

Christine Sagen Helgø:

## **NATO Parliamentary Assembly**

Sunday 11 October at 19:45, Stavanger Concert Hall

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Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Norway and to Stavanger, the energy capital of Europe.

And welcome to our Concert Hall, which we are very proud of.

It was officially opened in 2012 by the Norwegian Crown prince. It has been a great success with 225 000 visitors last year.

We are truly honored that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly have chosen Stavanger as venue for your 61st annual session.

Stavanger is proud to host NATO through the Joint Warfare Centre, which played a crucial role in training NATO members for ISAF duty from 2004 to 2014.

I have had the pleasure of visiting the training facilities myself several times.

Stavanger has always been a gateway to the world at large, and we like to introduce ourselves as open, energetic and innovative. The last nearly 50 years of oil and gas activities have shaped Stavanger into an international city.

Out of a population of 132 000, 22 percent have their origin in another country than Norway. We just passed 181 nationalities represented in Stavanger.

Since the last count Bhutan, Bahrain, Belize and Costa Rica have been added to the list. We see this diversity as one of our strongest assets and the best way to meet our future challenges.

We strongly encourage and welcome the establishment of

**international companies. We see the business, the technology and not least the people and cultures as an enrichment to our region.**

**We are now in a process of joining all good forces to prepare for an increase of refugees, from Syria in particular. There is a strong will among people living here to contribute. The city council of Stavanger has decided that we will settle 250 Syrian refugees in addition to the ordinary quota in the coming two years. We have also established a Syria center to coordinate the voluntary work.**

**Current security policy issues, such as the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East are among the central issues on your agenda in Stavanger.**

**I wish you all the best of luck with your assembly and the important work that you do, and I hope you get some time to enjoy some of what the city and region has to offer. Again, welcome to Stavanger.  
Thank you**