

**21. World Trotting Conference, Oslo, 16.-21. May 2009**

**Welcome speech by Acting President of the ITA,  
Member of the Board of UET and the Norwegian Trotting Association**

**Mr. Torbjørn Frøysnes**

**Dear Minister Brekk,**

**Dear delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen !**

**It's a great pleasure and honour for me to welcome you all – delegates, observers and accompanying persons – to the 21st World Trotting Conference here in Oslo.**

**This is the second time we are hosting this conference, since we also had the pleasure of being hosts for the World Trotting Conference in 1975.**

**Our aim for this conference is to address the most important issues of international trotting of to-day – which means that we will focus on the market situation, with particular emphasis on developments in Europe, animal welfare and sport/breeding. We are facing challenges to our sport:**

- We have to make sure that betting on our horses always gives a fair return to the sport, or the sport will collapse.**
- We have to ensure the integrity of betting and of all aspects of our sport**
- We have to make sure that our sport is free of doping**
- We have to take the greatest care of our horses and respect and promote animal welfare**

**These are issues that are highly prioritised by the International Trotting Association, as well as by the European Trotting Association and by all the national associations in our member countries.**

**The promotion of trotting and pacing throughout the world tops the list of aims of the International Trotting Association. We aim to create both governmental and public interest in the sport, and help in the development and implementation of a**

uniform set of International Rules and Regulations for the sport. The International Trotting Association has set up several commissions and committees to ensure it can meet its objectives, and we look forward to their further work and deliberations, this time in Oslo.

I hope that your visit to Norway will give you all an opportunity to learn a bit more about our country and our culture. We are especially happy to welcome you to join us in the celebration of our national day – the 17th of May. For us this day is unique, and hopefully you all will feel the special atmosphere and the traditions of our celebration.

Norwegian trotting is making a positive contribution to our society and the economy, with more than 5000 directly and twice as many indirectly employed. We had more than 5.800 racehorses starting last year, competing in close to 4.700 races, practically on a daily basis the year round. Betting on horse racing is solid, and providing the income for the industry. We are the 4. largest trotting nation in Europe, measured in turn-over of the betting on horse racing, with some 3.7 bn. NOK in 2008, an increase of 17% compared to 2007.

Generally, the performance standard of our horses is good, although we do not have the performance level of the top European racing nations which have substantially higher populations of trotters.

Norwegian trotting represents a well organised and professional industry. These are characteristics that we share with European trotting in general. It is indeed big business. In the European trotting there are 100.000 people directly employed, and 200.000 indirectly. We have more than 65.000 starting horses, racing at over 400 racetracks all over Europe. We are maintaining and protecting the European cultural landscape and environment through the extensive use of 200.000 hectares of agricultural land. Our organisations are putting this system at the disposal for horse race betting, through clear and transparent agreements, and for the purpose of giving our industries a sustainable economy. The total turnover of betting amounts to 9 bn. Euros annually, giving a contribution of some 2 bn. Euros annually to taxes and revenues to our Governments.

Since betting is the main income for our noble sport, we must demand equally high standards from the betting companies that are allowed to operate on our data and products.

Our sport is founded on century long traditions. The product that we produce, the race horse, is the end product of a long value chain. It starts with breeding, with the small foals that are borne in the spring and summer, and live with their

mothers in wide grasslands all over Europe, from Sicily in the south to Lapland and Finnmark north of the Arctic Circle, from the shores of the Atlantic to the plains of Kazan. They wade in blue grass at the great studs of Kentucky, and are cared for in countless farms, big and small, throughout the United States, in Canada, in New Zealand, in Australia and many other countries. They represent the love and hope of countless families and sport representatives and fans. They are brought up and trained by professionals, who represent the fine and long-standing tradition of great equine competence. And they are finally brought to their destination, the racetrack, with proud and hopeful owners and supporters ringside.

It would be intolerable if betting on these outstanding end products of a long value chain should be subject to fraud and greed and unethical behaviour. Intolerable, because this value chain is so important for a sound economy, for social relations involving family and youth, for the maintenance of the cultural landscape – for all the values that our societies should protect and promote.

So let us stand together and send a clear message from this conference that we will defend the values and ethics of our sport and of the betting systems.

As you all know, the World Driving Championship is also going on here in Norway these days. We have picked five of our tracks from different parts of our country to give our trotting fans the possibility to meet some of the best drivers in the world. At the same time we of course hope to show the participants in the championship some more of our beautiful country. In 2007 at the World Trotting Conference in Christchurch, New Zealand, the conference decided to name the winner's trophy: The Ulf Thoresen Trophy. We are very happy and honoured for this. Our world star driver Ulf Thoresen, was four times winner of the World Driving Championship, among many other big victories

We are very pleased to host the World Driving Championship, and we hope that it will also promote our sport to the broad public.

I am sure that the World Trotting Conference will strengthen and develop closer ties between the participating nations, in the development of our great sport. On behalf of the board – and all Norwegian trotting fans – I wish you all heartily welcome to Norway and to the 21st World Trotting Conference!