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**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway**

**Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide**

**At the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting**

**May 7, 2019**

**Lappi Arena**

**Rovaniemi, Finland**

Dear colleagues,

The fact that the Arctic is a region characterized by peace, stability and international cooperation is not a coincidence. It is a result of political choices.

Choices made by every country around this table. Choices that help us work together based on common interests and respect for international law.

This is something we have worked hard to achieve – and it is something we will work hard to maintain.

The fact that all eight Foreign Ministers are here today is a testimony to the importance we all attach to the Arctic Council.

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We also know that the Arctic is far more than a remote and icy place. The Norwegian Arctic is home to a tenth of our population.

In cities throughout the Arctic – in Rovaniemi, Arkhangelsk, Kotzebue and Nuuk - people live their lives, raise their families and run businesses.

The Arctic Council is instrumental in finding common solutions to the regional challenges we are all facing.

One of the reasons for the Arctic Council's success is the fact that it gathers everyone concerned about life in the Arctic, including indigenous peoples.

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Since its inception in 1996, the Arctic Council has avoided divisive issues.

Shared perspectives on environmental protection and scientific cooperation have unified us in our commitment to a well-functioning cooperation.

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In order for us to address the challenges facing the region we need the best available scientific knowledge to guide our efforts.

Throughout its history, the Council has been instrumental in increasing our knowledge of the Arctic region.

Under Finland's leadership, the Council has lived up to its legacy in developing new knowledge on the challenges facing the Arctic.

This includes the pressing issue of climate change and the state of the Arctic oceans.

We welcome the Council's increasing focus on the Arctic oceans, and appreciate the Council's work on marine litter and ocean acidification.

We would like the Council to continue strengthening its focus on marine issues and welcome the new marine mechanism that has been established to promote this work.

We would also like to acknowledge the new MoU with the Arctic Economic Council and welcome increased attention to sustainable economic development in general and the blue economy in particular.

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The Arctic Council contributes in a major way to continued stability and development in the Arctic.

A single country cannot solve the challenges facing the Arctic alone. Norway continues to believe in effective multilateral cooperation as the best way forward.

Thank you for your attention.

According to tradition I will now give the floor to Silje Karine Muotka, who is member of the Executive Council of the Sami Parliament in Norway.