

## Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting, Kiruna, 15 May 2013

### National statement by Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide

*“Check against delivery”*

Distinguished colleagues,  
Representatives,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Carl, let me start by **thanking Sweden for its chairmanship of the Council** and congratulate you on the results of another two years of successful Arctic cooperation, which **mark the end of six years of Nordic chairmanship**.

In this period we have agreed on a **binding search and rescue agreement**. And today we sign the **new instrument on Arctic marine oil pollution preparedness and response**. Through this agreement, we will improve our ability to cooperate on responding to any oil spills in the Arctic Ocean. The agreement demonstrates that we, the Arctic states, are shouldering our responsibility.

We have also succeeded in **strengthening the Arctic Council** by establishing a **permanent secretariat in Tromsø**.

I would also like to **welcome the new Canadian chairmanship** under the able leadership of Leona.

The great interest that non-Arctic states are taking in the forthcoming expansion of the Arctic Council's group of **observers** is a tribute to the good work we have done together. I think it is very important to welcome the new observers. Firstly, to appreciate their interest in working with us on the basis of the principles that we have agreed to, which include respecting the environment, the inclusion of all the permanent representatives and participants, and the need to strike a balance between old and new livelihoods, and between resource management and environmental concerns; and also as a reminder to the new observers that there is no such thing as a free lunch. By becoming an observer you also sign up to the principles embodied in this organisation, and to work with us to make these a reality.

The principle that every single state neighbouring and bordering the Arctic Ocean agrees on the **United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** is important for us. But it also sends an important signal to the rest of the world.

I would also like to emphasise that we have a number of **important documents on the table about the environment and climate change** in our region. I would particularly like to draw attention to the documentation we have provided on **Arctic Ocean acidification**, on the challenging nature of **Arctic biodiversity** and on the damage that **short-lived climate forcers** (such as black carbon and methane) can do to the environment.

The message here is that we can no longer just say that global warming is a global phenomenon. It is happening here. On top of that, there are **things we can do – and actually have to do – here in this region in order to reduce the damage to the environment.**

For that reason, I very much welcome the focus of the incoming Canadian chairmanship, on **grasping opportunities** but also taking due **consideration of the environment and livelihoods.**

As I said, it is very important for this organisation that we have the permanent participation of **indigenous people** and that they are with us here at the table. And in accordance with the tradition of Norwegian participation at these meetings, I will now hand over to the **President of the Sami Parliament**, Mr Egil Olli, who will speak for the remaining minutes.

Thank you.