

The European Parliament
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Prime Minister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

NORWAY, THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND EUROPEAN COOPERATION

Mr President,
Honourable Members of the European Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to speak before this distinguished assembly on Norway, the European Community and European Cooperation. The European Parliament - directly elected by all the citizens of the Community - embodies the very idea of democracy, an essential part of our common European heritage.

A Period of Change and New Opportunities

As the nations of the world are facing the turn of a decade, they can do so with more hope and greater expectations for the cause of peace and security. The improved relations between the United States and the Soviet Union are opening up new perspectives and fostering new ambitions for international cooperation. After years of stalemate and decline, there is progress in the fields of disarmament and security, progress with regard to many regional conflicts, and new hope in multilateral cooperation.

But while the 1980s may go down in history as a decade of genuine progress for international peace and security, it has also been a decade of lost opportunities for the Third World. We now face the challenge of overcoming the global development crisis. Mass poverty, bleak economic prospects and a devastating debt burden in the South are paired with economic imbalances between the major nations in the North.

The industrialized countries clearly have the resources, but not sufficient political will and leadership to really break out of this deadlock. On top of this the threats to the environment, both in the North and in the South are issues that jeopardize our long-term development and security interests. Corrective action needs to be taken.

In this overall global picture, the ongoing dynamic development towards closer European cooperation offers and indeed entails vast perspectives, not only for Europe itself but for the whole world. We all need a stronger Europe, and to realize Europe's full potential.

Our Norwegian vision is one of a Europe which can safeguard vital Norwegian, European, Atlantic and global interests. We have a vision of a Europe of full employment, of social and environmental quality and security, of improved and equal

educational opportunities, of cultural and scientific exchange and of responsible international cooperation and leadership.

This is the Europe to which Norway belongs. The Norwegians are a European people. Our history is European history. Our culture is European culture. And our form of government is fundamentally European.

Norway in Europe. Growing Interdependence

Geographically speaking, Norway is on the periphery of Europe. But so are also some of the countries of the European Community, and distance is a challenge that we in Norway have a history of overcoming. Reaching out has certainly been a distinctive feature of the Norwegian identity ever since the Vikings made their presence known all over Europe, although admittedly in a rather less friendly fashion than today.

Norway is closely linked to the countries of the Community in political cooperation and we are allied in defence within NATO. Our economies are interwoven in a growing interdependence. From a Central European perspective Norway is no longer a peripheral country. We are an integral part of the Europe that stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals, as we are part of the Europe that stretches from the Svalbard archipelago to Sicily, from the Barents Sea to the Mediterranean.

Norway occupies a unique and indeed exposed geopolitical position on the northern flank of NATO, bordering on the Soviet Union. The defence of Norway and the central front are closely connected, and depend on the trans-Atlantic lanes for resupply and reinforcement.

It has been the policy of successive Norwegian governments to contribute to stability and low tension in the High North, as it is in our interest to see progress in detente between East and West. Norway is conscious of her strategic coastal position on the rim of the Atlantic Ocean and the Barents Sea. And we are conscious of the responsibility that this entails.

Following the referendum on membership of the European Community in 1972, Norway signed trade agreements instead of joining the Community. On this basis, Norway has taken part in the process of economic integration in Western Europe, in which the Community has been the driving force.

Today, the Norwegian economy is tied even more closely to the European Community than it was in 1972. Two-thirds of our exports go to the Community, which is also where half of our imports originate. Your Internal Market is also Norway's market. In fact, a higher percentage of our total trade is tied up with the European Community than is the case for many Community countries themselves!

Norway's vast petroleum resources have added new dimensions to our cooperation.

Our total exports of natural gas go to buyers in the Community, satisfying 11% of the Western European demand. The Troll/Sleipner gas agreement indeed represents an important, long-term contribution to Europe's energy supply and energy security. Norway has the political desire and resources necessary to further increase deliveries of natural gas to the Community on a long-term and reliable basis.

Two-thirds of our oil exports go to countries in the European Community, which in turn are important suppliers to our off-shore industry. In terms of value, countries in the Community supplied almost a third of the total goods and services delivered to Norwegian off-shore petroleum activity last year.

Oil companies of Community countries have important operative tasks and they have substantial economic interests in Norwegian oil and gas fields. They have made important technological contributions to the development of our off-shore resources.

Norwegian petroleum resources will continue to be of both economic and strategic importance to the European Community. They will undoubtedly stimulate cooperation in areas outside the energy field, strengthening the economic and political links between Norway and Community countries in a long-term perspective.

Mr President, for Norway, relations with the Community do not only concern foreign and trade policy matters. Our relations have important political dimensions. The Norwegian public is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of European issues and cooperation.

For young Norwegians, the European continent is closer than ever before. In Norway, we speak of the "Inter-rail generation", young people under the age of 26 who travel by train across Europe. They are young Europeans who early in life develop a European consciousness and identity.

Rapid technological developments and the new media raise the issue of how Europe can defend her cultural identity. This is also a concern for Norway. We encourage further European cooperation in the cultural sphere, as we do in the economic and technological field.

Then why not membership? The 1972 Referendum

Relations between Norway and the European Community rest on a firm foundation and are characterized by close cooperation, goodwill and shared interests. So firm is this foundation for economic, political and defence cooperation that we are often asked why Norway has not joined the Community as a full member.

A majority of Norwegians voted against membership in the 1972 referendum. The referendum vote can have been influenced by the fact that Norway had as recently as 1905 regained national sovereignty after half a millennium of rule under Danish and Swedish crown. The issue of national independence was certainly an important one.

There was a greater majority against membership in rural than in urban areas. Fishermen and farmers were generally more sceptical than the urban population. Many of them live farther from Oslo than the distance between Oslo and Brussels.

There is, however, no simple answer to the question of why 53 % of the vote was against Norway joining the European Community. But one thing is very clear: Emotions ran high on both sides of the dividing line. And disagreements cut across political parties and social groups. They even split families and friends. The 1972 debate left us with a trauma which still has not been overcome.

Community policies represent challenges for Norway regardless of the form of our relations. It is important that Norwegian society is ready and able to discuss these challenges without being eclipsed by a new and premature debate on Norwegian membership of the Community.

The task before us during the coming years is to concentrate our national efforts on meeting the challenges involved in the implementation of the Internal Market as constructively as possible. Those efforts would be undermined should we instead fall into the trenches of the 1972 membership debate that so severely split our nation.

Our policy approach to the challenges of European integration is to lay the foundation for a new domestic awareness of the European dimensions of our national interests. The Government, supported by a broad majority in Parliament, firmly believes in pursuing a policy towards Europe which can enjoy the widest possible support in Norway.

Cooperation with the European Community

What then are the guidelines of Norway's policy towards Europe?

Mr. President, "Norway, the European Community and European Cooperation" is not only the title of my address today. It is also the title of a Government Report which was presented to the Storting in May last year and debated in June of this year.

The intention was to lay the groundwork for a broad and thorough domestic debate on Norway's position in the Europe of today and tomorrow. In a world of growing interdependence, the rapid process of integration in the Community, as well as Community visions for the future, will also have important and far-reaching ramifications for non-member countries such as Norway.

We face the same challenges of global competition as you do. And like other European countries, we also need to live up to new requirements. As an important part of modernizing the Norwegian economy we will seek the broadest possible participation in the ongoing cooperation in science and technology. Norway's ambition is to cooperate actively with the European Community to the greatest extent possible within the present political framework.

This is not an attempt to enjoy only the advantages of Community cooperation. Norway wishes to be a responsible and contributing partner in European cooperation. We wish to see the European Community succeed in creating a dynamic market. And we wish to take an active part in that process promoting the best possible Norwegian participation in the Internal Market, both by adapting to new market conditions and by seeking to influence the process itself.

A central objective is to ensure that there are optimal conditions for Norwegian industry to cooperate actively with European industry and participate in a dynamic process of economic development.

Norwegian industry must make independent efforts to seize new commercial opportunities in European market conditions. Their efforts will determine the extent to which our policy of adaptation will succeed in practice.

Our policy is to further Norwegian interests at three levels: Bilaterally with the Community and member states, multilaterally through cooperation in EFTA, and through our strong and traditional channels of Nordic cooperation. Our general policy of adaptation to new market conditions will not be discouraged by cases that may arise where our own national priorities and interests do not coincide with those of the Community and where Norway will choose national, Nordic or EFTA solutions.

This policy approach received wide political support across party lines when our Parliament debated the Government Report in June. Broad support was also given to the policy of cooperation within EFTA and to the ongoing cooperation between EFTA and the Community with a view to creating a European Economic Space.

Mr. President, Norway's policy and desire is to be an active partner in Europe.

The inauguration of the Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities in Oslo almost a year ago is an important milestone in our relationship, as is the establishment last year of a separate Norwegian mission to the Community to strengthen the basis for closer cooperation.

The fact that the European Parliament has a separate delegation for relations with Norway is another indication of the significance of our relations. Inter-parliamentary contacts run parallel to and supplement the increasing contacts at many levels between the Norwegian Government, and the Commission and governments of the Community. I am looking forward to an interesting exchange of views with your delegation this afternoon.

A Europe of freer circulation raises the question of values. What kind of Europe do we want to create? In a world of rapid technological change, we need to protect and preserve our living and working conditions. An efficient market certainly relies on efficient people, but efficient people rely on social and

environmental security. In your internal debate these issues have been raised as "The Social Dimension". Many have noted that a "Social Dimension" has been the key to the Scandinavian model of equality, solidarity and full employment. We do not believe that these values are barriers, but conditions also for making Europe competitive.

The EFTA Dimension

Cooperation within EFTA is a crucial factor in the dynamic integration process taking place in Europe. The meeting between EFTA and Community ministers in Luxembourg in 1984 added new perspectives to the role of EFTA. Progress is being made towards our common goal of establishing a dynamic and homogeneous European Economic Space. The European Community is EFTA's most important market. The reverse is also true, which is often forgotten. Surprising to many, EFTA is a larger market for Community exports than the United States and Japan combined.

Still, doubts have been raised both within and outside EFTA as to the organization's role and potential in our cooperation with the European Community. Impatient voices in EFTA countries call for a direct, bilateral approach to the issue of membership and cooperation with the Community. I regret this, because it can weaken the image of EFTA as the only realistic tool for furthering a coordinated multilateral approach to European integration.

The economic importance and geographical proximity of EFTA countries underscore the logic of strengthening a balanced cooperation to our mutual benefit. The Community has clearly and repeatedly expressed the wish to negotiate with the EFTA countries as a group. We clearly have a common interest in intensifying the cooperation between our two organisations.

The dialogue between EFTA and the Community covers important areas of cooperation. EFTA is now discussing a work programme for cooperation with the Community in priority areas.

Norway will actively support a continuing process of cooperation between EFTA and the European Community. Greater efforts should be made to approach new areas of cooperation on this multilateral basis, and results should be well-balanced with rights and obligations for both parties.

Norway will assume the chairmanship of EFTA on 1 January next year. We have invited the Heads of Government of EFTA countries to Oslo in March for a summit meeting. We shall discuss the broader political and economic aspects of European integration and how EFTA can contribute most constructively in this process. During our chairmanship of EFTA, we look forward to close cooperation and contact with the parallel Spanish chairmanship of the Community.

Cooperation to Protect the Environment. A Necessity.

We all face environmental challenges that defy national boundaries, challenges that can only be met through closer

international cooperation. This distinguished assembly has played an active role in this context. And the Noordwijk Declaration confirmed that EFTA and the EC can usefully cooperate, also in this field.

The Chernobyl accident, dying forests and polluted waters, heating of the atmosphere, the threat to the ozon layer all testify to the need for cooperation and action to protect our environment in a European and global context. It is in the Western industrialized countries that many of the world's environmental problems originate. We use more energy, consume more raw materials, cause more pollution than any other region. We must therefore redouble our commitment to sustainable development, nationally, in regional organizations as well as globally.

It is also in European industrial centres that our future can be spearheaded. From here emanate technological innovations and new industrial processes which will shape the future. Environmentally sound technology can unquestionably be a competitive edge for European industry as it moves towards the 1990s and beyond. We must inspire, support and when necessary direct action to protect the environment, locally, regionally as well as globally.

Strengthened cooperation on the issues of environment and development should fuel Europe to successfully assume the role and strength it can and should have.

Admittedly, however, it is presently in the industrialized countries that 98% of today's dangerous industrial waste is produced. We are still lacking adequate binding international regulations in this field. Many developing countries are concerned with the risk of becoming a dumping ground for our industrial excesses. The recovery, control and safe storage of such waste should satisfy the same strict requirements, regardless of where it is produced.

Central Europe and Norway are united by the North Sea. We depend on it, and we share a common responsibility for it. Its resources must be managed on a sustainable basis. We cannot allow it to serve as a rubbish dump. Most countries now seem to accept the principle of precautionary action and the fact that emissions of pollutants must be strictly limited. We owe it to ourselves and to coming generations.

Energy is a field of primary importance. A safe, environmentally sound and economically viable energy programme that will sustain human progress into the distant future is clearly called for. Developing countries will need much more energy to continue to develop, but we in the North should strive to stabilize our energy consumption. A low energy future is our only real option. Thus we must make energy efficiency the cutting edge of our energy policies.

The Voice of Europe in International Affairs

As a result of the successful coordination of positions within the European Political Cooperation, the voice of the European Community is increasingly making itself heard in international affairs.

We value the contact arrangements that have recently been formalized between Norway and the European Political Cooperation. The close dialogue which has been established keeps us informed of Community thinking and decisions, and gives us an opportunity to make our Norwegian views known also before Community decisions are made. Given our geo-strategic position, our partnership in NATO and our contribution to the security of energy supply in Europe, we are confident that it is also in the interests of the Community to have an active dialogue with Norway.

Post-war Europe has seen conflict in ideological, political and economic terms. We have had peace, but peace in the shadow of nuclear armaments. The most powerful military alliances in the world still face each other in a state of constant preparedness across the East-West divide in Europe. This East-West dimension has coloured our political perceptions and made itself felt also in regional conflicts far from the dividing line that still runs through our Continent.

De Toqueville's prediction more than 150 years ago that the United States and the Soviet Union would in time become the two dominant world powers came true. However, the post-war bipolar world has yielded to a multipolar one.

Past distrust must be replaced by cooperative strategies in regional and global contexts. Arms control and disarmament measures must include a political process of detente as well as dialogue and cooperation in the spheres of economy, technology, ecology, cultural affairs and human rights. In these fields, Europe can be a main force of progress.

Through bilateral contacts and constructive participation in the Helsinki Process, Europeans can strengthen cooperative structures in Europe and provide new impetus to cooperation on a broad basis. The Joint Declaration of the European Community and COMECON signed in June this year, opens up encouraging perspectives for European cooperation across East-West barriers.

We need a more assertive European role in international cooperation. Our efforts to meet global challenges must be based on a European vision of the future. We have a long-standing tradition of working towards a society that can satisfy the material, cultural and social needs of all our citizens. Economic growth is necessary to secure the fullest possible employment, where jobs are stable and meaningful, and where industry and labour, the centre and the periphery join hand in hand.

Mr. President, honourable members of the European Parliament, it is indeed in our wider European interests and it is our responsibility, not only to promote improved relations between East and West, North and South, but also to exercise leadership in the effort to achieve a better organized world community. The

true potential of European creativity, versatility and political tradition can and must be released.

I am certain that the European Parliament, inspired by the same vision and courage which launched the European Community more than 30 years ago, will make an enduring contribution to the hard work which lies ahead as we look towards the future and the next millennium with with confidence and hope.