

## **Opening Speech by Mr Høgni Hoydal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Fisheries of the Faroe Islands, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> North Atlantic Fisheries Ministers' Conference in Tórshavn 27-28 August 2018**

Dear Ministers, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a profound honour to host the 23<sup>rd</sup> North Atlantic Fisheries Ministers' Conference in the Faroe Islands during the days of 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2018.

And most importantly, it is a real pleasure to see all of you in our capital of Tórshavn.

And I do hope that all of you will enjoy the social events, which have been prepared in the margin of the conference where you will experience Faroese nature and culture.

Also, I would like to extend my gratitude to the delegates present here, who have been most helpful to assist and guide my team throughout the preparations of this conference.

As we have collectively decided beforehand, the theme of this conference is "Sustainable Ocean Governance".

When I think about our oceans, my mind like most Faroese will be filled with deep respect, humbleness and fascination. As we say in the Faroe Islands, "the oceans give and take".

It is hard to imagine any nation on the earth, which survival has been so duly dependent on the generosity of the oceans. Likewise, it is hard to imagine any nation on the earth, which has paid such a high price for this generosity in the form of tragedies on the oceans, when it comes to fishermen.

Today, however, everything has changed. Our seagoing vessels are huge, safe and equipped with cutting edge technology.

While tragedies on the oceans were the name of the game in the past, this very rarely happens today – and that is the good story to be told.

We may say today, that the old Faroese saying that "the oceans give and take" has changed to "the oceans give and give".

And this is exactly what is going on worldwide. The global perception of unlimited marine resources has by and large survived the immense technological advances, which we have seen during recent decades.

Overexploitation worldwide of marine resources is the rule rather than the exception. Such overexploitation is going on both legally within coastal States jurisdictions and on the high seas as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which threatens entire species and ecosystems.

Another scary and depressive development I would like to shed light on, is the gradual conversion of the oceans from a healthy and nutritious global larder of seafood to an unhealthy global dump of waste from human activities.

The international society has to take global action, sooner rather than later, in order to call a halt on this development. One obvious way to begin is to bring about a change of the global perception of the oceans as an unlimited dump for waste from human activities.

One point of paramount importance I would like to make here is that we have to address immediately the tragedy of plastics in all relevant global fora in order to save our oceans.

I am heartbroken when I see pictures of seabirds and whales struggling in agony for their lives while fatally trapped in plastic litter.

Our generations are proud and thankful for the earth we inherited from our ancestors. It is indeed our duty to hand over this very earth to our children and grandchildren in the same healthy shape it was handed over to us.

However far we collectively agree on the international arena on these global challenges, we have to act nationally in order to fulfil our joint goal to save our blue planet.

We in the Faroe Islands have just started this process through our new fisheries reform, which was enshrined into national legislation in the very beginning of this year. The plastic contamination of our oceans is also on the national agenda and will also be addressed through legislation and various government policies.

Let me conclude by wishing you all two good conference days.

And finally, I hope you will enjoy your stay in the Faroe Islands.

Thank you for your consideration.