

PRESS RELEASE – September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## Large interest in Svalbard Tourism Conference

This week more than 100 participants were gathered in Longyearbyen, Svalbard to discuss the future of tourism in Svalbard and how to develop sustainable tourism in a vulnerable Arctic environment.

“The potential for conflicts is large, but the conflict-level is low”, said Anders Anundsen, Norwegian Minister of industry and fishery, when he opened the conference.

Minister Anundsen also stated that the Norwegian government has a clear vision and policy for the further growth and development of tourism in Svalbard. The Governor of Svalbard, Kjerstin Askholt, expressed satisfaction with the good and responsible tourism industry in the archipelago, but also pointed to unused opportunities as well as reasons to be vigilant to the potential of increasing negative impacts of a growing tourism.

Tourism in Svalbard is pointed out as a developing area and has been subject to growing attention after a major decline in Norwegian coal mining in Svalbard. Approximately 60.000 tourists visited Svalbard by airplane last year, and an additional 40.000 arrived by cruise vessels. The objectives for Longyearbyen is to double the number of employees in the tourism industry, which may involve a tripling of the number of tourists.

The conference showed a remarkable level of agreement about the need for sustainable development, and also acknowledged an unused potential in use and marketing of national parks and the interesting cultural history.

The conference was organized in a cooperation between AECO (Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators), Visit Svalbard, Svalbard Business Council and the University in Svalbard – with funding from Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund and participants represented government, tourism industry, researchers, universities. NGOs and others.

Read more about the conference program and participants in Norwegian [here](#).



Photo of the Svalbard Tourism Conference Opening session



Photo of the Norwegian Minister of Justice Anders Anundsen addressing the conference



Photo of The Governor of Svalbard Kjerstin Askholt

# FRISKE FRASPAK

5 – 7 September 2016, Longyearbyen



Photo of the Conference program

## About the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators

AECO is an international organization for expedition cruise operators; dedicated to managing respectable, environmentally-friendly and safe expedition cruising in the Arctic. The members agree that expedition cruises and tourism must be carried out with the utmost consideration for the fragile, natural environment, local cultures and cultural remains, as well as the challenging safety hazards at sea and on land. AECO-members are obligated to operate in accordance with national and international laws and regulations and has agreed upon AECO by-laws and guidelines. All AECO members comply with the organizations operational guidelines, which includes a number of measures that enhance communication, coordination and safety



G Adventures Expedition vessel MV Expedition in Svalbard

***More information***

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