

Baltic Sea Action Summit.
Intervention by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, Norway

Your Majesty, Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,
I am delighted to be here at this important summit.

Today's summit reaffirms our strong traditional relationship in the region. It illustrates the potential for economic cooperation and new partnerships. And it demonstrates that now more than ever we *must* and we *can* work together to solve our common challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last 20 years the Baltic Sea region has seen a remarkable transformation. Economies have been opened up and modernised. Democratic institutions have been built. For Norway it has been a priority to contribute to the economic, social and democratic development in the region. Through direct investments by Norwegian companies and financial institutions, through institutional cooperation and by providing grants.

Norway has been active in the institutional framework that has gradually developed in the region. The Council of the Baltic Sea States brings together all the countries of the region. It provides an arena for cooperation and dialogue between EU and non-EU member states, including Russia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Baltic Sea region has made impressive economic and democratic progress over the past two decades. Until recently the Baltic States enjoyed economic growth 3-4 times faster than the European average. Today 15 % of the world's cargo traffic passes through the Baltic Sea. Agriculture intensifies. Meat production is predicted to increase by 70% by 2015. Economic activity is vital to the prosperity of the region. But this has also caused environmental degradation. We must also address the consequences of years of environmental neglect. Our challenge today is to create *sustainable* economic growth.

This summit is a response to the call for immediate action to improve the marine environment, secure sustainability and safeguard the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On the first of July, Norway will assume the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. We will bring with us the ideas and points of action from today's summit in our work over the next year. Other priorities for Norway will be a greener maritime policy, climate change, renewable energy, the environment, labour market questions and social welfare. These are priorities we share with the other members of the Council. In the coming year Norway will chair expert groups on sustainable development and on integrated maritime policy for the Baltic Sea. We will also chair the energy cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Through the Council and the energy cooperation Norway will put environment at the top of our agenda in the coming year. That is our commitment.

Thank you.