



MILJØVERNDEPARTEMENTET

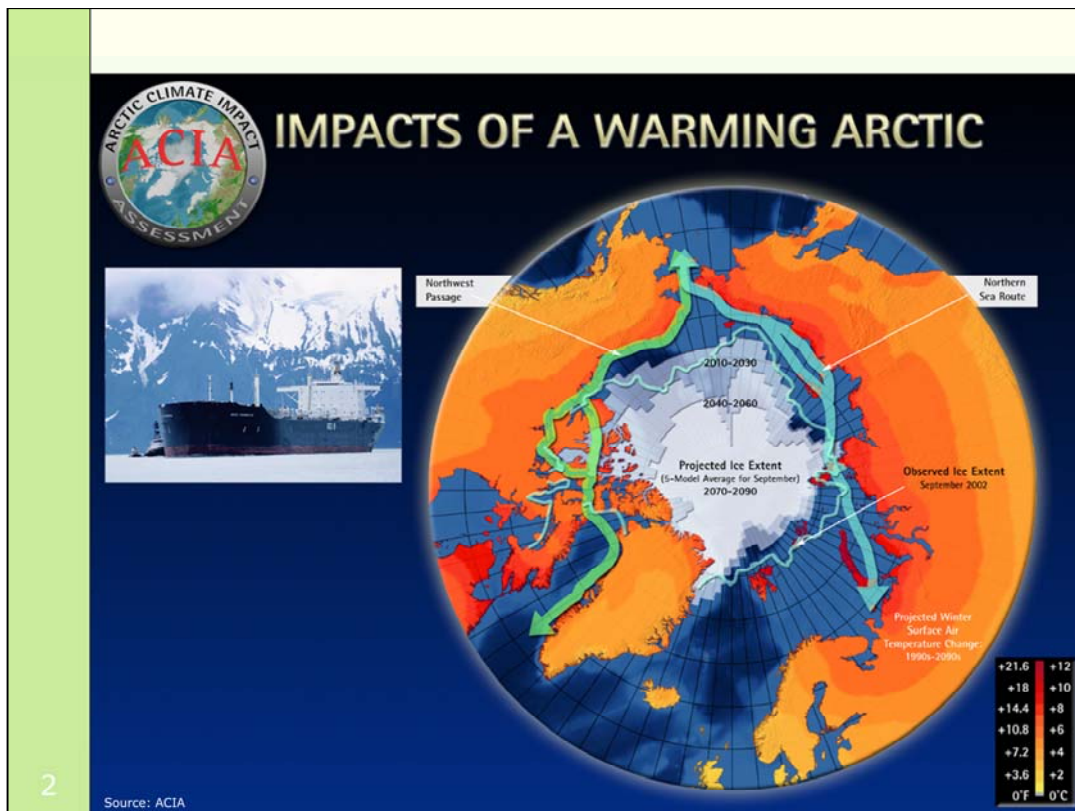
Research Center on Climate Change and Environment in Tromsø

Deputy Minister Heidi Sørensen
Ministry of the Environment
17. February 2010

Photo: Marianne Gjerv

Dear Vice-Ministers and senior officials of the Barents region,

We are facing a number of **new challenges** in the High North. We need to meet these challenges actively, given the sensitive ecosystem. The ecosystem is under increasing pressure, both with regard to climate change, hazardous substances and acidification of the oceans, and from increasing transportation, petroleum, fisheries and tourism.



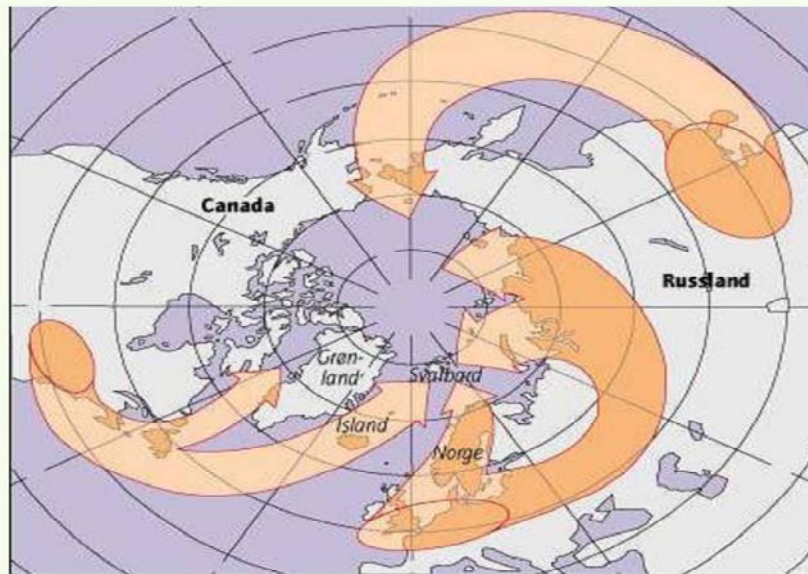
We have observed a **rapid warming in the Arctic**, with an alarming polar sea ice retreat over the last decades. According to research predictions, there are prospects for an ice free Polar Sea during summertime in a decade.

Melting sea ice have further increased the interest for economic activities in the High North and the Northern Sea Route. It has even increased the interest for crossing the Polar Sea during summer time, despite a slow-down in speed related to the financial crises.

Better understanding of the link between the Arctic and the global climate, and vice versa, is an important research field.

The importance of the Arctic Sea Ice and the relation to the global climate system, is the major reason for why we established the competence center on **Ice, Climate and Ecosystems (ICE)**, which was opened under the Norwegian Polar Institute last spring. This will also be a part of the new Research Center.

Hazardous substances



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Source: Ministry of the Environment

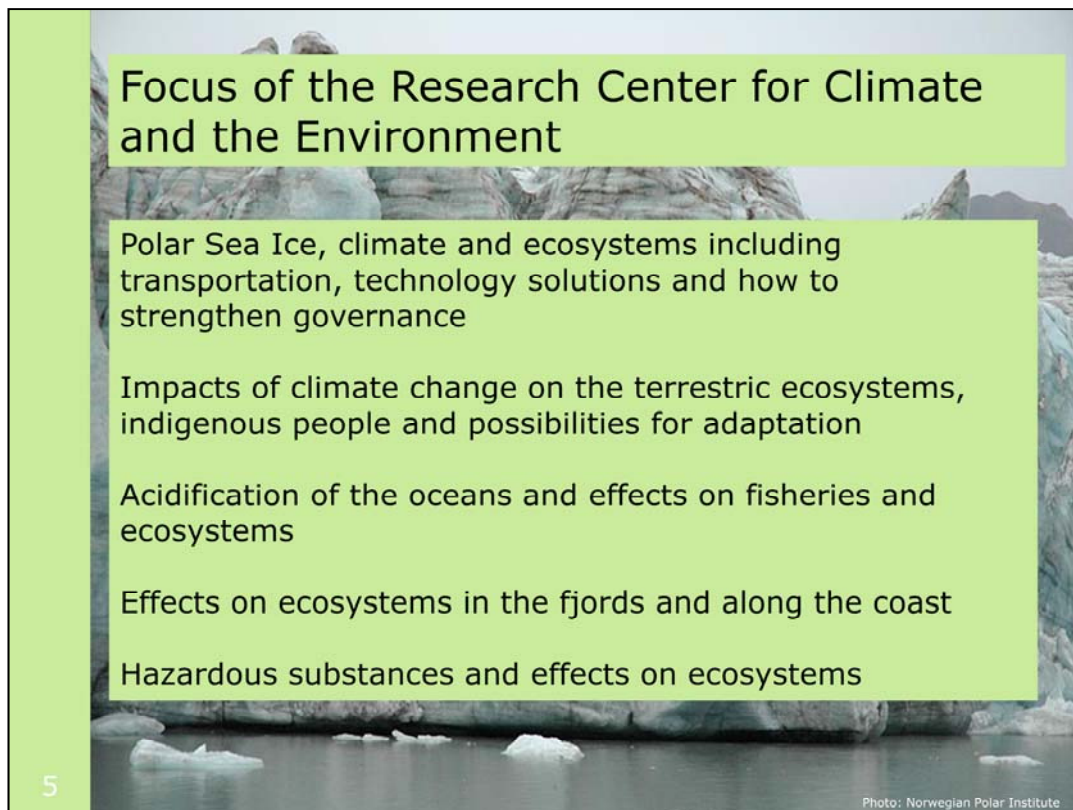
Hazardous substances, one of our global challenges, don't follow any national borders. Emissions are transported by winds and ocean currents to the Arctic and deposited there. We therefore need to build a **strong research network internationally**. We believe that such research can provide the best fundament for policy developments and initiatives in this area.



Many of the new challenges are **marine related issues** , but also **issues on the mainland** (which is the focus of the Barents co-operation). Economic activities in coastal areas and on the continental shelf, will often have an impact on activities on the mainland in the Barents region.

This is also the reason why this Center on Climate Change and Environment in Tromsø will develop **knowledge on impacts on the marine and the terrestrial ecosystems and the effects on related industries as well as indigenous people.**

It is also important to find technology solutions to **limit the “ecological footprint” of economic activities and also approach issues of good governance.** We need a **multi-disciplinary approach.** This will include **natural science, technology and social sciences**, in order to understand and provide advice on these complex challenges.



The focus areas of the Research Center for Climate and the Environment are:

The Polar Sea Ice, climate and ecosystems including transportation, technology solutions and how to strengthen governance,

Impacts of climate change and on the terrestrial ecosystems, indigenous people and possibilities for adaptation,

Acidification of the oceans and effects on fisheries and the marine ecosystems,

Effects on ecosystems in the fjords and along the coast and

Hazardous substances and effects on ecosystems.



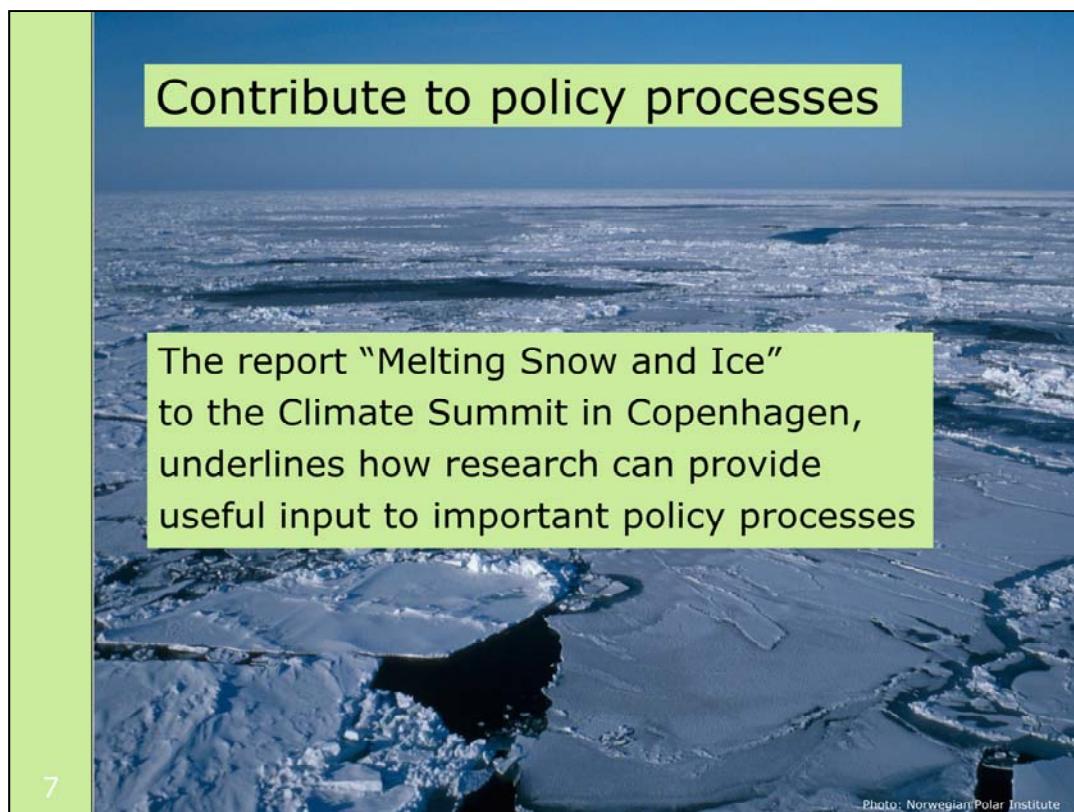
The research focus of the Center is interdisciplinary. This is why we will expand the number of institutions here **from 9** in the current Polar Environmental Center, **to approximately 16 institutions** under the roof of the new Research Center for Climate Change and Environment in Tromsø.

We are planning for the formal opening of the Center, September 1 this year, and preliminary facilities will be established for about 30 new researchers. In less than a three years time, we will provide new permanent space on the southern wing of this building for approximately 150 researchers, including guest researchers.

The Research Center on Climate Change and Environment in Tromsø will be a **network of national institutions**, promoting co-operation regionally and nationally. It comes in addition to other research efforts at the national level and is in line with the national climate research strategy, recently presented recently by the Minister of Education (Climate 21).

To manage all these new challenges, we need more systematic monitoring of environmental effects as well as more research.

A **new modern research infrastructure** will be provided through Svalbard Integrated Observatory System on Earth Sciences, being a part of the EU ESFRI Roadmap. This will provide a modern and high class infrastructure, that will benefit research in the area and make Tromsø and Svalbard more attractive to international partners.



Let me give you one example on how we think this new center can **contribute to policy processes**. One important component of the new center will be to understand the dynamics of melting ice, which is also the reason why we have an increasing research activity on Ice, Climate and Ecosystems (ICE) in Tromsø.

The Report on Melting Snow and Ice to COP 15 in Copenhagen, underlines how research can provide useful input to important policy processes.



We will **welcome researchers** from Russia, US, Canada, India and China as well as from the Nordic countries, to co-operate with institutions here at this Center for Climate Change and Environment.

We will also **contribute to the important work of the Arctic Council**, with the secretariat located in this building.

We are taking the **first steps this year to establish the Center and stimulate research** and plan to increase our efforts next year, being dependent on decisions in relation to the state budget.



One objective of the center, is to **strengthen research information and outreach** to public administration, business and industry as well as the general public. It is important to provide best know how for decision making in public and private sector as well as to promote general awareness raising on these complex issues.

Let me phrase it in a popular way: **“Research results should contribute to enlighten people in general and stimulate debate and further research. They should not be forgotten and wasted in a drawer”**.

Now I will give the floor to the Director of the Norwegian Polar Institute, and to excellent researchers of the University of Tromsø and the Norwegian Institute on Air Research, who will provide us with some highlights of the research here in Tromsø, in fields that we want to strengthen.

Thank you for the attention!