

## **"The official statement from the Home Rule Government of Greenland on a possible opening of the North West Passage"**

### ***1 – The position of Greenland in relation to the opening of the North West Passage, and subsequent increase in traffic.***

Climate change entails a number of changes in and around Greenland. Sea ice melts faster than previously, and it is expected that this in the long term can bring about an opening of the North West Passage. An opening of the North West Passage will imply commercial navigation in up to now undisturbed waters, and such changes will bring new challenges.

With an active effort, the increased traffic along our shores can lead to increased economic commercial activity in our harbours. The opening of the North West Passage can thereby contribute to the economic development needed to support the increased self-government.

On the other hand, increased navigation activity means an increased risk of pollution e.g. oil spillage. The International Marine Organization (IMO) is currently working on an update of IMO guidelines for navigation in icy waters. It is intended that these guidelines will be made obligatory. Greenland is an active participant in this work.

### ***2 – The position of Greenland in relation to a possible future conflict on the resources of the sea.***

The five Arctic nations – Canada, Denmark, Norway, The Russian Federation and the USA met in Ilulissat in May 2008, and adopted the Ilulissat Declaration. The declaration has as its basis that climate change is a fact and that climate change will have large scale consequences for the Arctic and the Polar Ocean. At the same time, the nations in the declaration express their continuing support to the existing set of regulations on the sea and its resources.

The Polar Ocean is included in the regulations in the convention of the Law of the Sea as well as other international conventions, e.g. within the framework of the International Marine Organization. The convention of the law of the sea also regulates the question of the demarcation of the continental shelf. All nations, including the USA, recognise this set of regulations. However, the USA has not yet ratified the convention of the Law of the Sea.

Greenland was one of the initiators behind the Ilulissat Declaration and continues to regard the agreement from Ilulissat – and the existing set of agreements – as the appropriate set of constructive tools, should conflicts on the resources of the seas arise in the future.

### ***3 – Greenland in a global world with increasing demand for fossil fuels.***

Due to a sparse population pattern, long transport distances and an aging fishing fleet, Greenland has a relative high consumption of fossil fuels. Without this consumption, everyday life simply would not be possible. The changing prices on fossil fuels therefore affect the economy.

At the same time, Greenland is investing intensively in the construction of alternative sources of energy – primarily hydropower. Hydropower is a CO<sub>2</sub> – neutral form of energy, with the potential of becoming a key player for economic development, without endangering the local or global environment. The development of alternative sources of energy will reduce Greenland's dependency of fossil fuels.

Furthermore, surveys indicate that the seas around Greenland may contain one of the largest reserves of oil in the world, which has the potential of becoming an important future source of income.