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Goals in National Ocean Strategies”
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Thank you for inviting me to speak today.

As you know, Norway is an ocean and coastal nation. More than 80 % of Norway’s population lives less than 20 kilometers from the coast.

We depend on the ocean for growth, income, employment, and for our standard of living and our level of social welfare.

We need the ocean. But most importantly – the world needs the oceans. Now and in the future. So how do we go about it?

Firstly, I will give you some facts on how important the ocean is for Norway. Secondly, give you some examples of our efforts to simultaneously address socio-economic and sustainability concerns. Thirdly, I’ll talk about global cooperation.

So – first issue. A wide variety of industries make up the Norwegian blue economy.

The offshore petroleum sector is our largest industry measured in terms of value creation, export value and employment.

But Norway is also increasingly exploiting offshore renewable energy sources including wind, tidal power, wave power and ocean thermal energy conversion. And we often use technology developed in the petroleum sector in these innovations.

Our maritime industry is highly international. Ship owners, shipyards and maritime equipment and service providers provides products such as ships, drilling rigs and other advanced equipment and services worldwide.

Norway is the world's sixth-largest shipping nation when ranked by value. Our shipping fleet is modern and specialized in technologically advanced, capital-intensive segments.

The Norwegian seafood industry has seen strong growth. We produce the equivalent of 35 million seafood meals per day. Go to any Woolies or Pick and Pay store around here and you will of course find Norwegian salmon. Fisheries account for an important part of the wealth Norway derives from the sea.

Norway also profits from the blue economy in terms of coastal and ocean-related tourism, which includes cruise ship travel and diverse types of nature-based and adventure tourism.

We foresee that the exploitation of seabed minerals may become an important industry for Norway. Also, the bio-economy is providing new opportunities for the exploitation of renewable marine resources. And the rich marine biodiversity could be used as a basis for developing new products - from pharmaceuticals to process industries, food, animal feed and cosmetics.

So, as you can see, Norway has benefited, and is benefitting, enormously from the blue economy. But a cornerstone in our policies are efforts to do it in a sustainable way.

Our national ocean strategy emphasizes sustainability and the environment. We need growth in the oceans economy, but it must be for a green future. We are pursuing "blue growth for a green future".

Which brings me to my second point. What can we do to use the resources in a sustainable way and promote a green future?

I will give you a couple of examples.

How to balance petroleum extraction and protection of fisheries? An important mechanism for us is “marine spatial planning”. A planning process by which all stakeholders are heard and taken into consideration when plans are made for the use of ocean space – voices from fisheries, environment, petroleum, local communities, research - you name it.

Through the Norwegian maritime regulatory framework, we actively seek to stimulate green growth for our maritime industry. Regulations prioritize the use of environmental technology solutions and more environmentally friendly fuel for vessels. Norway is currently leading in the development and use of gas-powered vessels and battery powered ferries, among other things.

Our government has implemented a tax and fee regime which strengthens environmentally short sea shipping. Also, energy efficiency requirements have been introduced for new vessel builds (design requirements).

These green changes actually give the Norwegian maritime industry a competitive edge and lead to a considerable reduction in harmful emissions.

But, as we all should know by now - our oceans are under threat. These threats include overfishing, illegal fishing, environmental toxins, plastic waste and loss of biodiversity. We see sea level rises, ocean acidification and possible shifts in the distribution of important fish stocks.

These threats are serious not simply because of the harm done to the environment. They are also a direct threat to economic growth and people’s income and employment.

Also, as the economic importance of the seas increase, conflicts about how to manage resources, and who should benefit may be accentuated. This may exacerbate global and regional security threats and could worsen the security situation in fragile countries and regions.

We will reach 9,7 billion people in 2050. We must look to the oceans to find solutions to many future challenges.

Which brings me to my third and final point.

We will have to cooperate closely at the international level if we are to be able to exploit the potential of the oceans to the full.

The potential gains are huge. For example, if we manage our oceans in an integrated and sustainable manner, renewable resources like fish can be harvested forever. Value creation is maximized by using the oceans in a sustainable manner. We can only do this if we maintain a sound environment.

How do we do this? No nation can solve ocean-related problems alone. Good cooperation mechanisms are needed at both a global and regional level. The UN is the most important forum for developing international norms, and to a large extent it determines the overall framework for ocean-based activities. Respect for the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, effective international organizations and secure seas and oceans are fundamental components in this regard.

The IMO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme also have key roles to play.

The AU's 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy and the Lome Charter provide important frameworks, as do regional cooperation and other agreements in Africa.

The world needs countries that are willing to actively use these fora. Countries that are willing to take the lead in the work to protect the oceans and ensure that resources are used sustainably.

Norway wants to be one of those countries.

We want to be at the forefront of international efforts to promote sustainable use and value creation, to ensure that we have clean and healthy oceans and to support the blue economy in developing countries.

In maritime transport, we would like to see better implementation of global shipping rules, more environmentally friendly shipping, measures to combat piracy, maritime security, and implementation of the mandatory Polar Code for ships operating in polar waters.

Together, we must work to improve the sustainable management of living marine resources, based on the best based scientific evidence and an ecosystem approach.

We need to work together to increase knowledge about marine ecosystems. There is a major global need for more ocean knowledge and more sharing of experience and expertise. Enormous areas of the seabed have yet to be explored or properly mapped, and coastal area ecosystems are not fully understood.

Although fish stocks in Norwegian sea areas are harvested at sustainable levels, the situation on a global scale is far less positive. According to FAO, around 31% of the world's commercially important fish stocks are over fished. International cooperation is imperative for solving this problem.

We need to develop effective and responsible fisheries management systems. We work closely with our neighbours to manage our common fish resources. We need to know how to establish sound legal frameworks and management regimes and security for private investments.

These are issues that Norway will be following up in relevant multilateral fora, and also bilaterally and regionally.

In October 2019, Norway will be the host country of the sixth Our Ocean conference. These conferences have become important international arenas for conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources.

Furthermore, our Prime Minister has recently taken the initiative to form an international High-Level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy. The Panel will highlight the relationship between clean and healthy oceans, sustainable use of ocean resources and economic growth and development. Policy choices needed to ensure a sustainable ocean economy will be an important part of the work. A report on this will be presented in 2020.

We currently have several collaborative efforts with institutions in South Africa and the region.

I could name the newly established Fisheries Law Enforcement Academy at the Nelson Mandela University, the new research collaboration on blue economy issues called SANOCAN between the National Research Foundation and the Norwegian Research Council, our long-time support for the Benguela Current Convention and also a new (pre-project) study to combat marine waste carried out by the Sustainable Seas Trust / African Marine Waste Network.

To sum up: Norway could be considered a “poster child” for how a country can benefit from the blue economy. The global potential for sustainably utilizing the world’s oceans is enormous. The only way to succeed is by working together.