

Med forbehold om endringer  
SPERRET til 6.7.87

India

Statsminister  
Gro Harlem Brundtland

Mr. Prime Minister,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of my fellow Commission members, my Norwegian delegation and myself, may I sincerely thank you for a most cordial reception in such a splendid setting, for your warm words of welcome and for the hearty hospitality extended to us.

I come to India this time in a double capacity - as Prime Minister of Norway but also as Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development - and you have also made me feel doubly welcome and grateful.

Grateful, Mr. Prime Minister, not least for the contributions of India to the work of the World Commission, through the distinguished Indian commissioner Judge Nagerdra Singh and the outstanding experts who worked with us over longer periods. We are most grateful also for the generous invitation of the Indian Government to the Commission to hold this regional meeting here in New Delhi.

Following a decade and a half of standstill or even decline in international cooperation, we on the Commission believe that the time has come to break away from short-sighted attitudes and to rethink the ways in which we manage this planet.

Our report entitled "Our Common Future" is an optimistic report. Even if the threats to the environment have never been greater, we see clear hope for a future for all people that is more prosperous, more just and more secure.

A new era and quality of economic growth, which we call for, can indeed improve our ability to avoid environmental problems and to eradicate poverty. We know that new and sustainable growth need not be environmentally degrading. A new growth must have a different content from the one we experience today. Many present trends are clearly not sustainable.

Mr. Prime Minister, your speech today and your foreword to the Indian edition of "Our Common Future" clearly demonstrate your own personal interest and deep concern for the future. India has provided leadership in important matters on the international political agenda. The support of your government to the work of this commission and to the follow up of our report is plainly invaluable as it moves to the General Assembly this fall.

Mr. Prime Minister, I represent a country with a long tradition of friendship with India.

For most Norwegians the exotic is an important part of our image of India. We admire India as a land of an ancient and rich culture, of great philosophy and literature. Your architectural monuments compare to the seven wonders of the world. Your literature is translated and admired.

For my generation, Mahatma Gandhi, his life and ideas have had a special appeal, and Indias fight for freedom has impressed the Norwegian people. The recent film about the life of Mahatma Gandhi has brought India even closer to us all and contributed to deepening the understanding of your country

We are proud to know that both Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi visited and made friends in Norway on a personal basis, long before they became prime ministers and came to Oslo on official visits in 1959 and 1983 respectively.

The visit to India last year of their Royal Highnesses, Crown Prince Harald and Crown Princess Sonja, was followed with exhilaration by the Norwegian people. It is our hope that the contacts between us, on all levels, will continue to increase in the years to come.

Our trade and cultural relations date far back. For more than a hundred years Norwegian missionaries have worked in India, particularly in the fields of health and education.

The Kerala fisheries project in 1952 was Norway's first bilateral development cooperation project. And even if we are still engaged in fisheries projects - this time in Orissa - our cooperation has indeed grown and expanded in scope since then. It now covers a number of areas, from basic education, progress for women and children, health, and family planning to advanced technology.

Our commercial relations now show a promising potential. Even if we differ in size and population, many of our priorities coincide. Mutually beneficial commercial cooperation could evolve strongly in many fields of high technology. The Agreement signed today on technical, economic and industrial cooperation will I hope, help promoting a much broadened economic relationship into the future. One example is the Norsk Data computers, which are today being produced in India by Indian industry. Our joint resources offer great promise.

Politically we see eye to eye on a range of important issues. In the United Nations and in the network of international organizations we often speak with one tongue, for example in our fight against apartheid in South Africa. Norway always listens with respect to the voice of India as that of a wise counsellor and a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Unfortunately, my visit to your country this time is a short one, but every visit to India - no matter how long - will be too short. It offers some consolation that I know I will be back in March next year to address the Society for International Development here in New Delhi

May I, Mr. Prime Minister, once again thank you for your warm hospitality. Permit me to propose a toast

- to the health of Your Excellency,
- to the happiness and prosperity of the people of India, and
- to the strong and lasting friendship between India and Norway.