

## Speech by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg

Your Majesties  
Your Royal Highnesses  
Ladies and gentlemen

We have reached the eve of the great day.

We are gathered here this evening to celebrate two young people who are radiant with joy and anticipation. We share their joy.

Norwegian writer Halldis Moren Vesaas wrote that it is not true that love makes people blind. It makes them wise. Love has a price. But it is a precious thing to find the person one wants to share one's life with. And it is a fundamental principle of our Christian cultural legacy that: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Our fairytales are woven around this desire - to find love and happiness. Only those with goodness in their hearts can find the way to the king's castle and win half the kingdom. Only those who can endure trial and tribulation. Over the last year, and right up to the present moment, we have seen this strength in the bonds between the Crown Prince and his fiancée. They stand together. They are ready to take up their duties together.

Exactly 10 years ago, when he was 18 and had come of age, Crown Prince Haakon stood in this banqueting hall and made his first official speech. He compared himself to Askeladden, the hero of Norwegian fairytales, the poor boy who ventures out into the world and finds all kinds of objects on the road, but who throws away nothing until he has examined it and seen whether he can find a use for it. We have followed the Crown Prince from his earliest years. We have learned to know him as he is - determined, full of respect for other people and highly conscious of the task ahead of him. We have seen him at the helm in the Navy and in the Council of State at the Palace. We have learned to know Mette-Marit Tjessem Høiby, the Crown Prince's chosen companion. We have seen and heard a courageous woman who has met us with warmth, honesty and maturity. These two are required to share their lives with others to a much greater extent than other people. Together they will now bear the responsibility and the duties involved in uniting the best of tradition order with the demand of a new era.

The kings of modern-day Norway have one thing in common: they have managed to reflect their own time. This can form a contrast to other times, other traditions and other values. But our kings have managed to build bridges - between generations, between values and between people in all parts of the country. Each in his own time, they have all been *the people's king*. King Haakon, who was elected by the people, who adopted the motto "We give our all for Norway" and who said No! when threatened by the occupying forces during the Second World War. King Olav, a regal figure and at the same time a king of the people, a symbol of unity for so many years, whose memory the people honoured with thousands of candles in front of the Palace on that dark winter's night. King Harald, tireless in the service of his people, serving them with dignity, who knows every corner of his country, and who is a leading ambassador for Norway, together with Queen Sonja, who is deeply committed to sharing her love and knowledge of Norwegian culture.

Now we are getting to know the Crown Prince and the future Crown Princess. We have heard them, in connection with the establishment of their Humanitarian Fund, emphasizing the importance of solidarity in a world where so many are suffering from poverty and want. We have seen them on an ice-cold February evening in Oslo, marking their aversion to racism and intolerance together with tens of thousands of others throughout the country.

As a new century opens before us, "We give our all for Norway" is also becoming a vision of a Norway for all. Norway is an old nation though a young state. We gained our independence and a new Royal Family at the start of the last century. Now we are looking ahead towards a new era, with a new generation of a monarchy that has served its country and its people for almost a hundred years. We see a Crown Prince who is exercising the right of every free individual - the right to be guided by love in his choice of a wife. We see a young woman who is mature and who knows that love transforms all things. We see two young people who are willing to bear the pressure that their position involves in a media-dominated society. We, the people, wish these two young people and their little family every happiness as they grow and develop. May they, too, be able to close the door when they need to, and find peace and quiet together.

Tomorrow Crown Prince Haakon and Mette-Marit will vow to be true to each other, just like in fairytales, which always end with a wedding, the most powerful symbol of love and happiness. Now this point has been reached in real life. Our future king has found the woman he wishes to share his joys and sorrows with. Once more Norway has a Crown Princess for its Crown Prince. And tomorrow the whole of Norway will experience the truth of the beautiful words from that hymn to love: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."