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## State Visit to Norway: Belgium and Norway, reliable partners for a safer and more sustainable future

Their Majesties the King and the Queen will undertake a State Visit to Norway from 24 to 26 March. It is the first Belgian State Visit to Norway in a generation and builds on the momentum created two years ago during the economic mission led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid.

The visit highlights the close strategic relationship between the two countries, which share the same values and the same ambition to make Europe stronger, safer and more sustainable. The warm family ties between the Belgian and Norwegian royal families add a particularly human dimension to this relationship and attest to the long-standing bond between the two nations.

### Ministerial delegation

Their Majesties are accompanied by a ministerial delegation, composed of:

- Mr Maxime Prévot, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation;
- Mr Theo Francken, Minister of Defence and Foreign Trade;
- Mr Oliver Paasch, Minister-President of the German-speaking Community;
- Mr Adrien Dolimont, Minister-President of Wallonia;
- Ms Elisabeth Degryse, Minister-President of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels;
- Mr Matthias Diependaele, Minister-President of the Flemish Government;
- Mr Boris Dillières, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region.

The delegation also includes representatives from the business and academic communities.

### A strengthening of our political, diplomatic and economic relations

In addition to the meeting between the Sovereigns and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maxime Prévot, will meet his counterpart, Minister Espen Barth Eide. They will discuss strengthening bilateral relations in the field of energy, particularly cooperation in the North Sea and the development of cross-border CO<sub>2</sub> transport. The talks will also cover issues of competitiveness and economic security, as well as several major international dossiers, including the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East. They will also address topics related to NATO, the transatlantic relationship, security in the Arctic, and the reform of the United Nations.

*"In these troubled times on the international stage, consolidating and strengthening our strategic ties is more essential than ever to defend a rules-based international order, reinforce our cooperation on energy and security, and open the way to new forms of collaboration,"* explains Maxime Prévot.

### Energy security as the backbone of the bilateral relationship

Belgium and Norway together form one of Europe's most important energy corridors. An 814-km underwater pipeline, one of the longest in the world, connects the two countries. Norway is a key supplier of natural gas; Belgium, thanks to its ports, terminals and pipelines, serves as a gateway for its distribution to the European mainland. By further unlocking this strategic potential, both countries contribute to strengthening the resilience of the European energy market. 90% of Norway's imports to Belgium consist of gas and oil.

The State Visit highlights this cooperation, notably during the High Level Forum on Carbon Capture & Storage and Energy Security in Stavanger, where the potential of large-scale CO<sub>2</sub> storage and the role of both countries in the energy transition will be central themes. Belgium aims to develop into a corridor for the transport of industrial CO<sub>2</sub> to Norway, thereby supporting both climate objectives and industrial competitiveness.

In addition, the complementarity of wind patterns in the North Sea offers unique opportunities. By balancing fluctuations in wind energy production, both countries can make a more stable contribution to a future North Sea network of offshore wind farms.

A tangible symbol of industrial partnership is the visit to DEMA's Norse Wind offshore installation vessel, acquired in 2025 following the takeover of the Norwegian company Havfram. During the *Harnessing the North Sea* event in Oslo, the Belgian triple helix model – cooperation between academia, the private sector and public authorities – will be presented as a key driver of the shared green transition.

#### A growing security and defence partnership

The North Sea is one of the world's most strategic maritime zones. Belgium and Norway protect critical infrastructure, energy connections and digital cables located there. The security of this area is essential for Europe's safety and prosperity.

As a northern ally, Norway plays a unique role within NATO. Belgium is strengthening its operational and industrial cooperation with Norway, notably through its choice of the Norwegian NASAMS air-defence system, a clear sign of trust and the growing convergence between both defence ecosystems. This defence cooperation will be highlighted in Stavanger during meetings with strategic partners.

#### Shared commitment to the international rules-based order and humanitarian values

Both countries are strong advocates of an international order based on rules and on the protection of humanitarian principles. A roundtable at the Nobel Peace Center will focus on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and the promotion of human dignity. This reflects their shared tradition of dialogue and multilateral cooperation.

#### Societal and cultural anchoring

The State Visit also includes a rich cultural and societal component. At the Deichman Library in Oslo, Their Majesties will take part in *Across Borders: Reading, a Skill for Life*, an initiative that promotes reading and curiosity among young people. This reflects shared values such as education, cultural exchange and inclusion.

The programme and meetings also provide opportunities for cooperation on science, innovation and



sustainable architecture, with visits to Norwegian research institutions and cultural landmarks.

### Reliable neighbours, ambitious partners

Although Belgium and Norway are geographically separated by the North Sea, they share the same horizon. This State Visit confirms the deep strategic alignment between the two countries in the fields of energy, security, innovation and humanitarian engagement.

It also strengthens Belgium's image in Norway as a technologically advanced, reliable and forward-looking partner. Together, the two countries contribute to building a safer, greener and more resilient Europe.

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