

**Utenriksminister Eriksen Søreides innlegg på Utrikespolitiska institutet (UI),
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank Director Mats Karlsson and Utrikespolitiska institutet for giving me the opportunity to speak on a topic that is of huge importance to Norway, the Nordic countries and the planet as a whole.

I would also like to thank Sweden and my good colleague Margot Wallström for chairing the regional cooperation of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) in such an excellent way.

For Norway, chairing the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2017, a main initiative was to ensure clean and healthy oceans and to develop blue and sustainable economy.

I am pleased to see that the current Swedish chair is continuing the work.

The sea runs like a blue thread through Scandinavian history.

The Barents Sea, the Baltic Sea, Bay of Bothnia, Kattegat and the North Sea have been sources of food and energy, strategic protection and our gateway to the world.

They are, and have always been, among our most important strategic interests. The Norwegian oceans are almost seven times larger than our land territory.

In our part of the world, having lived from and for the oceans for centuries, we know that our future prosperity and stability depend on our ability to manage the oceans in a sustainable way.

By 2050, there will be close to 10 billion people on the planet. 10 billion people will need more food, more energy and more means of transport and travel.

To meet our basic needs in the future, we need sustainable ocean management today.

The world has everything to gain from keeping the oceans productive and healthy.

The oceans are unique ecosystems. To protect them we need more and closer international cooperation.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the international framework.

Respect for the multilateral system and international rules and conventions is essential.

Clear rules are necessary to ensure a level playing field and equal opportunities.

Experience has shown that respect for the Law of the Sea benefits both small countries, like us in the Nordic-Baltic region, and global superpowers.

To maximise the effect we must all work for full implementation of the Convention and other global commitments.

The maritime domain is once again increasingly in focus, military strategically and financially, whether you are talking about the North Atlantic, the South China Sea or the Indian Ocean.

The maritime domain's rise in military prominence is the reason for our initiative and engagement in NATO the past four years to revitalize the alliance's maritime posture and strategies, and to renew the command structure.

And financially, the oceans are the highways of global markets. Over 90% of the world's trade is carried by sea.

Billions of terabytes of data follow the same routes through the intercontinental cables that are so critical to the internet.

It should therefore come as no surprise, that maritime security has again become an area of concern and an avenue for cooperation.

Oceans are also essential for security and defence in the classical sense - as areas of power projection for rising powers, as lifelines between allies, as areas of major strategic importance, as centers of great technological advances.

For Europe, maintaining the sea lines across the Atlantic is a matter of vital importance.

Across the globe, countries are fielding new and advanced capabilities at sea: submarines, autonomous under water vehicles and missile systems. All of these were prominent features in my four years as Defence Minister.

The increasing level of activity and sophistication can affect deterrence and defence. Conflicts may escalate in new and unpredictable ways. The risk of misunderstandings is always present.

That is why there is need for close cooperation between allies and trusted partners to maintain situational awareness.

I am glad to see the growing maritime cooperation between countries in and around the Baltic Sea in recent years.

As Arctic nations, the Nordic countries have a front row view of increasingly rapid and dramatic effects of climatic changes.

Today, global teamwork is more important than ever. If you combine the negative effect of pollution and waste, and add on the rapid melting of the ice cap - Our oceans are in trouble.

Full and swift implementation of the Paris Agreement is of crucial importance for the oceans - and for us.

The SDGs, and particularly SDG 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, are our common guidelines.

Meeting the SDG targets will only be possible if we manage the oceans in a sustainable way.

The UN Oceans Conference last year was a significant milestone. I want to thank the Swedish government for the important effort co-hosting the conference with Fiji.

It was the first time the United Nations spearheaded a global conference exclusively focusing on the health of the oceans.

This will help pave the way for a stronger focus on sustainable oceans in the UN in the years to come.

Last year Norway presented both a strategy for ensuring sustainable growth in our ocean industries and a white paper on the place of the oceans in Norway's foreign and development policy.

We are now putting our policies into practice.

The white paper is the first of its kind, and we pay specific attention to three areas:

1. Promoting the sustainable use of ocean resources,
2. ensuring that oceans are clean and healthy, and
3. strengthening the role of the blue economy in our development cooperation

Today, more than two thirds of Norway's export revenues come from coastal and ocean based activities – fisheries, aquaculture, shipping and energy production.

We rely on integrated management plans for marine areas. The system's cross-sectoral approach is especially important.

Our ocean management plans bring together all relevant parts of public administration, research and development, and not least the ocean and coast based industries.

In our view, the Norwegian experience is relevant for developing a global sustainable blue economy.

Responsible ocean management ensures sustainable harvesting and food production as well as employment, growth and welfare for generations to come.

Technological and scientific advancements are gradually helping us uncovering the secrets, and the opportunities, of the sea and seabed.

There is no doubt that we are not yet aware of the full potential the ocean holds.

We know that there is not necessarily a conflict between growth and sustainable development. Striking the right balance between protection and production is possible.

Experience shows that we can harvest the sea without reducing their value.

For decades, not to say centuries, we have made a living from sustainably harvesting our natural resources.

Strictly observing and enforcing environmental standards, has made it possible for ocean-based industries and a healthy marine environment to co-exist.

Norway's management of living marine resources and shared fish stocks is based on scientific knowledge, and managed in accordance with bilateral and regional agreements.

The cooperation in the Arctic Council, the Barents cooperation, The Baltic Sea cooperation, and EU's Northern dimension are all examples of successful cooperation that strikes the balance between sustainable use and protection of ocean resources.

Cooperation matters and has real impact. Let me use the Barents cod stock as an example.

Norwegian and Russian scientists do joint research on fish management, and knowledge and advice is passed on to decision makers in respective countries.

Today, Norway and Russia successfully manage the world's largest cod stock.

In 1989 the Arctic cod stock was at a historically low level. Today the cod stock has multiplied by ten. The economic value is estimated to around 2 billion dollars annually.

Norway's well managed offshore production lives side by side by some of the healthiest wild fisheries in the world. Globally, the Norwegian aquaculture industry provides 36 million meals every day.

An increasing number of companies recognize the great opportunities offered by well-managed oceans.

They are working hard to improve the environmental performance of existing ocean industries and develop new industries with less environmental footprint.

In order to encourage and inspire the ocean industries to participate actively in efforts to reach the SDGs, Norway recently became the main sponsoring country of the UN Global Compact's Action Platform for Sustainable Ocean Business.

It is our responsibility to pass on healthy oceans to future generations.

Limiting the impact of global warming and stopping the flows of waste into the sea are acute and global concerns.

Plastic waste is a particular concern because of its sheer volume and the fact that it does not disappear.

Growth in the global use of plastic-intensive consumer goods is projected to increase significantly over the next ten years, especially in markets where waste-management systems are only just emerging.

In December last year the third session of the UN Environment Assembly adopted a resolution, proposed by Norway, with the aim to stop the flow of waste and microplastics into the ocean.

A staggering 12 million tonnes of plastic end up in the ocean – every year. This cannot continue. This year we will launch a programme to combat waste and plastics in the oceans in developing countries, with a budget of around 150 million kroner, or about 15 million dollars.

A zero vision for plastics in the ocean is ambitious, but if we join forces and commit to the necessary global teamwork – we can make substantial progress.

If based on responsible resource management there is no reason why the blue economy cannot become a driver of growth in developing countries.

Norway is strengthening our efforts to share knowledge, technology and sustainable management strategies with developing economies.

Last year we launched a new, state of the art, research vessel, Dr. Fridjof Nansen, which will conduct scientific work with and for developing countries in many years to come.

According to the World Bank, the fisheries sector is losing a staggering 83 billion USD each year, largely because of overfishing. Much of these wasted opportunities hits small island states and developing nations the hardest.

Illegal fishing can ravage healthy fish stocks and undermine the economy.

Sustainable fish and seafood are healthy foods for a rapidly growing global population.

We want to give fish and seafood the position it deserves in food security.

Prime Minister Solberg has taken the initiative to establish the international High-level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy.

She will be leading the panel herself, and has reached out to Heads of Governments from several coastal states across the world.

The panel will cooperate closely with the UN and other international initiatives, such as Friends of Ocean Action, where Sweden has a prominent role.

Representatives of ocean industries and civil society will give advice and input, and a group of experts will provide scientific reports.

The overall objective is to increase global awareness of how responsible ocean management can help us to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The final report will be presented in 2020.

A milestone will be the Our Ocean Conference in Oslo in October next year.

Striking the balance between sustainable use and a healthy ocean environment as a precondition for increased economic growth, will be key agenda points

Our oceans flow into each other. In other words, there is really only one ocean.

Sustainable ocean management is the perfect example of why international cooperation matters and why global teamwork is needed.

If one country fails to stop waste and plastic going into the sea, we all suffer. Irresponsible management of fish stocks in one country can have devastating effects on the global food chain.

Norway and Sweden share the objective of making healthy and productive oceans a priority, bilaterally, regionally and globally.

In a time of global uncertainty - where we many times see less cooperation when what we need is more cooperation – we must continue to build the momentum for international cooperation on responsible ocean management.

Thank you.