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**Conference on Children and Punishment
Oslo, September 22, 2011 – welcome speech**

State Secretary, Ombudsmen, Director Generals, and
honourable guests from Norway, Russia and the Council
of Europe.

It is a great honour to open this Norwegian-Russian
conference on Children and Punishment.

Norway and Russia has a long standing cooperation in
Correctional Services. In the past decade, focus has
increasingly been on vulnerable groups, and in particular
on juveniles. This focus has brought about not just a
broader criminal justice approach in joint projects, but also

an interdepartmental approach – much resembling our own national process developing new policies and solutions for young offenders.

Since its inception, this government has been working to strengthen interagency approaches to prevention, rehabilitation and re-integration of young offenders.

As the political dialogue in the justice sector between Norway and Russia has been growing ever closer, these same objectives have been introduced in the practical cooperation between our countries. This was particularly emphasized in the cooperation programme between the Ministries of Justice from January 2010.

The Norwegian Government is developing its sanctions and measures towards juveniles committing crime, including more focus on prevention, mediation and sanctions more focused on rehabilitation.

At this conference much of this will be presented in detail, including our proposal for a new sanction for young offenders, launched by the government to the parliament in June this year as a draft for a new legislation. The content of this new sanction is based on experiences made in local projects carried out over the last 6 years.

Both Russia and Norway are in reform - the Russian Penal Service has begun major structural reforms, including reforms for young offenders. I am indeed looking forward

to learn more details about these in the key note speech by the Russian Director General Alexander Rejmer.

By its very size Russian penal reform has a global impact and is followed closely worldwide. The speed and direction of the Russian reform programme has demonstrated the decisiveness and effectiveness of the Russian government in this sector. It stands out as a clear example to the world that major penal reform is possible – indeed also in countries with large correctional services systems - like in the Russian federation. This is an inspiration to us as it should be to many other countries.

Though, size clearly matters, we share challenges in how to approach juveniles in conflict with law. How do we meet

these children so that chances are better they will succeed in growing up to live law abiding lives in our societies?

We try to develop our systems in Norway and Russia based on similar values – similar values that repeatedly is expressed in our ever closer political cooperation in the justice sector. The focus of our cooperation is in conformity with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which dictates that prison for children shall only be used in very special cases when all other alternatives have been considered and found inadequate.

Based on joint values, our practical cooperation should aim at sharing knowledge and experience for the mutual

benefit of our children. We must try to develop projects in this direction. A good example is that Norway and Russia now will work together on the implementation on a rehabilitation program for juvenile offenders. This program has documented effect on improved behavior among juvenile offenders. Norway and Russia will work together on research and evaluation to ensure quality in its implementation in new institutions.

Likewise, Norway and Russia has a joint approach to mediation as an alternative to penal sanctions. This has resulted in practical cooperation aiming at strengthening mediation as an alternative. We should aim at working together to learn from each other so that our cooperation

is of mutual benefit in developing our efforts to use restorative justice as an alternative.

It is important that all our projects have a research component. Research based knowledge is the basics for good practices and must be part of our joint projects in order for us to achieve joint political goals for our societies.

Much cooperation activities between the correctional services of Norway and Russia have been regionally based so far. It is very important that there is close correlation between various regional activities and the central political exchange between Norway and Russia. A conference like this is necessary and important to maintain this strong

correlation. We aim at developing a new cooperation programme between the Ministries of Justice from 2012 when our recurrent cooperation programme expire. We also work with other cooperation agreements with other Russian counterparts in the justice sector, such as police and prosecution that also falls under the responsibility of the Norwegian Ministry of Justice. New cooperation agreements in the justice sector should support our overall joint political goals and values established in the political dialogue between our countries.

The goal of this Government is to prevent better, solve more, react faster and rehabilitate better. Children who commit crimes face society with special challenges.

Investing time and resources in juvenile offenders may

prevent recidivism. This is necessary to give the population safety and security, but also to look after young people who are in the danger zone for commission of crimes and developing a criminal career.

I wish you all a successful conference and good luck in the continuation of this very important work.