

Dakar

Prime Minister

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ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

The ultimate purpose of politics is to help people to a better life, a definition coined by Willy Brandt. Nowhere is the need for increased global political cooperation more urgent than on this continent - to help its people to a better life.

Africa's plight is unique, The rest of the world is experiencing improvements in most accepted indicators of progress. In Africa, too, the success stories are many. But on the whole, the gap between the state of development on this continent and that on others is widening. There are more poor people now than ever before in human history and their numbers are growing at alarming rates in Africa.

The main responsibility for the future of this continent will lie with africans themselves, but we have a special moral and political obligation to respond to the needs of this great continent, where centuries of colonial rule and trade relations have, for better and for worse, left inerascable traces of our cultures. European languages are spoken in most of Africa. Basic conditions exist and can be used to forge a new partnership based on cooperation and mutual self interest.

The agreement in principle between the USA and the Soviet Union to conclude a global INF agreement offers hope that confidence will gradually replace distrust and fear on a global scale, and that conflicts of interest can come down to manageable levels. We seem to be on the threshold of realization that one country's security cannot be obtained at the expense of another, and that real security can only be achieved through

common security. The state of East-West relations will also be decisive to our ability to address global challenges, - of overcoming economic stagnation, poverty and the environmental degradation which now pose an urgent threat to our common survival.

Not least, East-West relations influence the resources, human, financial and technological which are allocated to promote the expansion of global economic cooperation. This is particularly important to the prospects of the African people who have not so far been met with the response required to relieve a worsening situation. The living standard on this continent has been declining since the 1970s. Its ability to produce enough food has been deteriorating since the 1960s.

Environmental problems are a root cause of mass poverty, just as poverty is a source of environmental degradation. That connexion is not new. But our knowledge about the scale and complexity of the problems have never been greater. For the first time in history human activity has the capacity to radically alter global life support systems and the resource base from which we all live. Over the last couple of years these trends have been aggravated by a series of environmental disasters, many of which have occurred outside of Africa. But the droughts and famines in Africa have dwarfed the others in scale and tragedy. Few single catastrophes have more clearly demonstrated the links between environment and development, the links between national and international economic conditions and their impact on the environment, and between environmental degradation and its long term effects on the prospects for development.

We thank the President of Senegal for hosting this meeting and we commend his great role as a spokesman for Africa and its environment. We recall his leading role in the framework of CILSS and that he was recently awarded the Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger. We welcome the ambitious Senegalese programmes for sand dune fixation which in a determined way address the regional threats of desertification.

Poverty is an insult to human dignity. It cannot be stated clearly enough that poverty is largely an effect of environmental collapse - and equally important - poverty is a main cause of environmental decline and disaster. Many countries in Africa are thus caught in a vicious circle. A complex set of circumstances is working against Africa and her people.

In the World Commission on Environment and Development, whose recent report has been presented on two major occasions on this continent, the UNEP Governing Council's meeting in Nairobi in June, and the Summit of the OAU in late July, we focused strongly on Africa. We found that nowhere is the environment/development connection more fragile and visible than here. Nowhere are the negative effects of the interlocking crises more acute. Nowhere are the problems of desertification and deforestation more alarming, and nowhere is soil erosion more of a threat to people's basic capital - the land on which they live.

But there is still time to break out of existing negative patterns. And there is time to adjust and to avoid making the same mistakes as we in the industrialized world have made. These mistakes have cost us billions to clean up and cure, and will cost us additional billions before we have finished dealing with the back-log.

There is still time to chart a new course of action, one which aims at sustainable development - to meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their needs.

But a new era of growth, which the Commission calls for, cannot be based on continued over-exploitation of the resources of Third World countries. The contents of such growth will have to be managed in order to respect the limits of nature.

Growth is also necessary to create the capacity to solve environmental problems. Research, adaption of local technology, environmental education, and the integration of sustainability criteria into national and company policies must go hand in hand

with greater wealth generation and a more equitable distribution within as well as among nations.

A new growth should promote sustainable agricultural practices which encourage food production where the demand is, and which balance the interests of large scale cash-cropping with subsistence farming on the local level.

It should expand the many tree-planting programmes and should be used to check desertification and soil-erosion, to create possibilities to save fuel and to restore the forest cover. Such growth will also give ordinary people more hope and real options for the future, including the option to limit the size of their families.

But for this to happen, fundamental changes must be brought about in the global economic conditions. A revival of the multilateral approach is necessary if national economic potentials are to be fully realized.

The debt crisis is placing intolerable burdens on many African countries which depend on commodity exports. They are caught in a downward spiral, taxing their natural resources at rates that will lead to their rapid depletion and devastation. The international community needs to address the debt crisis in a responsible manner which takes due account of the legitimate interests of both lenders and borrowers.

President Kenneth Kaunda made the concerns of Africa penetratingly clear to me recently. He said "Quite often I find myself helpless when I look at what we are doing to destroy our environment because we want to develop, and yet it is quite clear to every thinking person that this type of development which destroys the environment in the process is no development at all".

Much of the debt cannot be paid back through means that make sense. The world needs to come to Africa's assistance. Countries need new loans on concessional terms, new investments

and economic reforms. The flows of finance will have to be turned back to Africa. Donors have neglected to reach internationally agreed targets far too long. Developing countries need much greater financial inflows, and new funds must be forthcoming for projects aimed at sustainable development.

The need for additionality has never been greater, both in quantity and in quality. The recommendations of the World Commission emphatically point out that substantial increases in aid flows are necessary, and such aid and lending must come in ways that are sensitive to environmental realities. Sustainable development implies that these targets are pursued through an equitable process rather than through the imposition of external will and power.

But aid and lending are not enough. African countries must be secured a more equitable income from traditional exports. More equitable economic exchanges are clearly called for. Terms of trade must be reversed to favour Africa rather than to impoverish it.

The Lagos Plan of Action and, more recently, Africa's Priority Program for Economic Recovery, were ambitious designs for a better future, but they have not received the attention they deserve by the international community. Cooperation on sustainable development in Africa should come as a response to these plans and priorities.

The challenges of the future are enormous. How can we provide the energy required for Africa's progress without continued deforestation and desertification? How can we make available the potential of renewables and disseminate fuel-efficiency technology? We cannot hope to secure a future for the coming generations unless the status of women is raised, - they who carry a main responsibility for providing food, water and energy.

While Africa's crises are often linked to inadequate infrastructure and institutions in general, the opposite is the

case in South Africa. There, in a country rich in natural resources, the apartheid policy institutionalizes precisely the environmentally destructive practices that other countries are struggling to break away from.

The minority regime in Pretoria is holding the majority of South African citizens hostage to a political system that is an insult to the basic principles of civilization. One of the many ways in which the apartheid regime institutionalizes both conflict and environmental degradation is by allocating, through the homeland system, 14 per cent of the nation's land to 72 per cent of its population. Racist marginalization has become a source of tension, and the conflict is being pursued by Pretoria into neighbouring states.

These trends and threats also demonstrate the interdependence between environment, development and armaments which consumes far too much of scarce resources. The frontline states in particular have been forced to uphold and expand their defence efforts in the face of threats and aggression from South Africa, thereby demanding even larger yields from the resources available to them.

The apartheid regime must and will come to an end. The black population will no longer tolerate the oppressive apartheid system and will demand to be treated as equals and that their inherent right to political equality be recognized. The black population and the frontline states deserve our firm support in the face of apartheid aggression.

The use of physical power to suppress the black majority has been intensified through the use of vigilante groups. The state of emergency has been renewed, and arrests and detentions continue. South Africa has also increased its support to the rebel groups of Renamo and UNITA, and the policy of destabilizing neighbouring states has been increasingly revealed.

Sanctions against South Africa have been all too leniently imposed. This spring the Norwegian Labour Government proposed a

comprehensive trade boycott against South Africa. We have prohibited the sale of oil and oil transport on Norwegian and Norwegian-controlled ships. We have further strengthened our cooperation with the SADCC countries, and we are prepared to increase our assistance in the event of further South African reprisals against these countries. For 1988 the Labour Government has proposed that 170 million Norwegian kroner be spent on cooperation with SADCC, in addition to about 850 million Norwegian kroner for bilateral assistance to the countries of the region.

We have also responded to the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement by contributing 10 million Norwegian kroner to the newly established Africa Fund, and have urged other countries to respond in a similar manner.

The international community as a whole has an unfulfilled responsibility towards the oppressed people of Southern Africa. We need to be firm in our action to bring down apartheid. The North has a special moral responsibility as well as the means to do this.

The fact that apartheid exists also speaks for the inadequacy of present international cooperation. Ten years ago the United Nations Security Council adopted the only mandatory measure against South Africa. The time has now come to restore the authority of the international institutions we have created, by moving forward.

We have come to a point in the history of nations when we can no longer act primarily as citizens of any single nation state. We are entangled in the same destiny. And we have been brought closer together, so close that we no longer have the option to place more distance between us - though some gaps are widening. We have come closer through the sheer force of numbers. 100 million people are added to the global population every year. We have come so close that we run the risk of ruining our future together, but together we can also save it.

It seems objectively clear that the challenges of the future will require common solutions. They will require international and intersectoral frames of mind and politics that build on equity and solidarity, hallmarks of the Socialist International. We know that we can never be indifferent or inequality an injustice. The next decades will be crucial. We have the capacity to promote sustainable development. We must keep up the momentum for disarmament, and we must continue to pursue our goals in cooperation if we are to see the day when the entire African continent will be free of suppression and domination. Until that we should not rest. We have great possibilities to shape a common future.