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Dear fellow geoscientists,

The IGC has had a long and outstanding history since its first Congress in Paris in 1878. With strong emphasis on crossdisciplinary symposia in earth sciences and first-class excursions, the IGC has become the Olympic Games for geoscientists. The Nordic countries are proud to arrange the 33rd International Geological Congress in Oslo, Norway with the goal of developing the IGC tradition and giving the Congress a local flavour.

2008 is the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE), and the International Polar Year (IPY). Both will be addressed with special symposia and in the general programme. We have accepted 6,500 abstracts covering most fields in geosciences, and the Congress in Oslo presents a unique opportunity to discuss high level science in a broad perspective.

We are delighted that StatoilHydro has seen the potential in IGC and is our main sponsor. The interest for petroleum exploration and exploitation in Norway is significant and we are very pleased with so many contributions to the scientific programme on petroleum geoscience. The Nordic Countries are also important producers of metals and minerals and more than 20 symposia in this field demonstrate the interest. The development of IGC as a major meeting place for petroleum and ore geology is important for the future of IGC.

How can we improve communication between earth science and society? We have developed a programme of "Themes of the Day" with contributions from scientists, politicians and leaders from industry and government. The themes include the origins of life and biodiversity, climate change, geohazards, water and health, ores and minerals, energy and "earth and beyond". These seven fields of knowledge are all vital for the future of our planet.

It has been our consistent aim to limit the environmental impact of the Congress as much as possible. This has resulted, for example, in the choice of a simple Congress bag, an abstract CD-ROM rather than book, and rail transport for participants between Oslo and the Congress venue.

Since the first IGC in 1878, we have experienced a period of increased specialisation. Now is the time for a more holistic view of earth sciences. The 33rd IGC presents a unique opportunity to learn and debate!

I wish you an enjoyable stay in Oslo and Lillestrøm.

Arne Bjørlykke
President, 33rd IGC

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