

Check against delivery

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Chair of the Storting's Delegation for Arctic Parliamentary Cooperation, and  
Chair of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

**10 years Anniversary Seminar UiN and MGIMO**

**13 January 2015**

Mr. Chair, dear guests and friends,

First of all – let me extend my warmest congratulations to the University of Nordland and the MGIMO University for 10 years of important and successful cooperation.

I would also like to convey a special welcome to students and former participants in the Norwegian-Russian study program. Your active presence and participation is the reason why we are all here. The contribution from each of you in the study program is one small, but important, part of the cooperation between Norway and Russia.

10 years of cooperation is an excellent reason to meet, celebrate and discuss important areas of our cooperation. As all jubilees, it provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the cooperation so far, especially where we have been successful. A jubilee is also an opportunity to look ahead, reflect on the experiences, and give guidance to the future cooperation.

As Chair of the Norwegian Parliament's Arctic Parliamentary delegation, as well as leader of the International Arctic Parliamentary cooperation, I am pleased to meet you here today, together with such a distinguished and competent group of people.

The anniversary we celebrate today is standing on the shoulders of hundreds of years of cooperation between Russia and Norway. Over a thousand years ago, the Vikings travelled east and made close ties with the local people. Not all the visits from the Scandinavian Vikings could be characterized as friendly, but close contacts and alliances were made, and trade connections were established.

In the North, the Pomor trade between our countries was important for centuries, and just a few months ago we celebrated the Red Army's liberation of Finnmark in 1944 from Nazi Germany with the Norwegian King Harald the Fifth and Foreign Minister Lavrov present.

Dear friends,

I was fortunate to be able to welcome a group of students from MGIMO also last year to Bodø. Since then, the events in Ukraine have put serious constraints on relations between Russia and its neighbouring countries in the west, both economically and politically. Norway, along with its partner countries in the EU and NATO, have been unanimous in condemning the Russian intervention in Crimea and the ongoing actions in Eastern Ukraine.

But despite the worsened political climate, I believe it is important to maintain our people to people contact. The historical strong ties between Norway and Russia are built precisely on our peoples contact with each other. The cooperation between the University of Nordland and the MGIMO University is an excellent example of this. An open dialogue on research, innovation and how to solve our common challenges is a much better recipe than to distrust and undermine each other.

From a Norwegian point of view, Russia has always been and will always be a key partner in the Arctic cooperation. We had a constructive meeting of Arctic parliamentarians in Whitehorse in Canada last September, and the work in the Arctic Council between the governments is continuing towards the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Canada in April later this year.

The Arctic parliamentarians, with members representing the parliaments in Russia, Canada, the US, the five Nordic countries and the European Parliament, have always been promoting student exchange. We participated in the creation of the University of the Arctic. Next week I will meet with students from all Arctic countries in Tromsø as well as with leaders and rectors from different universities. Student exchange is in my view an important factor for increasing knowledge, cultural understanding and contacts between our countries. Student exchange is important because it brings young people together across national borders.

At the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Whitehorse last September, we adopted a conference statement which, among other

issues, addresses student exchange, the importance of knowledge and capacity building, and encourages the linking of education, science and business.

The environmental cooperation between the Arctic countries has been and is the basis for the cooperation in the Arctic Council. Knowledge is the key to sustainable development. The use and development of traditional and conventional knowledge is vital for the people living in the Arctic to build resilient communities and capitalize on the opportunities that come with greater economic activity.

We need to find ways to further stimulate Arctic student exchange, continue to learn from each other and together promote prosperous development in our countries. We propose to establish a Circumpolar Mobility Program where the universities cooperate closely with the business sector, and the local, regional, and federal governments.

To improve cooperation between academia and the business sector, the Arctic parliamentary cooperation has proposed to the Arctic Council to initiate a framework mentorship and mobility program. One possibility is to establish such a program within a specific sector – for instance energy.

Dear friends,

There is global attention on how the resources in the Arctic might be developed in a sustainable manner. As parliamentarians, we have the will to continue our engagement in and contribution to this important debate.

However, we also believe it is time to address Arctic innovation beyond the

development of natural resources. What will the people living in the Arctic live off in addition to its rich resources? How do we stimulate innovation in the Arctic which addresses the needs of future Arctic societies?

Many of the challenges and opportunities facing the peoples of the Arctic are similar. This is why we call for broader cooperation between the Arctic states to enable local residents to make use of new opportunities in the Arctic. Innovation in the Arctic must be an area of Arctic cooperation with a system that links the science community, the business sector and political society with the local populations. We propose to establish an Arctic innovation system which links the scientific community, the business sector, political society and local populations.

I believe the previous mentioned Arctic mentorship and mobility program could be instrumental in getting such an idea into work, for instance with regards to energy. That could support the development of renewable energy suitable for the Arctic Region and drastically reduce black carbon emissions in the region. It would promote new technological innovation and research that supports sustainable energy generation, promote pilot projects in the Arctic for affordable electricity production and heating, create efficient waste disposal and reduce emissions in order to establish self-supporting energy production for Arctic communities.

Dear friends,

Russia and Norway are in many ways very different countries, but there are similarities. One striking similarity between Norway and Russia is how both of our countries have resource based economies, getting much of our income

from oil, gas and fisheries. Also in both countries many of these resources are in the North. We have successfully cooperated in managing joint fish resources in the Barents Sea for many years. Today both of our countries are feeling the dramatic fall in the price of oil in our national economies.

But we are most of all neighbors which will continue to cooperate, discuss and live next to each other also in the future. Once again, congratulation with the 10 years anniversary. I look forward to the next 10 and many more.

Thank you for your attention.