



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

Meld. St. 22 (2016–2017) Report to the Storting (white paper)

# The place of the oceans in Norway's foreign and development policy



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(White paper from the Solberg Government)*

## 1 Introduction

This is the first time a Norwegian government has presented a white paper on the place of the seas and oceans in the country's foreign and development policy. Its aim is to highlight the opportunities the oceans offer for Norway and the challenges we will need to deal with, and to describe how Norwegian foreign and development policy can be used to safeguard Norway's ocean interests and promote the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Norway has a range of vital national interests relating to the seas and oceans. More than 80 % of Norway's population lives less than 20 kilometres from the coast. This has been a key factor in shaping Norwegian identity and in influencing how Norway is seen by others. Ever since the Viking Age, coastal waters have linked the various parts of the country and brought them together into a single kingdom, and the seas have connected Norway to the rest of the world.

The oceans are not only crucial to our understanding of the past; they also hold an important key to the future – in Norway as in the rest of the world. The Norwegian Government is actively promoting a transition to a greener Norwegian economy. If we are to succeed, we must safeguard biodiversity for current and future generations. At the same time, we must make the most of opportunities for economic development in maritime

areas, and promote production and consumption patterns that have less negative impact on the climate and marine environment than is the case today. The importance of this was made clear in 2015 when world leaders adopted the 17 SDGs, including one specifically concerning the oceans: SDG 14, to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The oceans offer huge potential for human development. According to the UN, the world's population is set to reach 9.7 billion in 2050. Most of the growth will be in developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia. All these people will need food and energy, and population growth will drive an expansion of trade and maritime transport. Shipping has a key role to play in promoting global trade and growth.

However, there is also concern about the state of the world's oceans. Population growth, urbanisation and the concentration of human activity in coastal areas will increase pressure on the oceans. Climate change, pollution, marine litter, overfishing and the destruction of coastal ecosystems are all threats to the oceans.

Global development trends indicate that Norway, as a coastal and maritime nation, will face a complex set of challenges and opportunities in the decades ahead. The choices we make and the pri-