HORDALAND FYLKESKOMMUNE

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U.Off. MELDING VESTLANDS PADET

NORTH SEA

17th March 2004

Dear Colleagues,

After 9 years as president for the North Sea Commission the time has come for me to step down. They have been nine interesting and challenging years, which I look back on with both pleasure and satisfaction. I do believe the North Sea Commission makes a difference and we have achieved many of the goals set out.

In Denmark we have an ongoing debate on the restructure of the county councils. Which is the best organisation to deliver public services to the citizens? The state, the county councils, the municipalities or professional boards without any democratically elected members? A number of solutions are up for debate and as Leader of the County Council in Viborg Amt and Vice-president of the Association of Danish County Councils this debate must have my full attention in the coming two years. It is fundamental to us all, that a regional democracy – directly elected, is a key player in the future of Europe. I hope and believe this will still be the case in Denmark after the restructuring.

At last year's General Assembly in Cuxhaven I was elected for another two year period as President of the North Sea Commission. Prior to this I did consider my position, but with no official candidates, my concern for the continuity in the work of the North Sea Commission persuaded me to take another period. Under the extraordinary circumstances of the Danish structural debate, I have, however, decided to step down at the General Assembly this summer and I am therefore urging interested candidates to come forward.

It is of great importance to us all that the North Sea Commission will maintain its momentum during the process of handing over the presidency as well as the secretariat. I will do my utmost to secure the continuation of the work, and the current secretariat in Viborg will be at the disposal of the North Sea Commission in a transition period up until the end of 2004.

It is of great concern to me, that the coming president will be given the best possible working conditions to further develop the North Sea Commission, and that we – in close cooperation with colleagues from the NSC Member regions - can set new and ambitious goals for the Commission.

President

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the work done over the past nine years and I am confident that the North Sea Commission is looking ahead to a very exciting and challenging future and I would like to wish the coming President and the North Sea Commission all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Bent Hansen

President

North Sea Commission