



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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President of the European Commission

**Statement by President Barroso following his meeting
with Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway**

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Good morning ladies and gentleman,

I am delighted to welcome Prime Minister Erna Solberg on her first visit to Brussels in her new capacity. We have met before, when Ms Solberg was leader of the opposition, and today we had this first official meeting which was very constructive and friendly.

My last visit to Norway was in December last year - for the award of the Nobel Peace Prize, which was a tremendous honour for the EU and a precious encouragement. On that occasion, I already stressed that our relationship with Norway is very solid and of great value to both sides.

The European Union and Norway are very close political and economic partners, bilaterally and on the global scene. Our meeting today was an excellent opportunity to discuss the state of play of our relations and how to deepen them further.

Our special relationship is mainly based on the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, through which Norway is closely integrated into the largest market in the world – the EU internal market. And our relation is also developed through the Schengen Agreement.

Today I welcomed the intention of the new Government of Norway to pursue an even more active European policy, primarily through the EEA Agreement, and I look forward to working with the Prime Minister and her team towards this end. In fact in during our meeting we discussed several issues where our experts and collaborators can develop a relationship. I welcome many of the initiatives of Norway, where Norway wants to be associated with the European Union. And I think it's in this spirit of openness that we want to develop our relationship.

Making sure the EEA works properly and ensuring its legal homogeneity is obviously critical for our businesses and citizens. It's also a matter of legal certainty and of predictability. Ensuring the timely incorporation of legal acts into the Agreement and their swift implementation are essential. Therefore, the Government's announcement to lift Norway's reservation vis-a-vis the incorporation of the Third Postal Directive into the EEA Agreement is an encouraging signal. We hope to receive similar good news in the future.

Our bilateral trade relations are very important and also mutually beneficial. We want to deepen these ties. I therefore welcome Norway's intention to progress on a number of specific trade issues we had recently, in particular as regards changing the existing trade regime for cheese and meat.

In the same vein, I encouraged the Prime Minister to agree a new multilateral arrangement with the EU, Iceland and the Faroe Islands on mackerel fishing in the North Atlantic. We believe there is now a time window until the end of this year, and we should use it together!

We also discussed energy in detail. It was one of the most important topics of today's conversation. A substantial portion of EU energy supplies comes from Norway, and these supplies are mutually beneficial, safe and secure. Broadening this open, reliable and transparent cooperation is in our common interest. We very much value Norway as an energy partner, a reliable partner of the European Union. Today we informally discussed with the Prime Minister what can be our future policy in terms of climate. We exchanged perspectives of what can happen on renewables and the possibilities of some interconnections between Norway and the European Union. I think there is a lot to do in this area and of course the European Commission – namely through Commissioner Hedegaard and Commissioner Oettinger – is open to deepen all these contacts at the appropriate level with Norway.

I also thanked Norway for its contributions to the EU. The support of Norway is highly appreciated, particularly at this time when we are promoting sustainable development and smart and inclusive growth, and in many areas that are of global interest, for instance, the issues of migration. We spoke about the tragedy of Lampedusa, what is our way of responding to it. I've told Prime Minister that tomorrow the European Commission will present a Communication, following the task force that was created some time ago. Norway has shown its interest to cooperate in this action, and I really welcome that. In fact we should do more together as Europeans to face this very important challenge of refugees, sometimes of illegal migration.

And we are also ready to address some of the concerns that Norway expressed to us, for instance the way that Norway can participate or to be associated to some of the work of our European supervisory authorities. I understand the sensitivity of the problem and we are working on it.

It is in this spirit that we are going to solve some of the current issues, keeping always in mind that the relationship between Norway and the European Union is not good, it is excellent! The relationship between two neighbours and two friends cannot be better than the relationship between Norway and the European Union.

So, today's meeting confirmed our mutual commitment to this already very special relationship. I'm certainly looking forward to continue this work with you, Prime Minister, and with your government, for the benefit of Norway, the Norwegian citizens and of course of the European Union as well.

Thank you.