

**Partnership Annual Conference (PAC)  
Sixth Conference  
Oslo, Norway  
25 November 2009**

<b>Reference</b>	PAC 6/5/Info 3
<b>Title</b>	NDPHS Chair Country's speech at the Second Senior Officials Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension
<b>Submitted by</b>	Norway
<b>Summary / Note</b>	<p>The 2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension was held in Stockholm, Sweden, on 12 November 2009, hosted by the Swedish EU Presidency.</p> <p>The NDPHS was represented at the meeting by the Chair Country and the Secretariat. In its speech (also available on the NDPHS website at: <a href="http://www.ndphs.org/?speeches">http://www.ndphs.org/?speeches</a>), the Chair Country briefly informed the participants about the NDPHS progress and plans for the future, as well as addressed to their attention several issues that Norway, as the Chair of the NDPHS, considers important for ensuring further successful work of the Partnership.</p> <p>Chairman's Conclusions from the ND SOM are submitted as document PAC 6/5/Info 2.</p>
<b>Requested action</b>	For information

**Second Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension Senior Officials (SOM)  
12 November 2009  
Stockholm, Sweden**

**Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being  
– Progress so far and plans for the future**

**Speech by Ragnhild Mathisen, State Secretary of the Ministry of Health and  
Care Services, Norway (NDPHS Chair Country)**

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address you in my capacity as a representative of Norway, which is currently chairing the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS).

I would like to begin by thanking Sweden for inviting our Partnership to take part in this meeting and for giving us an opportunity to provide you with a few highlights regarding the NDPHS. I would like to briefly inform you about our progress and plans for the near future, as well as bring to your attention a few issues which are of importance for the success of the Partnership.

The NDPHS is making a good progress. Approximately one month ago the Partners approved a new strategy that will guide Partnership's work for the coming four years. This new strategy places emphasis on policy and project work. The four current NDPHS Expert Groups will be restructured and, where necessary, new groups will be established that will focus on the implementation of concrete goals and time-bound actions that are at the heart of our new strategy. Let me stress at this point that – to ensure that the health- and social well-being related activities in our region be implemented in a coordinated and efficient way and involve all relevant actors – the NDPHS strategy is aligned with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. It should also be noted that our Partnership has agreed to take the Lead Partner role for the health area in the EU Strategy. I am pleased to say that the NDPHS has already taken one big step forward to implement one of the agreed priority actions by raising funds of over EUR 2.6 million for a regional project promoting equitable primary health care.

As you are aware, the Partnership Annual Conference (PAC) will take place on 25 November in Oslo. The conference will be held on a ministerial level and will offer the Partner Countries and Organizations an opportunity to discuss how to best address the regional challenges dealt with by the Partnership, and the Partners' contributions to our joint efforts. A signing of a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the establishment of a NDPHS Secretariat is now planned to take place during the Partnership Annual Conference, as is the adoption of a Declaration concerning prison health. Let me also remark that the day before the PAC, Norway will host an expert-level conference on prison health, which will discuss the finalization and the future implementation of the said declaration.

We believe that the Partnership Annual Conference will give a political boost to the Partnership and its new strategy. Therefore, it is Norway's hope and ambition that we would have fruitful discussions during this and also several other events to be held in Oslo during the same week. To that end, Norway looks forward to a good participation from the countries and organizations involved in the Partnership.

Last, but not least, the forthcoming Partnership Annual Conference will also mark the end of the Norwegian chairmanship of the NDPHS. It is, therefore, my great pleasure to inform you that during the recent NDPHS Committee of Senior Representatives (CSR) meeting, our fellow Co-Chair Country, namely the Russian Federation, has announced her readiness to chair the Partnership during the next term. This announcement was followed by Finland, which informed that she was ready to assume the Co-Chair position. Both these offers were warmly welcomed by the other Partners.

Mr. Chairman,

Judging from the growing number of the partnerships established under the Northern Dimension policy umbrella, it is clear that the concept of working together through this kind of structures is appreciated. It goes without saying that, for any partnership to be able to function effectively, it must be able to rely on support, commitment and active engagement of its partners.

Health has been named one of the priorities within the framework of the Northern Dimension policy and, more recently, in the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the BSR. It is clear that there is a broad political consensus that we want and need to have a well functioning regional partnership promoting health and social well being. Health is also one of the areas that are valued most by people. Recent developments such as the H1N1 influenza pandemic only confirm how important it is to work together to cope with and, preferably, prevent major challenges to public health.

Even though the Partnership has been successful on several fronts, there are still some challenges. One of them is the problem of missing contributions to the Partnership annual budget. I must, therefore, reiterate Norway's plea to those concerned to fulfil their financial pledges consistent with the principle of co-financing from the ND Partners.

I believe that we, gathered here today, as well as our colleagues in the NDPHS Partner countries not present here – all have a responsibility for taking action to ensure that an enabling environment be created for the Partnership, for its Expert Groups and the Secretariat. The NDPHS has an efficient institutional framework for governance and, to be effective in delivering towards the agreed health- and social well-being policies and actions, it requires proper arrangements and support back in the Partner Countries.

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the NDPHS Chair Country, I would like to close by thanking, the Northern Dimension Senior Officials and the Northern Dimension Steering Group for the support they rendered to the NDPHS throughout the entire Norwegian Chairmanship. We will pass the chairmanship to Russia with both confidence and great expectations. As we stated on many occasions, Russia is well positioned to play a great role in making our Partnership, and the Northern Dimension Policy in general, a great success. I would also like to extend our best wishes to the future Co-Chair Country, Finland. Let me also emphasize that, after her chairmanship comes to an end, Norway will remain strongly committed to the NDPHS, and we are also ready to support the Partnership's future leadership.

Thank you for your attention.