

Akershus

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Statsminister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

TALE FOR FNs GENERALSEKRETÆR OG SJEFENE FOR FNs SÆRORGANISASJONER
AKERSHUS SLOTT 9. JULI 1988.

Mr. Secretary-General
Mrs. de Cuéllar
Excellencies
Dear guests

This is a very special evening for the Norwegian Government. Five years ago Norway had the honour of welcoming you, Mr. Secretary-General, on an official visit. Tonight you are present here together with the leaders of most of the United Nations agencies.

We are deeply honoured to have you all here. A visit by any single one of you would be an important event for a country committed to the cause of the United Nations. The presence of all of you is unique and historic.

This occasion has a distinct political meaning. It is a solid testimony of the common desire of the UN system to find real solutions to the problems that we face as we near the end of the 20th century.

The blue UN flag has brought peace, health, education and economic growth around the globe. For refugees, poor people, illiterates, deprived mothers and children, for poor and hungry people wherever famine has struck, the UN flag has symbolized the best of civilization: The practical ethic that we can never be indifferent to the plight of our fellow human beings.

But in the last decade and a half, the role of the United Nations system has been suppressed by a declining support for multilateral cooperation. Many states have regrettably preferred to pursue short-term advantages to long-term progress and benefits for all. The absence of a consensus at the Third Special Session on Disarmament is one example of the lack of support of multilateral solutions that must now be effectively countered.

The time has come to provide fresh impetus. The World Commission on Environment and Development dealt with the scourge of poverty, we dealt with the links between environment and development. Responsible follow-up action is under way in many parts of the world. I am pleased to announce today that Norway will support the African follow-up conference which UNEP and the Economic Commission for Africa is planning to hold by covering 50% of the costs.

For our common future drastic action has to be taken. My question is: will the improved relations between East and West release the human and financial resources needed to address our common challenges? Will internationalist endeavours prevail over narrow-mindedness? Will hostile attitudes to internationally negotiated arrangements and institutions yield to a coalition of reason? In 1988, when it was decided to dismantle the INF-missiles, when the Soviet Union finally decided to withdraw from Afganistan, when President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev walked the Red Square together, do we see new opportunities in the history of the United Nations, will we be able to deal with vital issues of environment and development, in a real climate for change?

The Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen said 100 years ago: "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come". Sustainable development is such an idea. Together we must make it a reality.

The time has come to move forward towards a true revival of multilateralism. The time has come to take a giant leap forward in the upgrading of civilization. The time has come to restore the authority of the United Nations.

Mr. Secretary-General, you have been given a very special responsibility. Your vast experience and the confidence you enjoy is an important capital for the United Nations. As you said in your statement at the Conference today, the United Nations system can and must serve as conscience and catalyst in moving the community of nations. In exercising your overriding and coordinating responsibility to implement sustainable development, you will need, and you will get our total support.

Let me conclude by proposing a toast to the United Nations, to the Secretary-General and Mrs. Perez de Cuéllar, to the leaders and high officials of the United Nations agencies present here tonight, and to the thousands of officials and workers who serve the United Nations - who serve us all.