Ladies and gentlemen!

I am pleased that you have taken the time to come here to listen to our concerns regarding Sellafield, and I hope you will give us some update on the latest developments and plans regarding safety at Sellafield and Thorp.

I also look forward to what promises to be an interesting debate about Sellafield and hope this can be an opportunity to develop ideas that can bring us further in the matter.

I represent the beautiful region of Norway called Nordland. Nordland County is the third northernmost county in Norway with a population of 240,000 inhabitants.

The people in our region live in close contact with, and are dependent on, our natural resources, of which the living ocean is one of the most important to us. We like to say that we host the world's most beautiful coast! Our county is a persistent meeting between sea and land. The coast and islands have been inhabited for many centuries, and we do our best to sustain the region in this way.

Our rich resources and location has given us advantages within areas such as fishing, mineral exploitation and energy production. Also tourism is an important industry both in the urban and rural areas of Nordland.

As you understand, there are many reasons why we love our county. And that is the main reason why the activity on Sellafield has been on our political agenda for several years. The operation and decommissioning of Sellafield are issues of great political and public concern, also for the population of Nordland.

As you know, Norway has no nuclear installations of its own, apart from two research reactors. But there are many nuclear installations and other sources of pollution risk in our neighbourhood.

Some of these installations are of particular concern to us, because they:
- represent a significant possibility for radioactive releases
- because of concerns about safety
- and due to their geographical position and potential to cause air and water-born pollution in Norway and Nordland.

We consider Sellafield, and in particular the storage facilities for liquid High Level Waste, to be such a high risk site. Others include the remaining Chernobyl-type reactors and the Kola Nuclear Power Plant close to our border with Russia. Still today we have to deal with the impacts of disaster at Chernobyl.
Sellafield has the clear potential of causing transboundary radioactive pollution in the event of a major accident. Prevailing winds and sea-currents make Norway and, in specific, Nordland a close neighbour downstream. Both the history of acid rain and that of discharges from Sellafield demonstrate that Norway is at risk if a major release of radioactivity should occur.

An assessment from the Norwegian radiation Protection Authority has evaluated the potential impacts on Norway of a Sellafield accident in terms of radioactive pollution and the consequences this may have for the population. As mentioned, we are especially concerned about the highly hazardous High Level Waste from reprocessing at Sellafield. It goes without saying that if just a fraction of this liquid waste is released into the atmosphere, the consequences could be serious for neighbouring countries like Norway.

Our access to information on safety issues at Sellafield has so far been limited. Neither the track record of incidents at Sellafield, nor the assessment of safety culture made by the British Authorities after the 2005 leak is reassuring in this regard.

So, my main concern is related to the safety culture at Sellafield and the transparency. My hopes are that all of us will do whatever we can to improve the safety further and to give the information we all need to reassure the people in neighbouring countries. I hope that you will do whatever is possible to reduce the hazard related to nuclear waste stored at Sellafield, and that you do it fast!

In order to reassure us, and the inhabitants of Nordland, we ask for an international expert peer review. This can give re-assurance that THORP is operating safely.

The Norwegian approach to Sellafield is one of political dialogue. And I am grateful to have the opportunity today to be in such a close dialogue with all of you.

At the same time, we hope for further transparency and access to relevant information. I need to reassure the population of Nordland that we receive the relevant information if an accident were to occur.

In my opinion, the dialogue between UK and Norwegian authorities over Sellafield is constructive and useful. I hope we can continue the dialog and have a constructive meeting today.

Thank you for your attention!