

Minister of Petroleum and Energy Tord Lien
Akersgata 59, 0033 Oslo
Postboks 8148 Dep, 0033 Oslo
Norway

October 10, 2016

Dear Minister Lien,

We, the undersigned, express our concern that Norway is facilitating the continued pursuit of oil in the Arctic Ocean. We respectfully urge the Norwegian government to avoid making a grave mistake for the Arctic, the global climate, and for future generations and instead halt oil exploration and development there.

As you know, the climate is changing faster than our efforts to address it, so we must see real action following the global climate agreement made in Paris. Norway has already ratified the agreement and set targets to reduce emissions, demonstrating good intentions. But the announcement last month of a 24th oil licensing round and a major new exploration campaign in the Barents Sea from Statoil both clash with Norway's global climate commitments and an internationally equitable pathway to addressing climate change.

Further, opening new areas of the Arctic Ocean to drilling stand in contrast to actions and announcements from other Arctic nations, including our own, that reflect the urgent need to protect its increasingly warming waters. The most recent is Russia's announcement of a moratorium on any new Arctic offshore oil and gas leasing. Earlier this year, the US-Canada joint agreement committed the countries to science-based decisions regarding Arctic protection and development - that is, development decisions need to pass the test of emissions against the backdrop of the Paris agreement. Additionally, late last year the US canceled the remaining scheduled Arctic offshore lease sales under its current Offshore Oil and Gas Five Year Leasing Program and rejected companies' offshore oil lease extensions. And it is our hope that the US will forge ahead on this trajectory and take US Arctic Ocean drilling off the table.

The actions by these countries are also in line with the Joint Statement from the US-Nordic Leaders' Summit in May of this year, which noted that:

"The leaders recognize that climate change is one of the foremost challenges the world is facing. No effort should be spared in making concrete progress domestically and abroad over the coming decades by shifting to low carbon economies and creating more resilient communities."

It was especially disappointing to hear the announcement of your 23rd licensing round just a few days after the Summit and this statement.

The vast majority of proven fossil fuel reserves cannot be burned if we wish to limit global warming to the goals agreed to in Paris. A recent study in *Nature* found that if we are to avoid runaway climate change, we need to keep all Arctic oil and gas reserves in the ground. Furthermore, new Arctic reserves would not come to market for many years and would produce for decades beyond the point when a transition to clean alternatives would be necessary.

Now is the moment for Norway to walk the talk of the Paris climate agreement, which your nation laudably was one of the first to ratify. Indeed, Norway has a strong record of environmental protection, including having the highest per capita number of electric vehicles in the world and being the first nation to completely ban clear-cutting of trees. We therefore urge Norway to honor its reputation as an environmental leader by withdrawing the licenses from the 23rd licensing round and canceling the 24th licensing round.

The impacts we now see in the Arctic are indicators of what the entire planet faces if world leaders decide to maintain the status quo. The question must not be who will develop the last barrel of oil, it must be who will show the leadership needed to ensure we do not fail in our commitment to protect this and future generations from climate disruption. We should act responsibly and quickly to protect this special environment and invest in a sustainable pathway for both the region and the planet.

Respectfully,

Cindy Shogan
Executive Director
Alaska Wilderness League

Miyoko Sakashita
Oceans Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Trip Van Noppen

President

EARTHJUSTICE

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