

Managing the Arctic – Norway's views

The changes in the Arctic pose new challenges and give rise to new opportunities. As a responsible coastal state, Norway strives to address these challenges and make use of the opportunities in a safe and environmentally sound way. We will work to ensure that the Arctic remains a peaceful region of cooperation and sustainable resource management.

Predictable frameworks for sustainable development

The coastal states bordering on the Arctic Ocean agree that the Law of the Sea provides the legal framework for all activities in the Arctic Ocean. In Norway's view, existing international law provides a predictable framework for addressing present and foreseeable challenges in the Arctic. The 2010 Treaty Concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean between Norway and the Russian Federation is an example of the practical application of the principles contained in the existing legal framework.

The establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf outside 200 nautical miles is dealt with by the Commission on the Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf in New York. Norway is the first coastal state in the Arctic Ocean to complete the requirements related to the Commission. Norway has worked in close cooperation with all neighbouring states in the High North in this connection.

In Norway's view, it is essential that shipping in the Arctic Ocean is subject to the highest safety and environmental standards. Norway is a strong supporter of the development of a mandatory IMO Polar Code. We believe that mandatory rules for shipping in polar waters are crucial for preventing accidents, loss of human life and oil spills.

The prospects of increased activity in the Arctic Ocean mean that coastal states will need to maintain a strong presence in order to exercise their jurisdiction, sovereign rights and authority in a credible, consistent and predictable manner.

The Arctic Ocean is not Antarctica

Antarctica is a continent surrounded by sea, whereas the Arctic Ocean is an ocean surrounded by land under national jurisdiction. Recognising that Antarctica is an uninhabited continent with no generally acknowledged claims to sovereignty, the Antarctic Treaty was adopted in 1959 to regulate human activity on the continent. In contrast to the situation in Antarctica before the adoption of the Antarctic Treaty, the Law of the Sea already provides a relevant legal framework for regulating activities in the Arctic Ocean. Consequently, calls for a specific treaty to regulate activities in the Arctic are unjustified.

Circumpolar and regional cooperation

Various political arenas of cooperation address issues related to the Arctic. The circumpolar Arctic Council is the most important forum in this regard. The indigenous peoples of the Arctic have been given their rightful place as permanent participants. Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge is important, based as it is on a unique ability to live and work in the Arctic.

The work of the Arctic Council is producing tangible results. Its comprehensive reports and studies of climate change in the Arctic have been of major importance in highlighting the speed at which climate change is taking place and its implications. Furthermore, the Council has

undertaken comprehensive environmental and scientific studies on shipping in the Arctic, on oil and gas activities and prospects, and on ocean management.

The agreement on search and rescue (SAR) cooperation in the Arctic, concluded in May 2011, is the first legally binding agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council. It establishes a binding framework for search and rescue cooperation between the member states of the Arctic Council, and enhances the regional cooperation between the Arctic states.

Building on the positive experiences gained from negotiating the SAR agreement, the Arctic Council has established a task force to develop an international instrument on Arctic marine pollution preparedness and response.

The Arctic Council has also decided to strengthen its capacity to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the Arctic by establishing a permanent secretariat in Tromsø, Norway.

Norway supports the broadening of Arctic Council discussions through the inclusion of more observers.

Another example of innovative regional cooperation is the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation, which also involves local authorities. The Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation has played an important role in building trust and mutual understanding. The Northern Dimension will also further strengthen coordination in the north.

Norway welcomes the development of Arctic strategies by Arctic states and other interested parties and looks forward to continued fruitful cooperation within a bilateral, regional and multilateral context.

Integrated ocean management

Norway takes an ecosystem- and science-based approach to sustainable resource management. Integrated management plans for all relevant maritime areas are among our most important tools. Based on ambitious goals, these plans establish a holistic framework for all activities in the relevant maritime areas. Our ultimate ambition is that all activities should be managed within a single context, facilitating long-term and responsible value creation based on the sustainable use of the resources in these maritime areas, while at the same time safeguarding the environment and preserving the structure, functioning and productivity of the ecosystems.

Responsible management of fish stocks based on science is a key Norwegian objective. Regional cooperation is essential to achieve this. The bilateral cooperation with Russia in which the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission plays a key role, the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and our bilateral cooperation with the EU, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands are particularly important in this regard. This cooperation is based on input from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.

Petroleum activities on the Norwegian continental shelf are subject to the highest safety and environmental standards. We have taken measures to further strengthen and improve Norwegian rules and regulations. To prevent accidents, strengthened international cooperation is essential. Norway is leading the work of the OSPAR Commission and the Arctic Council on prevention of oil pollution, and participates actively in offshore safety regulatory bodies such as the International Regulatory Forum and the North Sea Offshore Authorities Forum.

