



Royal Palace, Oslo

Norway is honoured to have been chosen by the United Nations Environment Programme to host the international celebrations of the World Environment Day in 2007. This annual event is an important recognition of today's global interdependence and the responsibility that we all share for securing human welfare today and tomorrow.

As a Polar nation, Norway hopes that the official World Environment Day slogan *Melting Ice – a hot topic?* will inspire a range of activities and events all over the world. Man-made global warming - as illustrated by melting ice - is one of the most serious challenges shared by the world today.

The Arctic sea ice cap is declining rapidly. Science warns us that melting glaciers in the polar regions would lead to severe sea level rise. Disruption of the Polar Regions will interfere with their vital roles in regulating earth's climate, ocean cycles and the life supporting role of migratory species. It is appropriate that 2007 also marks the start of the International Polar Year, an internationally coordinated effort to promote polar research. Today, ice melting is taking place in all regions of the world. Shrinking mountain glaciers in Asia, Africa, the Americas and in Europe will affect freshwater supplies, with consequences for food production and human health.

Climate change and environmental degradation call for solidarity with those who are particularly vulnerable to its effects. Climate change will mean different things to different people. It can mean hunger for the African farmer coping with drought. It can mean migration for the islander coping with sea level rise and stormy weather. It can mean a loss of traditional culture and lifestyles for indigenous peoples, including in the Arctic where toxic chemicals from other regions pose an additional threat to life and health.

It is Norway's hope that World Environment Day activities can be many and diverse, reflecting the whole range of steps that need to be taken over time to reverse global environmental trends. The World Environment Day should be creative and forward-looking, focusing on possible solutions, building new partnerships and alliances at home, in the workplace and in the local community. Norway hopes that the World Environment Day and the celebrations going on all over the world, will give impetus to global efforts to solve global environmental challenges securing human welfare and our common future.

I wish you good luck with World Environment Day 2007 celebrations.

*Jarald R*