the terms of accession that we agreed with the present member countries. They dealt primarily with the specific situation in Norway and never challenged what is most important about the Maastricht Treaty. We made it clear from the outset that we accept and support the political objectives of the Union. This includes the economic and monetary union as well as the foreign and security policy aspirations.

The most important points in our negotiations included the retention of fishing rights, agriculture under partly Arctic conditions, continued sovereign rights over our petroleum resources and special regional policy needs in a country where 4 million people live in an area the size of

Germany. Oslo is as far north as Anchorage. In the negotiations, we set out to gain acceptance that Norway is not an exception in Europe but part of the diversity that is Europe. We succeeded in this.

I shall now concentrate on foreign and security policy and place Norway in the larger European picture. The new Russia meets the West in the north of Europe. Membership for Finland Sweden and Norway would add only 5 per cent to the population in the European Union but 50 per cent to its territory. It is impossible for me to conceive of Europe discussing its security without taking fully into account the North European perspective, and it is obvious that we all would gain if the Nordic countries were to be present themselves, as equal partners, at such discussions.

I would like to invite you to take an unusual view of Europe, and start, not in Berlin or some other traditional center of foreign policy attention, but at the Norwegian island of Kvitøya which is located at about 80 degrees North and 35 degrees East. From here, it is twice as far to Oslo as to the North Pole. We are further to the East than Kiev and Cairo. From here, we should look south:

To the west is the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, which comprise an area somewhat larger than Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire together. Svalbard is demilitarized under a separate treaty. It is not covered by the accession treaty with the EU, but it is part of the environment where Norway had perhaps its reatest responsibility during the Cold War, to maintain a low level of ension in the High North, where NATO and the Soviet Union met.

Two thousand Russians and about one thousand Norwegians live on Svalbard. Its eastern shores are washed by the Barents Sea, which covers an area larger than California and Texas together. Bordering on the Barents Sea to the east is Novaya Zemlja. It was here, close to our territory, that Krushchev tested his fifty megaton atomic bomb more than thirty years ago, and here we find Russia's only remaining nuclear testing site.

During the Cold War, the Barents Sea was home to important parts of the Soviet fleet of strategic submarines. The home base of the Russian Northern Fleet is still Murmansk, which is close to our border with Russia. That border, about 192 kilometers long, is the only border between a NATO country and Russia. The north-western part of Russia is an important gateway to Western Europe. Russia's principal ports, St. Petersburg, Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk are located in the region, as are some of Russia's most important industries and military bases.

Norway has been at peace with Russia for one thousand years. A hundred years ago trade flourished across the Norwegian-Russian border, peacefully linking the east and west of the Euro-Asian continent.

Our ambition is to restore normality across borders which have separated us in the past. Over the past couple of years, the border has become more

open, allowing people, goods and services, news and cultural influence to flow more freely. Thus our situation reflects the changes in Central Europe and is part of the larger European public order.

Traditionally we Norwegians have deep sympathy for the Russian people. Like all of you here, we are eager to see the democratic reform process in Russia succeed. We have initiated a regional cooperation with Russia and other countries in the High North which is called the Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation. By furthering cooperation in the fields of trade, environmental protection, culture, transport and investment, the initiative aims to promote prosperity and stability in the region.

We see this initiative as part of the general Western ambitions to integrate Russia into binding multilateral cooperation with the stable democratic Europe and to prevent political, economic and social chaos from erupting in our immediate vicinity. We believe that we can best overcome the past in the North, and counter the risk of set-backs if our NATO partners focus more strongly on the political challenges of this region, and if the European Union's responsibilities are extended, through our membership, to the north of Europe. I am pleased that the USA is taking part in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council as an observer, and I believe that the situation in the High North will remain important for the US.

NATO has been a guarantor of peace in this region for more than four decades, but the new challenges require a wider spectrum of political means than NATO alone can provide. This is why we firmly believe that the stability of Europe would be enhanced by the accession of Norway, Sweden and Finland to the European Union. This would mean that Norway's bilateral relations with Russia and Russia's policy towards us part of the relations between the European Union and Russia as well as between NATO and Russia.

We will continue, together with other countries, to improve stability through a wide range of means. In this connection, I would like to mention a rather unique military manoeuvre. The naval exercise "Pomor" was conducted off the coast of Northern Norway in March this year. For the first time ever, and on our initiative, naval and air force units from Norway, Russia, the US, the UK, Canada, the Netherlands and Germany came together to practise peace-keeping and rescue operations.

The exercise was a great success and could serve as a model for subsequent exercises within the framework of Partnership For Peace

Our NATO membership has allowed us to act with confidence in our relations with Russia. Russia will remain the single most important military power in Europe. It still has considerable military assets close to its Nordic neighbours. This military situation is not likely to change in the foreseeable future, but today, like all of you here, we do not view Russia as posing a concrete threat.

We do, however, see a mixture of widespread discontent and uncertainty. The Kola peninsula is the home base for the world's largest concentration of nuclear powered vessels. Approximately 100 operational and 60 retired submarines are located here. Before the year 2000 an additional 30 submarines are scheduled for retirement. Russian naval commanders have voiced fears that decommissioned subs which are in poor condition and manned by unmotivated crews, may sink at dockside and cause an ecological disaster. The military storage facilities for used uranium fuel are already filled to capacity, and so far the fuel has been removed from less than a third of the retired submarines. All categories of nuclear waste, ranging from liquid radioactive waste, to six reactors with used fuel have been dumped in the Kara Sea to the east of Novaya Zemlja. The situation is alarming and may affect a number of allied countries. Due to the sea currents flowing out of the Barents region, Alaska might be just as badly affected as Norway.

Thus the region is facing a major ecological crisis due to the situation in north-west Russia. Emissions of sulfur dioxide from two nickel plants just a few kilometres from the Norwegian border town of Kirkenes are three times the total Norwegian emissions.

The nuclear power plant on the Kola peninsula with its two high-risk reactors is a source of grave concern to the Norwegian people who live in the region. We are pleased that the US is involved in a project to improve the safety of the plant.

The end of the Cold War has enabled the Nordic countries to cooperate more closely on foreign and security policy. For Norway, however, our NATO membership will remain of vital importance and we see no alternative to it. We have never regarded our prospective EU membership as an alternative to our strong ties across the Atlantic, but as a necessary supplement. This is the "dual orientation" in Norway's foreign and security policy. The European and Atlantic dimensions are deeply rooted in our geopolitical and strategic position, our history and our cultural and our democratic heritage.

The Atlantic dimension is supported not only by government policy but also by the fabric which has been woven by people and time between the USA and Norway. Most families in Norway have some kind of personal ties with the USA. One quarter of the Norwegian population immigrated to the USA in the nineteenth century. No other country except Ireland experienced a comparable exodus of its sons and daughters to the United States. I believe this sense of close kinship is also shared widely here in the United States.

Europe is poised to assume greater responsibility for its own security. But I have been impressing on key politicians here in Washington that a continued US presence in Europe is of crucial importance. It is by combining the political resources of Europe and America that we can best contribute to ensuring stability and democracy in a wider European context.

We also wish to join the European Union to assist in the reintegration of the former communist countries into the mainstream of Europe. There are clear limits to what we can do alone and to what EFTA can do, not least if it is reduced to Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Some Norwegian politicians who are critical of EU membership point to the option of building on the CSCE and denounce the European Union as a "club for the rich". The CSCE has important tasks to carry out, but it was never intended as an umbrella for the intensified, wide-ranging European cooperation in the post-Cold War era. Nor is it realistic to assume that it can be adapted to such a mission. The fact is of course that the EU is preparing for its next enlargement to the East and that many of the new democracies are eager to join.

As a member of the Union, Norway would strongly support the inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries. The issue seems not to be whether the Union should concentrate on deepening or on widening. There now seems to be general agreement that enlargement is desirable and that it is not opposed to developing the Union further if its members so wish.

I see a great future for regional cooperation, and I fail to see how this could be at odds with strengthened cooperation between regions. In the European Union, greater emphasis is placed on the principle of subsidiarity, which means that the Union should not deal with issues which best can be dealt with at the national level.

As a member of the European Union Norway will contribute its experience and tradition of international cooperation, and will oppose any tendency towards European introspection.

-We will work to strengthen the Atlantic orientation of the Union.

- We will strengthen the Union's solidarity with the developing world

- We are among the staunchest supporters of the United Nations, and Norway is by far the largest per capita contributors to the UN in relative terms and in absolute terms on par with the UK and France, both of which have populations that are more than ten times as large as ours.

- We have considerable experience of peace-keeping operations. More than 40 000 Norwegians, that is 1 per cent of our population, have worn a UN blue beret. More than 600 Norwegian military and civilian personnel are currently serving under UN command in Bosnia and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The situation there is not only unacceptable in itself but has a direct bearing on European stability and deals with the core values to which we subscribe in common and which constitutes the basic rationale for our engagement.

We have supported NATO's new role in dealing with the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and of course the efforts of the co-chairmen Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg. Both NATO, the US and the European Union have been criticized because the conflict in Yugoslavia drags on. What we experienced at an early time, when the conflict was only opening up was

that there were too many divergent analyses among our countries and too little coordination of positions. To me this situation is a solid ground for pursuing a better coordinated foreign and security policy on the part of the European Union, and to see to it that there is sufficient political coordination between Europe and America.

I see the Union as Europe's modern contribution to the civilization of inter-state relations. Its members will reconcile the reflexes of the sovereign national state with new principles of shared sovereignty and solidarity. This is a future which cannot be confined by a configuration determined by the Cold War. The EU can become the framework for lasting and stable European prosperity and democracy. What kind of vision would it be if we should hold back the prospect of sharing these values from the people in Central and Eastern Europe who for too long were denied these rights and opportunities?

Global progress will depend on Europe's ability to to organize itself and assume its obligations in a world where European languages are spoken in even the most remote corner. A better organized world requires a better organized Europe.