

Norway-Canada High North Dialogue, Ottawa, 8 February 2011.

Presentation by **Odd Gunnar Skagestad**, Deputy Director General, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Norway's Integrated Ocean Management Plans (IOM)

- **Back in 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development – also known as the Brundtland Commission – submitted a report called “Our Common Future”. This document introduced the term “Sustainable Development”, defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.**
- **The term “Sustainable Development” has become a mantra in world politics – it has gained almost universal acceptance as the guiding principle for the management of natural resources.**
- **The sustainable development agenda includes the twin concepts of environment conservation and resource management – these are actually two aspects of the same issue.**
- **Renewable resources include marine living resources. Modern management principles include using the best scientific advice and incorporate the ecosystems approach. Sustainable use is the main objective of Norwegian fisheries management policies. Thus, for Norway “management of marine living resources” means sustainable management of fisheries in the broad sense – including not only catching fish but also the harvesting of crustaceans (shrimps etc.) and marine mammals (whales and seals).**
- **Long-term conservation and sustainable use based on scientific knowledge and an ecosystem-based approach are key principles of management of natural resources globally. They apply equally to any geographical region or sub-region of the oceans of the world, including the Arctic. Thus, there is nothing unique or special about the Arctic that would call for a substantially different or novel approach to dealing with the issue of sustainable management of marine living resources in the Arctic.**
- **There are, however, other considerations – including environmental issues - that are important to take into account, and which mutually affect resource management tasks and challenges – especially with regard to the coastal waters and the high seas of the High North.**

- **The main part of European Arctic waters – the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea – contains vast natural resources, - renewable and non-renewable.**
- **These waters contain some of the world’s largest and most valuable fish stocks, including the Northeast Arctic cod, which are also among the best-managed fish stocks in the world.**
- **The Arctic region is also the world’s largest unexplored prospective area for petroleum, with estimates indicating that large volumes of oil and gas remain to be found in the area – especially offshore.**
- **In addition, extensive maritime transport – current and prospective – through the important shipping lanes of this region, contributes to highlighting the environmental challenges which we are faced with in the High North.**
- **As a country highly dependent on the sustainable use of the oceans, Norway has for a number of years been working on developing and adopting integrated management plans for our coastal and ocean areas, as a tool for handling such tasks and tackling such challenges.**
- **The purpose of this endeavour has been – and is – to provide clear, predictable and operational frameworks for the existing and new activities – including the exploitation of the resources and the conservation of the environment – in these marine areas.**
- **The aim is furthermore to facilitate long-term and responsible value creation based on the sustainable use of the resources in these ocean areas, while at the same time safeguarding the environment and preserving the structures and productivity of their ecosystems.**
- **As a first step, the Norwegian government in 2006 adopted an integrated management plan for the Barents Sea and the ocean areas off the Lofoten archipelago. The plan has a time horizon until 2020, and will be subject to periodic reviews – the first of which is due to be completed in a few weeks’ time.**
- **We have subsequently (in 2009) adopted a corresponding management plan for the Norwegian Sea, and we are now in the process of developing a plan along the same pattern for the North Sea.**

- **The integrated management plans envisage systematic supervision of the ocean environment and measures for managing ocean resources, based on the ecosystem approach.**
- **We believe our system for integrated ocean management is also of interest to other Arctic states. I would therefore like to point out some of the main features that characterize this system and contribute to the uniqueness of our particular approach. These are:**
 - **In addition to the sector-oriented planning and management, we have adopted a cross-sectorial perspective. Thus, our management plans shall be a knowledge-based tool for facilitating value-creation as well as for safeguarding the environment. The plans shall identify measures which enable the authorities to reconcile the need for economic activity within petroleum industry, fisheries and maritime transport with the need to protect the arctic marine environment. The keyword is *co-existence* within the parameters of *sustainable development*.**
 - **In developing the management plans, relevant research institutions, government agencies and management bodies have jointly contributed to the preparation of a common knowledge base for the subsequent political decisions. This has facilitated and strengthened the overall quality of the work.**
 - **The processes leading up to the eventual adoption of the management plans have been accompanied with a substantial amount of popular consultation (“stakeholder participation”), including open hearings. This is a time-consuming exercise, but it is necessary to ensure that all legitimate voices are heard, so that the plans will be as democratically-based as possible.**
 - **As an additional bonus of positive “spin-off” from this open and inclusive approach, the very processes of developing the management plans have been a most useful educational experience for everyone involved, enhancing the general level of knowledge in the public debate.**
 - **It should furthermore be noted that our integrated management plans do not introduce any form of “micro-management”, such as concrete management decisions or new management bodies to replace existing structures where those are already in place and well-functioning. The plans are designed to provide an operational framework including general guidelines and necessary coordination, not to make specific implementary decisions. Existing, well-functioning management frameworks continue.**

- **Finally, as I mentioned briefly earlier in my intervention, our management plans are subject to mandatory periodic reviews. The reason for this is that the plans should be flexible enough to be adjusted or, as the case might be, revised, taking into account new knowledge and new experience and lessons learned *en route*. This gives each of the plans the extra dimension of being a *dynamic process*, and not just a “plan” in the narrow, rigid or static sense.**
- **The Norwegian Integrated Ocean Management Plans are *national* plans – i.e. they have a geographical scope confined to waters subject to Norwegian jurisdiction. Nevertheless, some of the key issues currently confronting us in the High North (including, above all, environment conservation and resource management issues) have transboundary aspects, and call for international or regional cooperation, as well as an integrated approach.**
- **Thus, even though the eastern (Russian) part of the Barents Sea is not part of the area comprised by our management plan, it has ramifications with regard to our relations with Russia. Therefore, in the process of developing our plan for the Barents Sea, we worked actively to engage Russia in a constructive dialogue. This policy has yielded positive results, such as the cooperation taking place in the Marine Environment Group under the auspices of the Norwegian-Russian Joint Commission on the Environment. We have also conducted constructive dialogues with other neighbours, including close cooperation with the EU – esp. with regard to the development of the EU’s Ocean Strategy Directive (which was adopted in 2009).**
- **In view of the transboundary aspects of the issues confronting us in the High North, we believe that our experience with integrated ocean management plans can provide a fruitful input to discussing these issues in a bilateral as well as in a regional setting. We do not pretend to have the final cut-and-dried answers to all the questions and challenges that these issues entail. We do, however, believe in the virtue of sharing our own experiences with others – friends and neighbours, and thus hope to be able to make a difference.**