

Akershus Slott

Med forbehold om endringer
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Statsminister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

TALE VED REGJERINGENS MIDDAG FOR CORPS DIPLOMATIQUE, AKERHUS
SLOTT 6. JANUAR 1988

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for the Norwegian Government to wish you all a hearty welcome to this dinner at Akershus Castle in honour of the Corps Diplomatique. As the new year begins we wish to say how very highly we value the work you are doing in Norway. We are looking forward to renewing old acquaintances and to making new ones. The Government hopes that your stay in Norway will be rewarding and interesting and that your working conditions will be the best. Historically speaking, openness in diplomatic relations has not always been something to be taken for granted. In Cromwell's England, those members of cabinet or Parliament who had contact with diplomats lost their offices without exception, and in 16th century Venice diplomats who made contacts without the approval of the city council were punished by severe whipping.

But things have been changing. Already in Prussia, King Friedrich Wilhelm the First instructed his ambassadors to, I quote: "write a report every fortnight on anything that happens; anecdotes, chronicles and scandals".

These are days long gone. We enter 1988 with a sense of cautious optimism facing a new reality. The signing of the INF Treaty a month ago secured the elimination of a whole class of nuclear weapons. It represents a historic breakthrough in arms control negotiations and gives new hope for

constructive cooperation among nations in an increasingly interdependent world. The treaty proves the extraordinary value of bold and visionary political leadership on the highest political level, and of sheer hard diplomatic work.

A new and positive atmosphere has been created, one which gives us more confidence in the future, and a responsibility to preserve and expand the present momentum. We hope that this new atmosphere will be conducive for more rapid progress towards reduction of strategic arsenals, conventional disarmament and stability in Europe and a global ban on chemical weapons.

Naturally, such progress is vital in itself. But the political confidence on which it must be based will also have a positive impact on parallel dialogues on economy, environment and human rights which are requisite to give peace and security the quality and basis it must have.

The not too promising prospects for the global economy in the coming year will present increasing challenges to us all. We may not be able to reach the growth rates we so urgently need, not least in the Third World. Imbalances, debt burdens and structural problems are leading to a widening of the gap between rich and poor nations. It is necessary, not only because it is right and just, but also because it is in every country's long-term self interest, that this gap be bridged.

It is imperative that the international economic system be improved and made more effective. This fundamental challenge, which also comprise a need for more equitable distribution within and among nations, can only be solved through comprehensive and binding cooperation within and across traditional affiliations.

The main key, however, to improved international economic cooperation is largely in the hands of the major nations. But the lack of effective coordination between them is severely hampering growth prospects on a global scale.

All nations must stand up to these challenges. Stronger growth is imperative if we are to solve the economic, environmental and social challenges that we face. Growth is essential for the increased transfers to developing countries which are needed in their struggle for self-sufficiency. Only growth can alleviate the plight of the poor whose numbers are growing every year, and only growth can create the capacity to solve the environmental problems which threaten our planet.

The economic challenges that we will face in the decades to come cannot be solved unless environmental concerns are given a new priority. They must be elevated to the top of the international political agenda.

Together with other countries, Norway will work for the total integration of environmental concerns into international decision-making. Such work is already under way in the United Nations, the regional economic commissions, the OECD and other important organizations. We have no choice but to act with a new sense of responsibility.

Nature is bountiful, but also fragile. That, you may say, is in itself not a very recent observation. Already in ancient Greece, Aristotle recognized that "property-getting, in accordance with nature, is not limitless!" Today, however, we may have higher hopes than ever that if we respect the limitations of nature, growth itself may not have limits.

In 1987 we witnessed another triumph of summit diplomacy, that of the peace plan for Central America, an initiative for which President Arias was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The weeks and months ahead will be decisive for the implementation of that peace plan and the Norwegian Government is following the process very closely. A whole world will eagerly follow the steps of the five president in a few days in San Jose. It is our hope that the outcome will be a lasting peaceful solution in Central America.

With these hopes on the dawn of a new year, let me end by wishing all of you a happy and prosperous 1988, both professionally and privately. In a world that is becoming increasingly intertwined, demands placed on the diplomats and the importance of diplomacy, will no doubt increase further. It is therefore with a sense of nostalgia that I conclude by reading to you the following instructions issued by a European foreign office one hundred years ago:

"The councillors and assistants of the foreign office are kindly requested to structure their working hours so as to be able to enter their offices no later than by noon".

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you all to join me in a toast to the Diplomatic Corps in Norway.