



Sustainable Development New Bearings for the Nordic Countries

**Revised edition with
goals and measures for
2005-2008
Principal policy points**

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The Nordic Council of Ministers

was established in 1971. It submits proposals on cooperation between the governments of the five Nordic countries to the Nordic Council, implements the Council's recommendations and reports on results, while directing the work carried out in the targeted areas. The Prime Ministers of the five Nordic countries assume overall responsibility for the cooperation measures, which are co-ordinated by the ministers for cooperation and the Nordic Cooperation committee. The composition of the Council of Ministers varies, depending on the nature of the issue to be treated.

The Nordic Council

was formed in 1952 to promote cooperation between the parliaments and governments of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Finland joined in 1955. At the sessions held by the Council, representatives from the Faroe Islands and Greenland form part of the Danish delegation, while Åland is represented on the Finnish delegation. The Council consists of 87 elected members – all of whom are members of parliament. The Nordic Council takes initiatives, acts in a consultative capacity and monitors cooperation measures. The Council operates via its institutions: the Plenary Assembly, the Presidium and standing committees.

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1. Sustainable Development – New Bearings for the Nordic Countries

BACKGROUND

The Prime Ministers' declaration on sustainable development

In November 1998, the Nordic Prime Ministers and the political leaders of the autonomous areas adopted the Declaration on a Sustainable Nordic Region. For the purposes of the present strategy, the term Nordic region or Nordic countries includes these autonomous areas.

A Sustainable Nordic Region

Oslo, 9 November 1998

We, the Prime Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, the Prefect of the Faroe Islands, the Prefect of Greenland and the Prefect of the Åland Islands,

IN AGREEMENT THAT the promotion of sustainable development is one of the key challenges of the 21st century, and

BEING FULLY AWARE of the importance of the new Treaty of Amsterdam; of the conclusions reached at the meeting of the European Council in Cardiff in 1998 on the sustainable development of the European Union; of the work undertaken in connection with the Northern Dimension of EU policy; of an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea region, (Baltic 21); of the activities of the AEPS (now the Arctic Council); of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council declaration; and of cooperation resulting from our joint declaration issued in Bergen on sustainable energy supply in the countries bordering the Baltic Sea,

AGREE that the following objectives should serve as a basis for the development of a sustainable Nordic region and sustainable development in our immediate vicinity:

1. Present and future generations must be assured a secure existence and a healthy life.
2. A sustainable society must be based on democracy, openness and participation in local, regional and national cooperation.
3. Biodiversity and the productivity of ecosystems must be preserved.
4. Emissions and discharges of pollutants into air, soil and water must not exceed the self-regulating capability of the natural environment, i.e. critical load levels on ecosystems.
5. Renewable natural resources must be utilised and protected efficiently within their capacity to renew themselves, i.e. the utilisation of renewable natural resources must not exceed their rate of regeneration in the long term.
6. Non-renewable natural resources must be utilised in such a way that natural ecocycles are safeguarded and renewable alternatives are developed and supported.
7. Efforts must be made to promote and maintain a high level of public awareness of the measures and processes necessary to achieve sustainable development.
8. Continued efforts should be made to mainstream the principle of sustainable development.
9. The role of indigenous peoples in bringing about sustainable development must be emphasised.
10. Over time, efforts should be made to ban the use of xenobiotic substances and substances harmful to people and nature.
11. The necessary innovative approaches should be adopted to encourage more efficient energy and natural resource utilisation.

In pursuance of these objectives, **WE HEREBY COMMISSION** the Nordic Council of Ministers to draw up an intersectoral strategy for sustainable development in the Nordic region and the Adjacent Areas. The strategy should focus on areas of common interest to the Nordic countries, where the latter are especially equipped to contribute to sustainable development, and where Nordic cooperation creates special added value. The assignment should be completed by 2000.

The strategy for sustainable development in the Nordic region was adopted by the Nordic Prime Ministers and the Nordic Council in 2000. The strategy, which took effect in 2001, contained goals and initiatives for the period 2001–2004 as well as long-term goals for the period up to the end of 2020.

Revision of the strategy

The original strategy provided for a follow-up and revision of its aims and proposed measures. The revision was then to be submitted to the Prime Ministers and political leaders of the autonomous areas in 2004.

The terms of reference emphasise that the aim of the revised strategy must be to help strengthen and influence relevant international processes such as the EU, the OECD and the UN, and that the social and economic dimensions should be given greater prominence.

New goals and initiatives for the period 2005–2008 have accordingly been set out in the revised strategy, while the long-term aims remain unchanged. The revised strategy also includes a new chapter on sustainable production and consumption in the section on inter-sectoral (horizontal) action areas (Part 1). The chapter is intended as a contribution to the follow-up of the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002. A new chapter concerned particularly with population developments, public health, education and research has also been added.

The past few years have seen numerous, far-reaching changes in the sustainable development sphere, at international, regional and local level. The outcome of the Johannesburg summit, which concluded with the adoption of a comprehensive implementation plan and a political declaration, was one such development. Within the European Union, a major event was the June 2001 Göteborg summit, which adopted a strategy for sustainable development. On 1 May, the Union acquired 10 new members. The above changes were taken into consideration and, where appropriate, incorporated in the revised strategy.

The revised strategy was circulated for comment to some 120 Nordic NGOs. One of the challenges inherent in the continued development of Nordic cooperation on sustainable development is to give due consideration to many of the views put forward.

The Nordic countries' common point of departure

Similarities and differences

The Nordic countries share many similarities in terms of social structure and cultural heritage. Conditions in the region are particularly favourable to the promotion of a transition to sustainable development. This may be attributed to the region's political stability, close cooperation between its member countries, functioning societies based on the rule of law and well-educated citizens with considerable ability to adjust to changing conditions. Common problems and shared development potential create a basis for close cooperation. The ambition to generate added value through cooperation towards sustainable development is shared by all.

At the same time, efforts to promote sustainable development reflect substantial differences in prevailing conditions in the Nordic countries. There are considerable disparities between them regarding the socio-economic importance of industries such as fishing, agriculture, forestry and manufacturing. The countries also face markedly different challenges in terms of mainstreaming environmental considerations and sustainable development.

Integration of sustainable development

The Prime Ministers' sustainable development goals are in line with the definition drawn up for Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the Brundtland Commission report.

“Sustainable development is [...] development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. [...]. In the final analysis, however, sustainable development is no final state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which resource utilisation, the management of investment, the direction of technological development and institutional change are brought into line with future as well as present needs”.

Sustainable development has three interdependent dimensions: economic, social and ecological. It presupposes broader and deeper integration of these three aspects, a process ultimately defined and delimited by the ecological dimension.

The ecological dimension of sustainable development and the integration of environmental considerations remain a major challenge in the Nordic region, and the wording of the Prime Ministers' declaration stresses this dimension of sustainable development.

Historically, the Nordic welfare states have attached importance to the mainstreaming of social considerations. The objective of enhancing the quality of life based on common fundamental values such as justice, equality, democracy, openness, and participation will remain central concerns.

Health, employment, and gender equality objectives are to be developed as part of the goals and initiatives for each sector. This should apply to all groups and serve to promote “spatial planning and design for all” when designing urban buildings, infrastructure, etc. For example, the full integration of disabled people into the community is predicated on adequate planning and practical measures in a range of areas.

Agenda 21 and the WSSD declaration and plan of implementation state that gender equality, which, among other things, presupposes participation in economic and political decision-making processes, is a precondition of sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21 in its entirety. Although by international standards the Nordic countries have made considerable progress on gender equality issues, disparities in terms of economic resources, power and influence remain.

Creating conditions of prosperity in all countries without impairing the global climate, ecosystems or people’s health is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Increased investment in environmentally driven growth and welfare can help us meet several of these challenges. The industrialised countries, including the Nordic countries, have a responsibility to lead the way in this area. The transition to an environmentally sustainable society can bring substantial benefits in terms of economic growth and employment. By mainstreaming environmental considerations and sustainable development we bring about conditions conducive to growth, employment and welfare, while focusing greater attention on environmental concerns. The development of new technologies, skills and expertise can generate new markets for products and services, as well as new jobs. This holds true both for the Nordic region and the adjacent areas.

The purpose of the strategy

The Nordic strategy for sustainable development is to constitute the basis of a continual transition towards sustainable development in the Nordic countries and in the context of Nordic cooperation.

The present strategy provides the overall framework for transition and serves as a basis for Nordic sub-strategies and action plans. It adheres to the overall priorities for Nordic cooperation.

The Prime Ministers stress the importance a) of mainstreaming the principle of sustainable development, i.e. integrating it into the policy- and decision-making process for all sectors of society, and b) of further defining the goals laid down in the declaration in terms of an inter-sectoral strategy for sustainable development.

The strategy focuses on 7 horizontal (intersectoral) action areas: sustainable production and consumption, the social dimension, climate, biodiversity, the sea, chemicals and food safety. These areas are particularly relevant to a closer definition of the objectives of the Prime Ministers' declaration, which deals with biodiversity, air, soil and water pollution, the use of renewable and non-renewable resources, and termination of the use of substances harmful to human health and the environment.

The areas present health, environmental, social, and economic challenges, and progress is predicated on horizontal measures and success in mainstreaming the principle of sustainable development. Thus the work of mainstreaming environmental concerns and sustainable development in chosen sectors forms the 'hub' of the strategy. The sectors in question are energy, transport, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

As in the original strategy, a key principle governing Nordic cooperation for sustainable development is – in certain areas – the 'highest level of ambition applied': if the Nordic country with the highest level of ambition is allowed to take the lead Nordic cooperation can be used as a lever, nationally and internationally.

Nordic initiatives and international forums

The Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development must also serve as a point of departure for joint Nordic contributions to international talks on sustainable development. A number of the priority areas in the strategy reflect commitments made at the WSSD. The Nordic countries played a proactive role in the run-up to and follow-up of the world summit through their work on a ten-year framework of programmes for sustainable production and consumption.

Nordic cooperation has also had an impact on EU interventions in the global arena. Other areas where Nordic cooperation can influence international cooperation within bodies such as the EU, the OECD and the CSD are sustainable utilisation of marine resources, policies to

promote environmentally sound products, efforts to limit the use of hazardous chemicals, promotion of environmental technology, renewable energy sources, efficient energy utilisation, and the application of economic and other policy levers.

Accounted among the world's richest nations, the Nordic countries acknowledge their responsibility for sustainable development. Their aim, as societies conscious of their responsibilities, is to bring about positive change in the foreseeable future.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved in one country or region in isolation. The Nordic region is closely dependent on development in Europe and across the globe. International trade has forged strong ties between countries. This also applies to transboundary pollution, climate change and economic and social development. Moreover, Nordic production and consumption have a significant impact on the environment in other countries.

Progress towards sustainable development also hinges on the willingness of countries to assume individual as well as collective regional responsibility for initiating cooperation for sustainable development and thereby promote solutions to common challenges. Efforts should therefore be made to widen Nordic initiatives aimed at the surrounding regions, in areas where the Nordic countries are particularly well placed to contribute to sustainable development through fruitful cooperation.

The Prime Ministers have emphasised the role of indigenous peoples in the transition to sustainable development. The Rio Declaration states that "indigenous people and their communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices". The Sami and the Inuit are indigenous to the Nordic region. The Nordic countries actively promote the cause of indigenous peoples and will continue to strengthen their rights through political dialogue based inter alia on international declarations and agreements. Acting at international and regional level, the Nordic countries will continue to affirm the right of indigenous people to take part in decision-making processes affecting their traditional lands, livelihoods, and ways of life.

Cooperation for sustainable development must be underpinned by a positive vision of welfare within and outside the Nordic region. The purpose of Nordic strategy is to complement the Nordic countries' national strategies as well as other international and regional strategies for sustainable development, and thereby help strengthen efforts in the international arena.

Challenges

Three social transformation processes in particular challenge and call into question development in industrialised societies: globalisation, the advent of the information society and sustainable development. The distinguishing feature of globalisation is the internationalisation of the market economy and the growing interdependence of nation states.

As the information society has developed, social and institutional relations have become a great deal more open and transparent. Knowledge is the most important factor of production in an information society and as such will play a crucial role in the future growth strategies of industrialised countries. Information technology has also facilitated the development of new relations between the enterprise sector, civil society and political life.

Sustainable development poses a challenge in terms of bringing human activities and patterns of production and consumption into harmony and balance with nature's functions and sustaining capacity, while meeting long-term economic and social demands. There is a need to develop production and consumption patterns where in which economic growth is decoupled from further environmental impacts. In addition, renewable natural resources must be utilised and protected efficiently within their capacity to renew themselves, i.e. the utilisation of renewable natural resources must not exceed their rate of regeneration in the long term; non-renewable natural resources must be utilised in such a way that natural ecocycles are safeguarded and renewable alternatives are developed and supported.

Another important economic challenge is to invest in people's health, children and young people.

Through the UN, the international community has achieved a high degree of unanimity on the main area challenges arising in connection with sustainable development. The Brundtland Commission and the Rio and Johannesburg summits identified the main challenges as global poverty and the environment. The implementation plan adopted at Johannesburg defines the eradication of poverty as the greatest and most important global challenge facing the world today and an essential precondition of sustainable development, especially in developing countries.

In the Nordic region 'poverty' may be applied in connection with specific population groups with incomes below the national average, or associated with certain social problems. In the global context, however, the term is understood to mean that a significant proportion of the world's population lives below subsistence level. In 2002, the Mil-

lennium Declaration was adopted by the UN. Its development goals, aimed at combating poverty, constitute an acknowledgement that poverty has economic, social, health and environmental implications.

Combating poverty is a high-priority issue in the Nordic countries. However, as development policy does not form part of the Nordic Council of Ministers' programme for Nordic cooperation, the Nordic countries' respective poverty reduction policies are not dealt with in the present strategy.

The legacy of the Rio and Johannesburg conferences is a growing recognition of the serious nature of transboundary and global environment problems. The transition to sustainable development in the Nordic countries should help to unite the primary forces for change – globalisation and the development of a world community – behind concerns for the environment, welfare and common Nordic values. Forward-looking policies and resolute efforts based on the political and popular determination to effect a transition can drive development towards a sustainable society in the Nordic region between now and 2020. The sooner the problems are dealt with the better the prospects will be.

Implementation and follow-up

Primary responsibility for following up the strategy's goals and initiatives rests with the governments of the Nordic countries. The strategy will be a key element in the formulation of national policies for sustainable development. Its implementation is predicated on the active participation of players at all levels, including local government authorities, the enterprise sector and NGOs.

The section on horizontal action areas in the revised strategy sets out long-term aims for sustainable development for the period up to 2020, and goals and initiatives for the period up to 2008. The latter are designed to provide a basis for subsequent sub-strategies and action plans, and for the continual adaptation and transformation of the relevant sectors towards sustainable development under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers. A number of indicators have been developed as independent components of the strategy follow-up; these were compiled and presented in the spring of 2003 (see also Chapter 16).



2. Sustainable production and consumption patterns

Between now and 2020 the Nordic countries will seek to achieve a transition to a more sustainable society, in which the connection between economic growth and greater environmental impact is not as strong as at present. At global level, the Nordic region intends to lead the way in meeting the WSSD goal of appreciably changing unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

Sustainable production and consumption was a key issue at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and at the WSSD in 2002. The implementation plan adopted at the WSSD includes the following statement:

“Fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development. All countries should promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, with the developed countries taking the lead ...”

It is essential that value creation take place within a sustainable development framework. Economic development based on sustainable production and consumption patterns therefore emerges as an overriding strategic objective. The links between economic growth and severe environmental damage in important areas must be broken.

Nordic cooperation in the sphere of sustainable production and consumption is based on the following principles:

Common but differentiated responsibility. A central principle governing all UN-run sustainable development programmes and projects is that all the world's countries have a common, though differentiated, responsibility to combat the environmental problems besetting our planet.

Shared responsibility and common measures. Contributing to the development of sustainable production and consumption patterns is a common responsibility. The prerequisites of coordinated, effective participation by the business community, NGOs, central and local government authorities and individuals are a common recognition of the nature of the challenge, the willingness of all concerned to assume responsibility and the opportunity to do so.

Ecosystem approaches. The functions of ecosystems must therefore be protected and the activities of society must not exceed the self-regulating capability of the natural environment, i.e. critical load levels on ecosystems.

The precautionary principle. In essence, the precautionary principle states that scientific uncertainty is not in itself sufficient reason for not implementing measures to deal with environmental problems.

The polluter-pays principle. The principle that the cost of environmental damage must be borne by the perpetrator. Putting a price on pollution and making the polluter responsible for paying it will help the environment and reduce pollutant emissions where it costs least.

Coordinating policy areas. Effective, goal-directed efforts to promote more sustainable production and consumption patterns require a cross-policy focus, policy integration at the various decision-making levels, integration of the relevant concerns into each sector, and policy levers to facilitate the above in a cost effective way.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- intend to implement measures aimed at promoting and encouraging more sustainable production and consumption patterns. This cannot be achieved without effective cooperation between central and local government authorities, the business community and NGOs. Cooperation in turn presupposes active dialogue to develop the necessary climate,
- must make greater use of economic policy levers, continue to cooperate with regard to their application in environmental policy-making, and assess the potential for closer coordination of these instruments under Nordic Council auspices. They are to evaluate proposals for a further cutback in and restructuring of government support measures that have detrimental effects on the environment,

- must seek to ensure that Nordic authorities exercise their ownership function, take environmental and ethical considerations clearly into account in all activities and financing operations, and seek to promote a sense of social responsibility in the enterprise sector,
- must seek to ensure that general public measures aimed at promoting research and innovation support the development, application and spread of environmental technology,
- intend to strengthen the sectoral integration of environmental concerns within the various sectors. Nordic Council of Ministers will continue to develop methods to facilitate the fulfilment of each sector's responsibility for and contribution to sustainable development,
- intend to send out clear signals enjoining all central and local government entities to comply with sustainable consumption and production requirements. Green public procurement policies and environmental management systems are vital cooperation and action areas.



3. The social dimension

The long-term objective of Nordic efforts in the social welfare sphere must be to further develop the Nordic welfare model. Future welfare financing is predicated on an efficient labour market, an increased supply of labour, and tax and welfare benefit systems that encourage work.

The Nordic countries will continue to adopt measures to strengthen gender equality at work and make it easier for men and women to reconcile working and family life, with the aim of promoting the development of sustainable working life. Provision of support to those who have most difficulty entering and/or maintaining themselves in the labour market and improved accessibility for disabled people in working life are important sub-goals.

It is essential, in light of present demographic development, that the Nordic countries take steps to safeguard financially and socially sustainable pensions and high-quality welfare services.

A social perspective on sustainable development also involves the establishment by the Nordic countries of goals, aimed partly at developing the social conditions necessary for good health on equal terms, partly at promoting education and training in sustainable development, and partly at boosting participation in cultural activities in close dialogue with people active in cultural life.

Historically, the welfare policies of the Nordic countries have been based on an economic policy of full employment and an active distribution policy aimed at redistributing incomes and resources. The Nordic model is distinguished by efficient labour markets with a high rate of labour force participation among women and men, a relatively balanced pay structure, a high degree of job security, good education, a low percentage of poor citizens, income-related social benefits and publicly financed welfare services extending to all citizens.

The Nordic countries' welfare policies are facing a number of common challenges. The Nordic population is ageing. The proportion of elderly inhabitants in the population is rising significantly while the proportion of younger citizens is declining. A common trend throughout the Nordic region is the declining number of people in gainful employment and a growing proportion of people who retire early on disability pensions.

Sweden, Denmark and Finland are characterised by large generational differences, reflected in relatively high unemployment rates. The point at which young people become firmly established in the labour market has been delayed due to factors such as longer periods of education and greater emphasis on temporary employment. As a result, people are starting families and having children later in life.

In time, the current trend among people in the Nordic countries to put off establishing themselves in working life, combined with absence from the labour market due to chronic unemployment, increasing rates of illness-related absence and premature retirement, will lead to slower economic growth and a smaller tax base.

Demographic trends in the Nordic countries threaten to increase the pressure on public finances. About a quarter of current public expenditure is age-related, i.e. goes on financing childcare, school services, pensions and social services for the elderly. Expenditure on pensions as a proportion of GDP is expected to increase in all the Nordic countries over the next 40 years, albeit at different rates.

The labour market in several Nordic countries has been marked by growing segregation, with social exclusion and marginalisation as a result.

In all the Nordic countries except Iceland and Norway, people have become increasingly dependent on social security, particularly single parents with children, whose situation has deteriorated compared with that of older couples without children. People from non-European countries tend to be over-represented in less skilled occupations.

Drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse, bad diet, lack of physical activity, etc. are often linked to economic and social vulnerability and may create problems for the community at large. Ill-health, whether

lifestyle-related or structurally conditioned, presents a major challenge to social and economic sustainability throughout the welfare system.

In this context, the value of education for the individual and society as a whole is considerable. It enables the individual to improve his/her quality of life and working conditions. For society, it holds out the promise of economic growth and the development of common basic values that underpin social cohesion. The Nordic countries will need to demonstrate their ability to think in new ways and pursue innovation if they wish to achieve a more sustainable future. The emphasis on education and research is crucial to this objective. The level of education in the Nordic countries is high by international standards.

Education for sustainable development can only succeed, however, if teachers, pupils and students at each individual school and institution draw on their creativity and commitment in a joint endeavour to achieve the goal of mainstreaming a sustainable development perspective into all learning.

Goals and initiatives for 2005-2008

The Nordic countries:

- will strengthen Nordic influence in the EU/EEA and the Lisbon process,
- intend to ensure that the results of the Nordic Welfare Research Programme are disseminated, discussed and applied both in the Nordic region and outside it,
- will give concrete form to the strategy for closer cooperation on Design for All, a universal design programme for the Nordic area,
- will actively follow up the declaration of the WHO ministerial conference, Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe, Budapest (June 2004), in cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers,
- aim to develop ongoing efforts in connection with the EU Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing,
- will promote the integration of education for sustainable development into Nordic education systems through lifelong learning.



4. **Climate change and atmospheric pollution**

The Climate Convention's long-term goal is to stabilise the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

The long-term goal with regard to long-range atmospheric pollutants is to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and ammonia to a point where the impact on the natural environment can be kept within critical load limits (nature's 'pain threshold'), and damage to people's health and the environment is avoided.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change (IPCC) has called attention to the fact that the mean global temperature has already risen by 0.6°C since 1860. Over the coming century the temperature is likely to increase by a further 1.4°–5.8°C. There is now “new and stronger evidence that most of the [global] warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities”. As signatories to the Kyoto Protocol, the industrialised countries have undertaken to reduce the total emission of 6 greenhouse gases by 5 per cent on 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) expects global CO₂ emissions to rise by 70 per cent between 2000 and 2030 unless new climate initiatives are adopted. The European Environmental Agency (EEA) has concluded that if the concentration of greenhouse gases is to be stabilised at sustainable levels, global emissions must be cut by 50–70 per cent, a reduction which goes far beyond the commitments made in the Kyoto Protocol. With existing measures, the agency expects a stabilisation of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU at 1990 levels by 2010. Fulfilment of the EU commitments under the Kyoto Protocol – an

8 per cent reduction on 1990 levels by 2008–2012 – is expected to require additional measures, including implementation of the EU Emission Trading Directive.

Far larger emission reductions will be needed to achieve the Climate Convention's long-term objectives. Thus it is evident that the Kyoto Protocol will be a first step and that it will be essential to strengthen the reduction of the emissions after 2012. By virtue of their international credibility, the Nordic countries can play a vital role as a bridge-builder between developed and developing countries and thereby contribute to a dialogue that is less polarised between these two groups.

The fact that the increased warming associated with climate change aggravates the problem of air pollution is an added reason for intensifying efforts to reduce the emission of atmospheric pollutants. As the health effects problem cannot be solved by measures taken at national level, joint action at Nordic level in accordance with the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) will be needed, initially in the form of a revision of the Göteborg Protocol and the EU directive on national emission ceilings for substances causing air pollution.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- will seek to ensure that the Kyoto Protocol, as a vital first political step towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, comes into force at the earliest possible opportunity,
- consider that launching negotiations on a more ambitious future global climate strategy after 2012 is the most important long-term challenge in the climate policy sphere. They will therefore actively promote the establishment of a broad-based process involving as many countries as possible in a global cooperative endeavour to limit greenhouse gas emissions after 2012. With regard to the world's developing countries, there is an urgent need to build confidence and open the way to commitments of various kinds which can contribute to global emission reductions without jeopardising the countries' economic and social development. Bringing the USA back into the Kyoto process is also a vital priority,
- regard the decision to establish the Baltic Sea region as a testing ground for the flexible mechanisms in the Kyoto Protocol (Testing Ground Agreement – TGA) as settled. In the course of cooper-

ation on the testing ground project, the Nordic countries will i) continue to work for successful implementation of the TGA and seek cooperation with other countries, ii) support the environmentally and economically efficient development and use of the Testing Ground Facility (TGF), iii) urge other/future parties to the Kyoto Protocol and private operations to take an active part in the testing ground project, and iv) promote the development and implementation of environmentally sound, cost-effective Joint Implementation projects,

- will continue their expertise and capacity-building efforts in the Baltic Sea region, with particular focus on Russia,
- intend to lead the way in reducing consumption of industrial greenhouse gases (HFCs, PFCs, and SF6) and to promote a climate conducive to such a reduction,
- will seek to ensure that the follow-up of the Kyoto process with respect to greenhouse gas absorption as a means of reducing emission effects is environmentally effective,
- will assess and evaluate the possibility of wider intra-Nordic cooperation on climate research,
- want to take a closer look, in the context of Nordic cooperation on climate research, at the consequences of climate change in the region *inter alia* in the light of the findings of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) project. There is considerable evidence to suggest that most of the effects of climate change will show up there first, and the ecological impact is likely to be particularly severe in that part of the world. Climate change in the polar regions can lead to changes in the ice-cap and ocean currents, which in turn can affect the global climate,
- will be adopting policy levers and initiating measures aimed at ensuring fulfilment of the emission targets laid down in the Göteborg Protocol and the EU directive on national emission ceilings for certain atmospheric pollutants. During the revision of the protocol, the Nordic countries will be attaching particular importance i) to the fact that limit values for acidification will have been exceeded in large areas of the Nordic region after 2010, and ii) to new findings on the health effects of ground-level ozone. The Nordic countries will be helping to identify the health effects of particulate pollution in the Nordic region with a view to strengthening their common knowledge base, and cooperating on a joint Nordic effort in support of EU initiatives in this area.



5. **Biological diversity and genetic resources – the natural and cultural environment**

The Nordic countries are working to protect and secure the sustainable use of biodiversity, to preserve the region's natural resources and to safeguard cultural heritage assets.

The Nordic countries will also seek to ensure the sustainable use of and access to genetic resources, promote the just and equitable distribution of the benefits obtained from utilisation of genetic resources, and take steps to ensure the continued existence of the region's cultural environment.

Biological diversity is the very foundation of human life. The term refers to the diversity of animal and plant species, the genetic spectrum within and between individual species and the diversity of their habitats. The Nordic region is rich in genetic resources, natural and cultural environments and biodiversity. At global level, however, biological diversity is under enormous pressure, with species vanishing at an ever-increasing rate and the ability of ecosystems to deliver goods and services in steady decline. Man-made climate change will in the near future become a paramount threat to global biological diversity.

All efforts to protect and preserve biodiversity must be based on the precautionary principle. In the Nordic countries, this principle is taken to mean that where a threat of serious or irreversible damage exists, the lack of comprehensive scientific data must not be used as grounds for postponing cost-effective measures. Natural resource management must be based on the precautionary principle, which is already embodied in many international conventions. Every sector is responsible for ensuring that biodiversity and the natural and cultural environments are given due consideration.

The Nordic countries have in many ways pioneered development in the biodiversity sphere. Genetic resources in agriculture and forestry (Nordic Gene Bank – NGB, the Nordic Gene Bank for Farm Animals – NGH and the Nordic Council for Forest Reproductive Material – NSFP) have been a priority concern for more than 20 years. The Nordic Genetic Resources Council serves as a forum for strategic discussions on genetic resources.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- will continue to play a proactive role in international processes and negotiations forming part of the follow-up of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),
- will work for the achievement of the WSSD -2010 target and the complete fulfilment of European commitments to biodiversity,
- will present national strategies and action plans for the protection of biological diversity, the preservation of genetic assets, the sustainable use of natural resources, intensified exchange of experience and the integration of environmental concerns in sectoral policies for agriculture, forestry, fishing and traffic/transport by 2005,
- intend to work i) for efficient implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which is concerned with the transboundary utilisation of living modified organisms, ii) ensure that products are satisfactorily labelled at international as well as national level, and iii) ensure that consumers are informed when gene technology has been used in food production,
- will contribute to European efforts to improve follow-up and assess the potential risks before non-native species are introduced, in accordance with Nordic recommendations,
- will continue to cooperate on the development of methods for and exchange information on monitoring biodiversity in the Nordic region,
- intend to continue efforts to develop new tools with which to assess the effects of changes in the way areas are used on biodiversity and the cultural environment,
- will take landscape-related issues into account in all relevant sectoral plans and identify conditions under which sectoral integration can heighten concern for these issues,

- will attach particular importance to the natural environment and biodiversity of the Arctic region and take account of the Arctic Council's assessment of climatic effects in the region,
- will develop the Nordic action plans for the preservation of natural and cultural environments in the Arctic region into an action plan which also covers Nordic environmental initiatives in the region, particularly with regard to climate change, persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and mercury,
- will promote environmentally sound agricultural and forestry sectors in the Nordic region in order to maintain and strengthen biodiversity, and ensure the preservation of a sufficiently large proportion of Nordic species and habitat types,
- intend to further develop cooperation with national and Nordic programmes for the preservation and sustainable use of genetic resources,
- will seek to ensure that implementation of an ecosystem approach will also serve as a framework for Nordic management of the marine environment, and lead to greater knowledge of marine biodiversity, the functioning of marine ecosystems and the individual and combined effects of different interventions. Marine surveys, research and monitoring are vital in this connection,
- will promote the right of common access in the countryside and inform citizens of their rights,
- will strengthen cooperation between public bodies responsible for the management and administration of the region's natural and cultural assets, acknowledge their interdependence and see them as mutually enriching resources.



6. The sea

Efforts must be made to ensure the preservation of the biodiversity, structure, functions and productivity of Nordic marine ecosystems, and ensure the sustainable utilisation of marine resources. Pollution of the oceans must cease. This will require measures to limit the runoff of natural substances likely to disturb the oceans' chemical and nutritional equilibrium and steps to halt the discharge of chemically stable and hazardous substances altogether. To achieve this, the runoff of nutrients into areas where such flows are expected to cause eutrophication must be cut by half. Discharges of hazardous substances should be gradually reduced until their concentration in the marine environment approaches the background levels for naturally occurring substances, and is close to zero in the case of synthetic man-made substances. This should be achieved by 2020.

The Nordic countries are linked together by the sea. The sea provides a livelihood for many coastal and island communities, and seas and beaches are also important recreation areas for the region's inhabitants.

However, the marine environment and ocean productivity is threatened by pollution. But marine biotopes and ecosystems are also being damaged by other human activities. As the seas are a vital link in the global eco- and climate systems, disturbances to or dislocations of the marine environment can have far-reaching consequences. Our understanding of the marine environment is in many ways deficient and must be improved. This is essential if we are to become more aware of the importance of the oceans to the global ecosystem and work effectively for the preservation and sustainable exploitation of the sea's riches.

In recent years, many positive steps have been taken in the fight against marine pollution and other threats to marine ecosystems. The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GAP) and many regional initiatives are some examples of new, more effective measures to reduce the threat to the seas. Additional guidelines for the coming years are set out in the Johannesburg Implementation Plan, and the Nordic countries must take the lead in achieving the plan's objectives.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- must help produce more and better information on the status of the marine environment at global level. They will support UN procedures for global assessment and reporting of the marine environment. They will also be a source of ideas for reporting on the state of marine ecosystems in their areas, and of cold-water coral communities,
- will develop their national action plans or similar initiatives for the protection of the marine environment by 2005 if they have not already done so. These must be based as far as possible on a marine ecosystems-oriented management approach,
- will remain at the forefront of international efforts to promote and develop efficient and effective tools to deal with mercury pollution. They will also seek to strengthen the Stockholm convention and other instruments to combat heavy metal and POP pollution,
- will reaffirm their commitment to the establishment of a network of effectively managed marine protected areas. They will also be actively involved in laying the scientific groundwork for the establishment of marine protected areas and their role in the preservation of the biological diversity and productivity of the world's seas and oceans and must have identified the first group of protected areas in their own waters by the end of the period 2005–2008,
- want to step up regional efforts to protect sea areas,
- will support the development of the proposed Arctic Marine Strategic Plan and the ongoing dialogue within the North Atlantic Conference and the North Sea conferences. They support the development of the common European Marine Strategy,

- will actively seek to promote implementation of the IMO decision-in-principle, approved in April 2004, to designate the Baltic Sea area, with the exception of Russian waters, a particularly sensitive sea area (PSSA). They will actively endorse the designation of the Baltic Sea as an Emission Control Area under Annex VI, MARPOL 73/78, IMO.



7. Chemicals

The long-term goals are a society in which the use of chemicals does not involve a risk of damage to people's health and/or the environment, the elimination of all chemical discharges that constitute a threat to health and/or the environment within a generation, increased producer responsibility, and the application of the precautionary-substitution principle in chemicals policy. Goods introduced into the market in 10-15 years' time must therefore be largely free of man-made organic substances that are slow to degrade (persistent) and/or accumulate in living organisms (bioaccumulative). Goods must also be free of man-made substances that can cause cancer (carcinogenic) or heritable genetic damage (mutagenic), affect reproduction, or disrupt the endocrine system. Provisions requiring the dissemination of knowledge and information about all chemicals used in the production and processing of goods must be drawn up.

The rise in the volume and number of substances in chemicals is linked to health and environmental problems and constitutes one of the biggest global challenges to sustainable development. While the discharge of chemical pollutants from point sources is decreasing, their dissemination via products and diffuse sources is on the rise.

It is estimated that there are around 50,000 chemical substances in the European market. In most cases, very little or nothing is known about the environmental and health risks involved. While new substances are subject to testing and approval requirements, no tests are carried out on substances already in the market. Not enough is known about chemicals in products. Coherent international regulatory frameworks and regular assessment criteria based on the precautionary principle will be needed to reduce the spread of and exposure to

hazardous substances via products. In the Nordic countries, data on chemical products are collected in national product registers, which serve as an important basis for work on chemicals.

The Nordic countries have made considerable progress in this area by international standards and have high common aspirations. A central aim is to follow up a generational goal – the elimination of chemicals having particularly problematic health and/or environmental effects from products and production processes by 2020. (The term ‘generational goal’ was first used at the North Sea Conference in Esbjerg in 1995). Further progress will call for vigorous, coordinated action at international level. Actions to strengthen EU/EEA regulations are crucial, and businesses should be subject to stiffer requirements. Prospects of success here and at international level are enhanced by Nordic cooperation, which should therefore be given priority.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- will seek to bring about a sizable reduction in mercury use by being pro-active in developing the EU regulatory framework in this sphere and by leading the way with national initiatives and play a proactive role in the establishment of a global UNEP agreement on mercury,
- intend to ensure that the environmental and health effects of pharmaceutical residues receive attention, that further efforts are made to chart their extent and distribution, and that regulations are developed at national and international level and in the EU,
- will help ensure that the new EU chemicals legislation (REACH) contains provisions requiring the dissemination of knowledge and information on all chemicals used in the production and processing of goods,
- will seek to ensure that REACH places the onus for investigating and assessing the risks presented by chemicals and for ensuring that chemical use does not endanger people’s health or the environment squarely and clearly on the manufacturer,
- intend to press for the adoption of uniform requirements on testing and risk assessment of substances, whether regarded as existing or new and whether present in toys, cosmetics, pesticides or used in industrial processes,

- are anxious a) to contribute to the further development of ongoing work in the chemical sphere, specifically in connection with product-oriented environmental initiatives, through its concrete integration in production and consumption processes, and b) to ensure that the life cycle perspective is taken into account,
- will continue efforts to reduce the use of pesticides in public spaces and private gardens,
- intend to help give concrete form to the generational goal agreed to under the OSPAR Convention and by the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) – and now the object of international cooperation – and continue to play an active part in designing criteria for the selection of chemicals to be prioritised under OSPAR.



8. Food – safety and health

Consumers must have access to safe food, relevant information and the means to compose a sound diet. This is to be effected through the provision of basic knowledge and information, including adequate and easily comprehensible food labelling.

The primary means of reducing levels of environmental contamination and micro-organisms in food must be to limit contamination at source, i.e. either where it is contaminated or in primary production and in the processing industry.

Producers and importers are responsible for ensuring that food is in good condition and does not constitute a health risk when handled correctly. Public authorities carry out supervision and ensure openness and transparency in connection with risk management (rules and inspection) and risk assessment.

The Nordic countries have taken policy decisions on food safety and adopted an action plan aimed at strengthening consumer influence on and participation in food-related matters. The countries have expressed a clear desire for higher levels of protection. Nordic policies are based on the principle that only the lowest possible concentration of chemical substances and dangerous micro-organisms in food – achieved through preventive measures – is acceptable. Diet and nutrition and knowledge and information are essential to consumer health.

Knowledge about food safety is undergoing constant development. New, improved food technology and new manufacturing processes can solve old problems, but also give rise to new ones.

Simple, clear-cut rules that can be understood by food companies, producers, consumers and supervisory authorities, in conjunction

with advice on food composition and preparation, are vital to high food safety standards. Consumers must have access to safe food, relevant information and the means to compose a sound diet. Consumers must be given the opportunity to make real, informed choices. The division of roles in the drive to achieve high food safety standards is clear. Producers and importers are responsible for ensuring that food is safe when it reaches the consumer. It is important in this context to ensure that agriculture and fishing are not adversely affected by external factors such as soil, air and marine pollution, but that pollution is stopped at source.

The assessment of food safety is increasingly based on risk assessment in international forums – in particular the EU and FAO/WHO expert committees. It is vital for international trade that the same food safety standards are established throughout the world.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- will intensify efforts to promote animal health and welfare. Efforts to improve the knowledge of all players involved in the process from ‘field and fjord to fare’ combined with increased supervision will help strengthen measures in primary production aimed at preventing diseases, zoonoses or other conditions that could threaten animal health and food safety,
- will promote safer food handling and production by enterprises and consumers,
- intend to encourage further training for personnel in primary production, industrial production and the distribution chain to ensure that all those involved are fully informed of the potential risks involved. Consumers will be supplied with specifically targeted information about safe handling, storage and preparation of food,
- are anxious to limit the presence of chemical substances in food as much as possible. The use of additives and flavourings, production agents such as pesticides, veterinary pharmaceuticals, and detergents and disinfectants must be limited to what is technically necessary. Risk assessments of substances used e.g. in packaging or as flavouring have high priority. Consumers must be offered advice and guidance aimed at minimising the intake of problematic substances such as dioxins and mercury in fish,
- intend to promote wider knowledge of natural toxic components and to limit health risks,

- will seek to limit food-induced allergic reactions through the adoption of preventive measures, inter alia by supplying information to businesses and consumers about problematic food ingredients. Other measures include adequate food labelling and the inclusion in producers' own quality control programmes of allergens and substances known to cause intolerance,
- will promote the dissemination of information on the connection between diet, nutrition and health. Citizens must be motivated to adopt healthy food and exercise habits, and in particular be informed about the importance of reducing sugar and fat in their diet and increasing their intake of fruit and vegetables. Basic knowledge in this field should form part of school education and be supplemented by easily accessible information from the relevant authorities,
- aim to ensure greater traceability and access to information about potential risks. The number of food products that do not comply with existing regulations must be minimal,
- will seek to support companies' own control systems, inter alia by defining the prerequisites for an efficient control programme, and by ensuring that the analytical methods required are available,
- will seek to reinforce research-based knowledge on food safety and develop better risk assessment models, coordinate Nordic research efforts and implement common Nordic risk assessments and thereby influence priority setting in international forums,
- will intensify the dialogue with consumers, promote open risk communication, and ensure that correct information is incorporated in schoolbooks, other textbooks, cookery books, cookery programmes/articles in the media, etc.,
- are anxious to improve dissemination of information about traditional food in and between their countries.



9. Energy

The general long-term objective of Nordic energy cooperation is to ensure an efficient, competitive, safe and sustainable supply of energy. Energy resources must be used efficiently to boost employment and strengthen the economy without jeopardising the environment.

The energy system must be so designed that it helps reduce global emission levels of greenhouse gases and other atmospheric pollutants, and encourages greater use of renewable energy sources.

Continued efforts must be made to step up the integration of energy markets in the Nordic countries, the adjacent areas and the EU, with sustainable energy production as an important competitive factor.

The objective of all the Nordic countries is to limit the energy sector's contribution to environmental problems; a number of policy levers, including taxes, charges, direct regulation and support measures, have been brought into operation to achieve this goal. The transboundary environmental challenges will require cooperation within and outside the region.

Inter-agency cooperation on energy matters has long been established in the Nordic area, and has worked well. Nordic cooperation in the electricity sector and power trading are both important, as linked grids are an aid to environmental improvement in the region.

International agreements and closer cooperation with non-Nordic countries, especially in the EU and the Baltic Sea states, are increasingly shaping Nordic energy policies and systems.

Energy development in the Nordic countries in the 1990s benefited from the fact that energy consumption increased by a considerably smaller margin than economic growth. However, limiting the growth of energy sector emissions in pursuit of sustainable development remains a major challenge.

A significant share of total greenhouse gas emissions comes from the energy sector, and the overall performance of the Nordic countries in terms of reducing CO₂ emissions has not been positive. On the other hand, they have taken active steps to reduce emissions, including the introduction of CO₂ charges (green taxes) – which are among the highest in the world – and flexible mechanisms.

Substantial resources have also been allocated to programmes and projects aimed at promoting new, renewable energy sources.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- will make greater use of cost-effective instruments and harmonise policy levers aimed at the further development of a sustainable energy sector and reduced environmental impact from Nordic energy consumption. Provided that the market framework is efficient and environmentally tenable, the implementation of a sustainable energy sector can largely be left to energy market players,
- will cooperate on energy trading, promote infrastructural expansion and determine what measures will be required to ensure long-term security of supply in the region,
- will move regional cooperation forward and promote the rational, efficient and environmentally sound expansion of infrastructure in the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions. This will require regional cooperation between agencies and between agencies and energy producers. The countries are supporting this development within the framework of the Baltic Sea Region Energy Co-operation (BASREC),
- must effect a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, using the Baltic Sea region as a model. The general framework for this cooperative endeavour has been provided by the joint Testing Ground Agreement (TGA). A Testing Ground Facility (TGF) has been established as a source of funding for the promotion of joint implementation projects in the Baltic Sea region,
- will cooperate on the development of policies, policy instruments and technologies in order to achieve more efficient energy utilisation, encourage the development of hydrogen as an energy carrier and promote increased use of renewable energy sources in the region,

- want to work towards the establishment of framework conditions that make it possible to install CO₂ management facilities at fossil-based power plants and other major emission points,
- will continue to pursue research cooperation in the energy field handled by the Nordic Energy Research centre. The overall aim of the Nordic Energy Research programme is to help provide a scientific basis for the cost-efficient reduction of energy consumption and the development of new renewable energy sources and environmentally sound energy technology,
- are to broaden cooperation with a view to strengthening global use of renewable energy sources and promoting more efficient energy utilisation, strengthen the coalition of like-minded countries formed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, and follow up the Bonn conference.



10. **Transport**

The long-term goal is to create a sustainable transport system. Such a system must allow the basic access and development needs of individuals, companies and societies to be met safely and in a manner consistent with human and ecosystem health, and promotes equity within and between successive generations.

It must also be affordable, operate fairly and efficiently, offer a choice of transport mode, and support a competitive economy and balanced regional development.

It must be capable of limiting emissions and waste to levels which the planet is able to absorb and use renewable resources at or below their rates of renewal. Finally, it must use non-renewable resources at or below the rates of development of renewable substitutes while minimising land use and noise impacts.

Large parts of the Nordic countries are sparsely populated with long distances to major markets. The Nordic countries are therefore highly dependent on a long-term sustainable transport system. The biggest challenge facing the sector is to coordinate the economic, social and environmental demands on the transport system.

Virtually all sections of society have an important role to play in the changeover to a transport system that is sustainable in the long term. Their efforts must be supported by consistent, long-term policies. All political decisions must take long-term economic, social and environmental impacts into consideration.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- will continue to promote efforts to increase the mobility of people without access to a car, disabled people and children. It is also important in this connection to adopt a gender equality approach so that the transport system meets both men's and women's transportation needs. The same applies to children, who must be able to travel safely on their own in the transport system. The quality of public transport needs to improve and become more customer-oriented. Efforts must be made to improve opportunities to walk or cycle. Programmes for Mobility Management should be supported and developed,
- recognise that to achieve long-term sustainable goods transport systems, the various modes of transport must become more efficient and better coordinated. The railway system must be revitalised and made more competitive,
- consider that the infrastructure must be adapted to meet the needs of a transport system which is sustainable over the long term. Investment in new infrastructure should always be tested against alternative measures,
- consider that the development of more environmentally sound and energy-efficient transport modes of all kinds must continue. The Nordic countries should continue to be proactive in international bodies, particularly in the EU, with a view to tightening technical requirements and standards. In addition, the Nordic countries can speed up development by creating a market for new technical solutions and more environmentally sound and energy-efficient modes of transport, through financial incentives, public procurement, information campaigns, etc.,
- wish to continue their efforts to achieve global agreements on more stringent safety and environmental requirements for shipping. In the absence of global agreements, the Nordic countries should force the pace of development in regional forums. The Baltic Sea motorways concept should be developed,
- consider that a sustainable transport system presupposes fair and effective pricing that internalises the external costs that traffic gives rise to. The long-term aim is to ensure that transport policy taxes and charges are commensurate with marginal costs to the economy, i.e. the additional costs incurred by society that arise whenever an additional vehicle uses the infrastructure. In

the short term, tax and charge differentiation may be an effective means of achieving a more sustainable transport system cost-effectively,

- should examine the possibilities and consequences of including the transport sector (all modes of transport) in CO₂ trading systems from 2008,
- should step up cooperation in international bodies, in particular the EU, ECMT, OECD, ECE/WHO, IMO and ICAO, in order to stimulate Nordic interest in achieving a sustainable transport system and the integration of environmental and health aspects into transport policy,
- should promote research and development for a long-term sustainable transport system. Where appropriate, research efforts should be coordinated with the EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.



11. **Agriculture**

The goal is a sustainable agricultural sector capable of producing healthy, safe food and other high-quality products both in the short and long term without diminishing the resource base or adversely affecting natural ecosystems.

Agriculture must contribute to the creation and preservation of well-developed, viable rural communities, and do so under special conditions.

It must provide a framework for recreation and preserve and protect biological diversity, the landscape and cultural assets. The Nordic countries want to play a leading international role in the development of agricultural production systems that emphasise healthy, safe food, animal welfare and protection of the natural environment.

Agriculture has both positive and negative effects on the environment. It forms and preserves the cultural landscape, which is a valuable part of our natural and cultural heritage. Its ecosystems constitute important habitats for many animal and plant species.

A major challenge for a sustainable agricultural sector is to develop more environmentally sound, efficient production methods that will also secure economic and social sustainability under the various natural and climatic conditions prevailing in the Nordic region.

Conditions for agriculture in the southern parts of the Nordic region are among the best in Europe. Agricultural production here is intensive, and the nutrients and pesticides used can leach into surface water and ground water and be carried into watercourses, lakes and the sea. This can also have an impact on biodiversity. Profitable agricultural production in the northernmost parts of the Nordic region is beset with difficulties. The Nordic countries will work to ensure the preservation of agriculture in these areas.

Dealing with this development will require the application of an active, integrated and locally adapted rural development policy accompanied by structural reforms in the agricultural sector and market-oriented production of goods and services that make full use of the district's entire resource base. Efforts must be made to maintain a decentralised, structurally varied agricultural sector in the Nordic region.

To an increasing extent, the rules and regulations governing Nordic agricultural production are laid down in international negotiations and agreements, both in the EU and at global level, e.g. the WTO. The Nordic countries will therefore seek to influence international negotiations, regulatory activities and agreements.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- will step up their efforts in connection with international negotiations, regulatory activities and agreements to ensure that joint Nordic views and standpoints on sustainable agricultural production have an impact on international rules and agreements,
- will strengthen cooperation on research and development into sustainable production systems in agriculture. Cooperation on research and higher education in agriculture and on environmental issues will be developed with a view to achieving potential synergies and thus greater impact, and contributing to concrete improvements in terms of added environmental value in agriculture,
- will continue to promote the development of sustainable production systems in agriculture. This will include reduced environmental and health risks from the use of pesticides, reduction targets set out in the North Sea Declaration, HELCOM, OSPAR, the EU Water Directive and efforts to ensure the safe use of organic waste on farmland,
- will place greater emphasis on innovative measures aimed at strengthening increases in value. There will be a need for continual restructuring in the agricultural industry in response to new knowledge and technology and changes in the market and in agricultural policy. The biggest challenges lie in the northern reaches of the Nordic region, where the special climatic conditions make food production more difficult,

- are anxious to promote organic farming and move Nordic efforts in this area forward by actively targeting all the stages along the food chain from primary production through processing to consumption,
- will facilitate the long-term protection and maintenance of the rich variety of agricultural landscapes in the Nordic countries with their natural and cultural-historical values, as a resource for society. Efforts to preserve cultural landscapes in the Nordic countries should be more closely linked to work on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention,
- will focus greater attention on and actively support the multi-functional role of agriculture, including the production of collective values,
- will actively seek to promote and maintain animal health, wellbeing and ethical standards in agriculture and thereby ensure that the region as a whole continues to set an international example in this area,
- will play a prominent role in the international development of methods for assessing the potential health and environmental risks associated with use of genetically modified organisms, based on the precautionary principle,
- will broaden the basis, in terms of technical expertise, for Nordic cooperation in the reindeer herding policy sphere, and adopt specific measures aimed at making herding more sustainable. It is important to build on the cooperation already developed by the Sami in the Nordic region.



12. Forestry

The strategic goal in this sector is sustainable forestry – a process in which forests and woodlands are exploited and managed in such a way that they fulfil their ecological, economic and social functions now and in the future. Forestry must be a competitive enterprise, a secure source of income and jobs capable of delivering high-quality forest products.

Forestry must safeguard and preserve healthy, viable forest resources while protecting and conserving biological diversity and other environmental values. Forests must also be used for recreation and open-air activities.

There are large expanses of forest in the Nordic region, and forestry is a major industry of immense commercial importance. However, there are considerable differences between the countries. Forests are extremely important as places for recreation and open-air activities and to the wellbeing of a country's inhabitants.

Forestry is also concerned with environmental considerations. Forests focus attention on biodiversity issues, help protect groundwater, prevent soil erosion and bind CO₂. Concern for the environment is an increasingly important competitive factor in the forestry sector. The challenge is to develop production methods and processes which are also efficient, economical and socially sustainable.

In recent years, the framework conditions governing the Nordic forestry sector have increasingly been determined by international negotiations and processes. The UN has now established a permanent high-level forest forum. Its future will be determined in 2005 as part of the follow-up of the Rio Conference. Forest matters are also dealt with under the CBD. A pan-European forestry policy process, the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe, has been established with a view to implementing international decisions on

sustainable development. A common EU forestry strategy has been drawn up.

The Nordic countries pursue an active forestry policy. In recent years, the policy and its accompanying regulatory framework have been undergoing a process of revision. The focus is on sustainable utilisation of the many functions of forests in our societies. Gaining public support for official decisions is important in the Nordic countries. Much commercial forestry in the Nordic region is environmentally certified and the demand for environmentally labelled wood products is on the rise.

Goals and initiatives for 2005-2008

The Nordic countries:

- will intensify their participation in European and international cooperation on forestry matters in an effort to ensure that Nordic views on and approaches to sustainable forestry are taken into account in international agreements,
- consider that organised Nordic cooperation must be based on a joint Nordic strategy founded on national and international goals and guidelines for sustainable forestry,
- take the view that Nordic forestry research should continue, be coordinated and made more focused and systematic, will in future focus on sustainable forestry,
- will further develop nature-friendly and environmentally sound production practices. This undertaking will be coordinated between the Nordic countries. The goals must be in line with those of the pan-European forestry cooperation process,
- will contribute to the preservation of a representative and technically sufficient proportion of different Nordic forest types. It is important to promote environmentally sound forestry products inter alia by requiring that suppliers provide documentary evidence of the legal and sustainable origin of timber and wood products. Wood products can replace other materials and new products can be developed. Measures to further develop the wood processing industry, including research and the development of information systems, should be introduced,
- will emphasise and promote the social role and functions of forests. Increased access to forests and woodland is vital to open-air pursuits. Attention should also be focused on the cultural-historical dimension and on forests as plant and animal habi-

tats. Efforts in this connection should be implemented in close cooperation with organisations representing outdoor recreation, forest owner and environment protection interests. Specific initiatives could include courses, instruction, pilot projects and intensified research,

- will continue to promote joint Nordic efforts aimed primarily at compiling existing knowledge, generating new knowledge through research and development, and stimulating development by building on joint bioenergy programmes already under way. See also Chapter 9.4.4.



13. Fisheries and aquaculture

The overall objective over the next 20 years is the development of Nordic fisheries policies in accordance with the following principle: Marine living resources (MLRs) must be exploited in a manner that is sustainable in the long term under an ecosystem management system based on the principles embodied in the CBD on the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable utilisation of its various biological components.

The living resources of the sea represent both a source of wealth and an important area of common responsibility for the Nordic countries. Fishing and aquaculture are a vital means of support for coastal communities throughout the region – from the North Atlantic in the west to Arctic areas in the north and the Baltic Sea in the east. For many peoples and local communities in the Nordic area, marine living resources (MLRs) are essential to life itself

Exploitation of MLRs, whether through fishing, hunting marine mammals or birds, or through aquaculture, must be based on an integrated, inclusive approach – based in turn on knowledge and research, the precautionary principle and due consideration for marine ecosystems – and take into account the social and economic conditions surrounding the industry.

Goals and initiatives for 2005-2008

The Nordic countries:

- should lead the way, particularly in relation to the EU and other international forums, in adjusting capacity to the resource base, thereby demonstrating the benefits of such a move. Here, there is a need for closer regional cooperation in line with the Johannesburg targets and for better coordination of the implementation of integrated, ecosystem-based management

of marine resources. This calls in particular for improved coordination by the Nordic countries at national level,

- have drawn up the following education and research goals:
 - i) maximal utilisation of all harvested resources, including by-catches, gutting residues and other matter presently thrown back into the sea, and ii) the development of (by-)products through utilisation of residual fractions, non-commercial target species and new opportunities to increase product value,
- consider it necessary to step up education and research on economic and social factors and the relationship between management systems and sustainability in the utilisation of MLRs,
- support research aimed at providing a basis for scientific, balanced dietary advice to consumers, with regard to ingredients that benefit consumer health and to environmental toxins that accumulate in the marine food chain and which may represent a health hazard,
- consider that there is a widespread need for sectoral players to join forces with the education and research sector, with a view to coordinating the development of a joint Nordic training programme that offers skills at all levels of relevance for the future sustainable development and competitiveness of the sector,
- consider that dialogue and active cooperation between administrative authorities and enterprise are essential to the task of introducing effective measures that benefit sustainable development based on MLRs. Cooperation in this area is to be given additional resources and improved,
- urge Nordic organisations in the fisheries sector to become actively involved in the shaping of strategies and priorities in cooperation with public authorities and the research community,
- aim to survey and reduce energy consumption and waste disposal on the part of fishing fleets, in close cooperation with enterprise,
- support the further development of fishing techniques that help reduce adverse effects on the natural environment, including the harmful impact of deep trawling equipment on the seabed and its biodiversity. Consideration must be given to the working environment of professional fishermen and its effect on their health,

- will seek to promote broad international endorsement of the sustainable management of marine mammals. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) must be restored to its position as a conservation, research and management body,
- will encourage research into technologies that boost value creation and reduce environmental impact while ensuring the competitive competence of aquaculture and a sound working environment for those employed in it,
- support skills enhancement for all who work in aquaculture, focusing on the importance of health and wellbeing for fish and animals in this field, especially with regard to interaction with the environment, and measures to prevent the escape of cultivated fish into open water.



14. **Cooperation in adjacent areas**

The overall goal of the initiatives undertaken by the Nordic countries in the adjacent areas is to contribute to long-term economic development based on consideration for the natural environment, environmental requirements and traditional ecological knowledge, and to help reduce disparities in health and social conditions, and to support the mainstreaming of sustainable development in all sectors.

The Nordic countries will contribute to the preservation and protection of biodiversity and help restore environmental quality, reduce pollution and ensure sustainable use of resources. They will support and promote transparency, democracy and public participation, and contribute to the work of framing fair and equitable legislation and the development of efficient local management.

They will contribute to education and training in sustainable development, support the development of environment-friendly technology and ecological efficiency, and raise levels of technical expertise in environmental technology.

The Nordic countries are anxious to promote sustainable development through Arctic cooperation and reduce pollution of ice, sea, water and air in the adjacent areas, and reduce long-range air pollution in the Arctic. They also plan to initiate a strategy for a sustainable marine environment and justifiable use of marine resources in the North Atlantic.

The Nordic countries will monitor and seek to reduce the effects of climate change and changes in the ozone layer in the north, and work to increase nuclear security and security in the handling of nuclear waste.

The Nordic Council of Ministers will continue to develop cooperation with the Baltic states, Northwest Russia and the Arctic. Coopera-

tion will be adapted to the special characteristics of each region and currently applicable political priorities. In light of EU enlargement, efforts will be made to distinguish between cooperation with the new EU Member States and cooperation with Northwest Russia.

The Baltic states will be treated as equal partners in all cooperation. The good relations established between the Nordic countries and the Baltic states must be maintained and further developed. The aim of cooperation with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania is increased Nordic-Baltic cooperation (NB8) on projects and networks linking these countries more closely to the Nordic countries.

Continued cooperation with Northwest Russia should serve to develop and encourage sustainable development in the economic, environmental and social sectors in the region.

Nordic environmental cooperation accords high priority to solving environmental problems in countries in the adjacent areas and the Arctic.

Funding institutions such as the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) have been specially established to support environmental projects. The Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) is now focusing some of its operations in the adjacent areas on environmental issues, mainly in the form of environmental loans.

Cooperation in the form of partnerships is taking shape. The Nordic Council of Ministers plays an active part in the Northern Dimension Partnership for Public Health and Social Wellbeing, and has also emphasised the value of a gender equality and child-based perspective. The sustainability perspective has been given an important place in continuing efforts to implement the partnership programme.

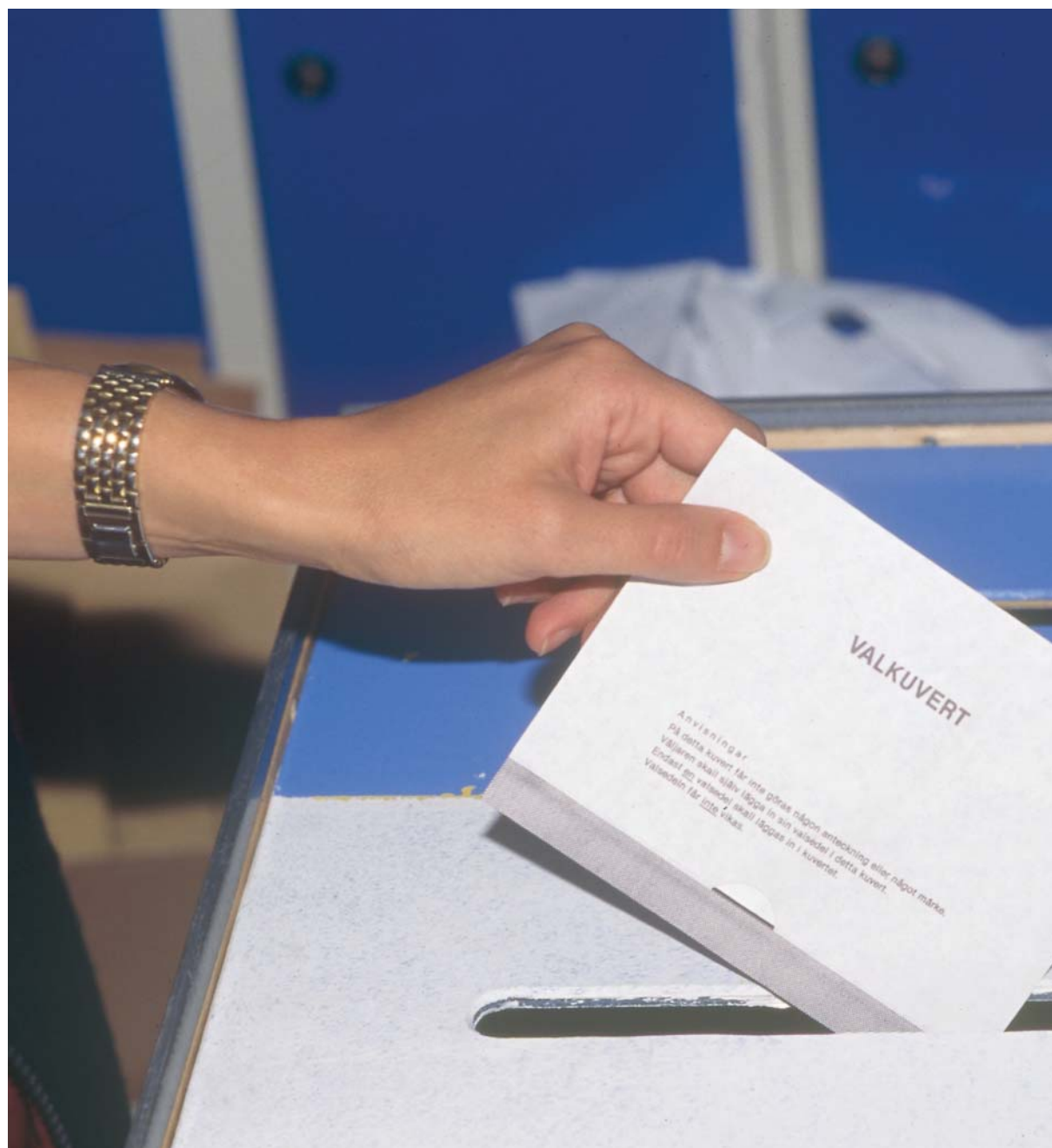
Development of sustainable production and consumption in the adjacent areas is an important action area for focus for the Nordic countries. Nordic cooperation will achieve this through political dialogue and by involving adjacent areas in concrete programmes and projects where appropriate.

There is considerable growth potential in the adjacent areas, and trade and investment barriers must be phased out. Nordic initiatives, which must be systematic and goal-oriented, may serve to complement those of other regional cooperation bodies – such as the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), the EU Northern Dimension, HELCOM and Baltic 21 – of which the Nordic countries are members.

The North Atlantic areas adjacent to the Nordic region are relevant in a number of respects to Nordic sustainable development goals – particularly with regard to the marine environment and marine resources.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

- In the *Arctic*, the Nordic countries will help develop cooperation and a viable division of responsibilities between players and regional processes in the region. They will extend support for initiatives involving indigenous peoples, welfare projects including gender equality issues, sustainable use of natural resources, and development of education, training and research in the circumpolar region. They will also contribute to the work of identifying indicators, report on sustainable development, and continue to support the Arctic Council's working group on sustainable development,
- In the *Barents region*, the Nordic countries will support the development of Local Agenda 21 networks and networks of indigenous people, and play an active part in the BEAC Working Group on Health and Social Affairs. They will also support implementation of the measures recommended in the NEFCO/AMAP Hot Spot List and in the Barents Region Cleaner Production Strategy action plan, and promote implementation of concrete measures to increase nuclear safety,
- In *Northwest Russia*, the Nordic countries will support the implementation of EU action plans for the Northern Dimension, development of funding instruments for small and medium-size projects, and promote the development and expansion of efficient administrative entities and inter-agency cooperation, and draw up a cooperation programme,
- In the *Baltic Sea region*, the Nordic countries will support implementation of the IMO decision-in-principle to classify the Baltic Sea as a particularly sensitive sea area (PSSA), seek to improve water quality in the region, and identify administrative, technical and other obstacles to more effective transboundary cooperation. They will support the development of effective local, regional and national administrative bodies for sustainable development, and promote the transfer of technology and expertise, Nordic experience of implementation of EU legislation and experience acquired by the Baltic states to Russia,
- The Nordic countries will support implementation of programmes and recommendations for the Baltic Sea region from organisations actively involved in promoting sustainable development, such as HELCOM.



15. **Public participation and Local Agenda 21**

The Nordic countries will promote public participation by making information accessible and encouraging their citizens to take part in the drafting and implementation of a policy for sustainable development. To ensure the integration of sustainability concerns in local planning processes, it will continue to be necessary to boost support for Local Agenda 21 work in local authority areas and to redirect efforts from agenda setting to concrete action.

The task of creating an environmentally aware population and building public confidence in the political and administrative system presupposes right of access to information on environmental matters, early public participation in the preparation of decisions on the environment, and the right of appeal against decisions by public authorities. These principles were emphasised at the 4th pan-European Conference of Environment Ministers held in Aarhus (Århus) in 1998.

Local government plays a specially prominent role in the Nordic countries, politically and economically. The decision-making process is traditionally characterised by subsidiarity, administrative processes are open and transparent, and the general public is brought into planning and major local initiatives.

Local Agenda 21 programmes and projects are broadly based and enjoy widespread public support. They have been instrumental in bringing elected representatives, local authorities, businesses, stakeholders and citizens together behind sustainable development processes. The overall Agenda 21 process has brought communities closer to concrete action by generating the knowledge and skills needed to achieve sustainable development and creating partnerships between players and stakeholders.

Extending Agenda 21 activities to increasing numbers of local authorities requires the creation of regional networks for exchanges of experience and information within and among the Nordic countries and the adjacent areas.

The WSSD confirmed the governments' commitment to sustainable development and the effective implementation of Agenda 21. At the summit, the concept Local Action 21 was presented by the local authorities as the next step in Local Agenda 21.

Local Action 21:

- assumes progress from agenda to action through efforts to focus on special factors that hinder sustainable development, such as poverty, injustice, conflicts, unhealthy environments and insecurity,
- anticipates that efforts will be made to counter the worldwide depletion of natural resources and global environmental pollution, and
- expects the introduction and consolidation of instruments that will be used in local administrative contexts to ensure rapid implementation, effective monitoring and continuous improvement.

Goals and initiatives for 2005–2008

The Nordic countries:

- expect to have completed implementation of the Aarhus Convention by 2004–2005. They also intend to support its rapid implementation in the countries in the adjacent areas. They will continue to press for the application of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in other areas of importance for sustainable development,
- will urge local authorities to develop networks and spread their experience and examples of good practice with regard to sustainable development,
- will promote the continued extension of Agenda 21 activities to all local authorities and ensure a transition to concrete action to promote sustainable development,
- will help improve cooperation between businesses and public authorities,
- will seek to strengthen partnerships between public authorities and civil society,

- will continue their efforts to strengthen and broaden Local Agenda 21 processes in the adjacent areas and thereby emphasise social development and the need to strengthen civil society, will seek to facilitate the use, application and development of indicators aimed at measuring local sustainable development. These will enable local authorities to compare their efforts, inform the general public about ongoing trends and encourage debate on sustainable development,
- will seek to ensure that cultural environments, which are a source of knowledge about the lifestyle and resource use of previous generations, are cared for in a sustainable way,
- will ensure that the Nordic Council of Ministers takes steps to encourage greater public involvement in its work in accordance with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on access to, gathering and dissemination of environmental information, and on public participation in environmental planning, programmes and policies.



16. Implementation and follow-up

The Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development sets long-term development goals for the Nordic region for the period up to 2020, and describes the goals and initiatives to which the region is committed between 2005 and 2008. A sustainable principle is the mainstreaming of environmental concerns and sustainable development into sectoral policies and other policy areas. This will involve significant changes in the Nordic countries and in the nature and scope of Nordic cooperation. It will require political leadership and continual dialogue between public authorities. It will call for broader participation on the part of other players, in accordance with the principles embodied in the Aarhus Convention.

Responsibility for strategy implementation rests primarily with the Nordic countries. It will be financed by the respective countries' governments inasmuch as they are responsible for following up the strategy at national level. The Nordic Council of Ministers is responsible for financing implementation of strategy measures in areas where countries are not individually responsible for follow-up. The council is also responsible for providing information on, reporting on, assessing and reviewing the strategy.

The strategy will be implemented and followed up under the aegis of the Nordic Council of Ministers by the prime ministers, ministers for Nordic cooperation and ministers responsible for sectoral policy. The ministers for cooperation have overall responsibility for ensuring that the council implements the strategy measures.

The sectoral ministers are primarily responsible for implementing and following up strategy measures in their sectors through the integration of sustainable development work into their normal areas of activity. The sectoral strategies and action programmes for the various sectors under the council must be brought into line with the time-frame for the overall strategy.

The strategy is to be revised in 2008 and submitted to the prime ministers, the political leaders of the autonomous areas and the ministers for cooperation. Before the strategy is revised, the outcomes of and experience gained from implementation of the strategy's second period must be assessed and evaluated.

The draft strategy has been circulated for comment to some 120 Nordic NGOs. Keeping the recommendations submitted by NGOs as essential to sustainable development firmly and clearly in view will prove a challenge to those responsible for implementing, following up and revising the strategy.

The Nordic countries have devised indicators designed to show how to implement strategy aims and initiatives and describe development on the basis of central sustainable development criteria. The indicators will be continually developed to ensure that they correspond to established goals and measures at all times.

The Nordic countries and the Council of Ministers must ensure that information concerning the strategy is visible and readily available both nationally and internationally. It is essential that all relevant players are informed about the strategy's aims and objectives and the measures applied to achieve them. The Nordic Council of Ministers website at <http://www.norden.org> is to be regularly updated with information concerning the strategy.

The strategy is concerned with the Nordic countries and the Nordic countries' cooperation with the adjacent areas on sustainable development. The Nordic countries will seek to implement relevant parts of the strategy within the framework of regional and international cooperation.

The strategy will enter into force on 1 January 2005.