**Erik Solheim's opening session speech 270911**

What a powerful speech by the president. I was particularly moved by his promise that he would spend his last three years as president putting the conservation of rainforest at the top of the agenda. It is a powerful promise and I think it moved us all.

Let me promise that Norway will be with Indonesia in this regard. We are not similar to Indonesia, to the contrary we are very different, but we will do our best to make certain that the president can deliver on his promise.

…Let's be frank, we have had huge difficulties reaching a global agreement on climate change. We made great strides in Cancun, Mexico last year and hopefully will make new strides in South Africa this year. But we did not reach the global, encompassing agreement this year.

However, a number of nations are doing their homework. China is improving technology in this field every day; Australia is embarking on a national system for carbon quotas; Germany has decided to phase out nuclear technology but that means a huge effort to improve renewable energies. Brazil and Indonesia are defending, protecting and conserving their forests. These are the bottom-up initiatives we need to complement the top-down initiatives of a global climate agreement.

There's no way these initiatives can happen without national leaders taking the platform to provide leadership. That's why I was so moved by the leadership shown by Indonesia, and in particular President Yudhoyono, in outlining the strategy for Indonesia to reach its climate emission targets, setting up the agency or taskforce under Kuntoro, embarking on a moratorium on forestry concessions – the moratorium may not have been exactly what everyone wanted but it was a huge step in the right direction – then dedicating a pilot province in Central Kalimantan, taking Indonesia step by step in the right direction.

…Starting from the very top with the president and coming down to the local level, Indonesia is dedicated to this great cause and the international community will stand by you. We know it will not be easy. It will be a long road, but we will go on that road with you because it is responding to the main issues of our time.

There are three main reasons to conserve and make a system for sustainable use of the rainforest in Indonesia and everywhere else:

1) 15–20 % of all global climate gas emissions originate from deforestation. Unless we can bring that substantially down, there is no way we can globally combat climate change.

2) Rainforests are the biggest source of biodiversity anywhere on the globe. Some scientists believe we are now embarking on an eradication of species unprecedented in modern times – maybe even similar to what happened when the dinosaurs died out. To protect the biodiversity of Indonesia is a great cause. Last year in Papua, there was a sensation: a new mammal was discovered. It's a symbol of the great biodiversity of the Indonesian archipelago.

3) Because we want to provide a better livelihood for the millions of people living in the forest.

Then comes what I think is *the* issue, because no one is really opposed to conserving the forest, but some people ask, 'can we conserve the forest and continue with 6-7% economic growth at the same time?' Or to put it in another way, can conservation of forest be good for business? The answer is very clearly yes. There are a couple of reasons why conservation and sustainable use of forests are good for business.

One is predictability - there is no way there can be predictability while you are destroying the source of your income. Predictability relies upon conservation and sustainable use of the forest.

Second, it will be good for business because you would be much closer to the demands of the global marketplace. In the long run, consumers will simply not accept products that are destroying the source of the product or destroying the environment. All the big companies working in the global market are feeling these pressures. They want to be responsible because consumers demand responsibility, and also because they want their employees to be proud of the business. If you want to recruit good people these days in the global marketplace, you must create a company that people are proud of working for, and that's easier if you are environmentally friendly.

Adding to this, there will be money available through REDD schemes. Norway has provided US$1 billion for this, but other nations like the UK and Australia are also providing money in different ways. Combined, this would also be a huge source of income for businesses that change to environmentally friendly ways. It can be done in so many different ways: the productivity of agricultural forestry can be increased, degraded land can be taken into use, industry can be done in a way that is not harming the forest. Tourism is a huge source of income. There are many ways of getting an income from the forest by not destroying it.

Then the ultimate answer: some people will say this is a theory you cannot implement in real life. But there is a nation that has proven that all this can be implemented, and that nation is Brazil.

Brazil, with Indonesia, is the biggest rainforest nation in the world. In the last seven years, Brazil has reduced its deforestation rate by 70% , while at the same time being a prime target of business investment because they have a business-friendly investment climate, while at the same time embarking on one of the most well-known schemes for reducing poverty, the Bolsa Familia program. Brazil has shown that you can take care of the environment, of business and of poor people at the same time.

When President Lula left office after 8 years, he had an 86% approval rate. That's because this policy was so successful. If I had gone to Brazil 8 years ago and told the Brazilians that you could do this, of course I would have been kicked out as some maverick who really did not understand economics.

Brazilians have not done it for anyone else; Brazilians have done it for Brazil. They have support from the international community to do it, but they devised the ways of

doing it, in exactly the same way the President, Kuntoro and others will devise the methods for doing it in Indonesia.

We are here to support, not to lead. You will lead, but we will gather behind you. We have not chosen to support Indonesia in this because we believe it will be easy, or because we believe there will be no counterforces: we have decided to be behind Indonesia in this issue for one simple reason – it is so important.