

Moskva, Handelskamrene – hovedtale

Kjære venner, dear friends, doringie družja (da-ra-gi-e droz-jaa),

Whenever you feel there is too much conflict and confusion in the world – it is always a relief to come to a place of peace and stability.

The Arctic – the High North – is precisely such a place.

One of the main reasons for this stability is the 1000-year bond between Russia and Norway – and our ability to work together, respect each other and find common solutions – even in times of disagreement.

Another key factor is our common best friend:

The ocean.

From the Vikings and Pomors to the excellent way in which we handle our common treasury – the Barents Sea – our shared ability to navigate, utilise and take care of the ocean has been crucial.

Even during the Cold War, Norwegian and Soviet diplomats, officials and researchers came together to settle prudent fish quotas in the Barents Sea.

This cooperation has continued to this very day – and as a result – the Barents Sea is teeming with cod – giving jobs to our fishermen and schools and hospitals to the people along our coasts.

(Actually, yesterday (?) Russia and Norway concluded our negotiations for next year's quotas – and we have just made important progress in our fight against illegal fishing.)

This proves our ability to work together.

It is also firm evidence that you can harvest the riches of the sea without reducing their value – and an early example of responsible resource management that others should follow.

Together, we have demonstrated that green policies do not lead to red numbers in the account book.

What is good for the planet can also be good for profit.

It also shows where and how neighbours should look for solutions:

At the negotiating table – through diplomacy – by respecting scientific advice and the interests of both the other side and Mother Nature.

In the north, Russia, Norway and others have reached a level of institutional cooperation and people-to-people communication that should serve as an inspiration for other regions:

From the Barents Council and the Arctic Council to the frequent contacts between our local authorities in the north, including my own county – or oblast – Nordland.

Arctic diplomacy is an art not reserved for diplomats – far from it.

Let us listen to the lesson from the north as we work together to extend our relations even further – not least in the field of business.

The potential for trade and business cooperation between Russia and Norway is great – from fisheries, shipbuilding and aquaculture to tourism, energy and other areas.

Trade between our two countries increased by 26 percent last year – and it is up 40 percent so far this year.

This is promising, but we should also remember that we have some years of stagnation behind us.

We should also do more to diversify our trade.

When we think of what trade brings – meaningful jobs and welfare for our citizens – peace and prosperity for our nations – it is hard to imagine a task more important than working to increase and improve trade relations.

I would like to thank our hosts, the Norwegian-Russian Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian federation, for their constant and tireless efforts to bring our businesses together, establish contacts and exchange experiences and knowledge.

Spasibo bol'sjoe! (Spa-si-ba baill-sjå-je)

I am pleased that we have now resumed annual, high-level talks on economic cooperation at a high political level.

Our minister of trade and industry, Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, has invited Russia's minister of natural resources and the environment, Mr. Dmitriy Kobylkin, to Oslo.

This meeting in our Joint Norwegian-Russian Economic Commission takes place in exactly a week from now.

It will be a great opportunity to discuss how our great potential can be unleashed.

Three practical and dynamic working groups are part of the Joint Economic Commission.

I look forward to develop this further as the new head of the Working Group for Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation, together with Deputy Minister Pristanskov.

In Murmansk this March – this group signed a five-year cooperation plan – consisting of more than twenty projects.

As neighbours, we must always seek new areas to do business.

However:

There is a lot about the future we do not know – but we do know that we will continue to live off the sea.

The ocean is where we will find the jobs of the future – the resources of the future – and the Russian-Norwegian relationship of the future.

Which reminds me of a second reason to thank the chambers of commerce:

For the excellent and well-timed choice of making ocean industries the topic of this year's conference.

The ocean is the blue thread running through Norwegian history.

And now, we are going to write new chapters.

The Norwegian Government has launched an ambitious ocean strategy – as national as it is global in scope – and as job-creating as it is problem-solving in ambition.

It stretches from green technology, digital solutions and new uses for marine resources to international diplomacy and the fight against illegal fishing and plastic pollution.

The forces of the sea have always forced mankind to pull together.

But this time we need closer cooperation than ever before:

Cooperation between seafaring nations like Russia and Norway – cooperation between all members of the international society, between north, south, east and west, between businesses and between businesses and authorities.

The success of Norway's Ocean Strategy will depend on our continued ability to combine our historic knowledge with hard work and new ideas.

Centuries of contact with the sea have given a tremendous advantage – just like it has done for Russia.

We have done it before:

When Norway first struck oil in the North Sea in 1969, we knew very little about petroleum.

But we knew the sea – so we learned oil.

Fast.

Today, the oil and gas experience has helped our shipyards build the world's first gas-powered ferry, the first electric ferry, the first electric

fishing boat and much more – including ground-breaking aquaculture technology for use offshore.

Competence is our competitive edge.

That is also why shipbuilding and modernisation of fishing vessels is a field of tremendous potential for Russia and Norway – especially in view of your plans to renew your fishing fleet.

This is a topic I could speak a lot about – which I will do in a couple hours – at the seminar on Norwegian- Russian Maritime Innovations.

Traditional fishing and modern fish-farming are also central to our Ocean Strategy.

Nothing is more healthy and nutritious than seafood – it is good for both brain and heart.

In Norway, we take the most profound care to make sure that our fish is healthy.

We do not only ask what the ocean can do for us – but also what we can do for the sea.

Reopening the Russian market for Norwegian salmon would be good for the health and happiness of Russian consumers – and would also give a tremendous boost to our trading volume.

Dear friends,

One thousand years of Russian-Norwegian relations is a story of trade, friendship and cultural and social exchange.

It is also a story of ups and downs, which is how it is among old friends.

Most of the time, however, we have been able to find common language.

Our traders fishermen in the north even constructed a common language:

"Russenorsk" – or "pomor" language:

The only pomor expression I know shows that relations were not always easy:

"Moja tvoja på vater kastom."

Which means:

"I will throw you on the water."

Thankfully – this does not represent where Russia and Norway stand today – and perhaps it was just a negotiating technique.

Where I stand today, is that Russia and Norway should do more business together – on the water, in the water and under the water.

Thank you and good luck with today's forum!