**Climate Change and Future Scenarios**

**in the Arctic Region**

**ROUND TABLE**

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* **The Arctic remains the Norwegian government’s main foreign policy priority.**
* While the various parts of the Arctic have a lot in common, there are also great differences across the region.
* This is one of the most important things to keep in mind when talking about the Arctic: It is **not a homogenous region**.
* For instance, the Arctic is home to ten percent of Norway’s population. I was born and raised north of the Arctic Circle. In the summertime the sun never set, in the wintertime it was dark during the day – but at night we were entertained by the spectacular Northern Lights. It never felt exotic to me – it was as normal as the canals of Venezia are to someone who was born here.
* Today we see **increasing interest from non-Arctic countries** who want to take part in the development of the Arctic region. We should keep in mind that there is a **high degree of consensus** in the Arctic.
* The **Arctic Council** is the most important arena for discussing the common challenges. The council has been strengthened through the establishment of a permanent secretariat in Tromsø, Norway.
* The **Arctic is a peaceful region at the top of the world**, and there is no “Race for the Arctic”.
* **There is, however, an increased interest for the Arctic, including here in Italy.**
* We are of course aware that Italy has a long history in the Arctic:
* In 1926, Umberto Nobile flew over the North Pole together with the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. Two years later, Nobile again flew over the North Pole, however the airship crashed on the return. Amundsen joined the rescue effort, and died in the effort of finding Nobile.
* The Italian oil company ENI has been operating in Norway for many years.
* The Italian research council CNR is present at Svalbard, running the appropriately named Amundsen-Nobile climate change tower.
* Fincantieri is constructing the new Norwegian polar research vessel Crown Prince Haakon, which is set to be the most advanced polar research vessel in the world.
* I mention this to illustrate that to Norway, Italy is a natural observer in the Arctic Council.
* It’s important that the observer states – like Italy – contribute to this work as we face both opportunities and challenges in the Arctic.
* The defining challenge in the Arctic is **climate change**.
* It **increases global warming**, **accelerates sea level rise** and could **change weather patterns** throughout the northern hemisphere.
* An average global temperature rise of two degrees Celsius means a temperature rise of four degrees in the Arctic.
* **It is in the Arctic that we will see the physical changes first. Changes that will have serious consequences for the whole world.**
* Research in the polar regions is crucial for understanding changes that are taking place in other parts of the world.
* On the one hand, **global warming is alarming**. On the other hand, the melting ice cap is **opening up new commercial opportunities**.
* An ice-free Arctic could **shorten distances** between the North Atlantic and East Asia.
* The main increase in traffic is expected to be to and from **petroleum** activities in Arctic waters, rather than in transit traffic.
* Another commercial opportunity arising from the thawing Arctic is the increased access to new energy resources.
* Norwayseeks to **strike a balance between different interests** in the sea areas and at the same time **safeguard the environment**.
* Due to the Gulf Stream, our Arctic Areas have always been accessible for **petroleum activities**. We have had oil and gas activities in the Arctic since the early 1980s.
* At the same time, we have been able to further develop our **fish resources**.
* With our **high environmental standards**, we have developed a successful petroleum industry that at the same time allows for **coexistence** with sustainable fisheries.
* One example: In 1989 the **Northeast Arcticcod stock (Merluzzo)** was at an all-time low. Today it is estimated to be **ten times larger** than it was 25 years ago.
* This happened through the close and constructive **fisheries cooperation between Russia and Norway**.
* This is an example of how **different industries, like the petroleum industry and fisheries, can coexist and thrive together**.
* In the Arctic we need to **go forward gradually** – step by step – based on the **highest environmental and safety standards**.
* Common to our approach in all of these areas – climate change, new sailing routes, energy, and resource management – **is the need for responsible action based on knowledge.**
* Research and science will be essential in developing solutions for the Arctic in the future. Developing these solutions is in **our common interest**.
* It is **our responsibility**. Not only the responsibility of the Arctic states, but for all who claim a stake in the developments in the Arctic.
* We will continue our collaboration in the Arctic with other Arctic states, as well as with other states, like Italy.