

HARARE

Prime Minister  
Gro Harlem Brundtland  
Chairman of the World Commission on  
Environment and Development

ACCEPTANCE OF THE THIRD WORLD PRIZE, HARARE, 24. APRIL 1989.

President Mugabe,  
Ministers,  
Secretary-General of the Third World Foundation,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here with you today to receive the Third World Prize for 1988. And it is a particularly great honour for me to receive it from His Excellency President Mugabe, whom I have known for so many years, and who has not only achieved such remarkable results in the Republic of Zimbabwe, but has also gained worldwide respect and admiration as a political leader and statesman.

I have come here with a deep sense of gratitude and humility towards the people who nominated me for the prize, towards the distinguished members of the Selection Committee, and towards the people of Zimbabwe and Africa who on so many occasions have made me feel so welcome.

I have been lucky in life to have the opportunity work for what I believe in. I have been lucky to be able to do so together with many wonderful and dedicated people. When I receive this Prize here today I know that I can do it because of so many others.

I wish to thank the many thousands of men and women, in all parts of the world, who placed their hopes and confidence in the World Commission on Environment and Development. I cannot name them all, but without their support, the Commission's task would have been much more difficult. The experience of listening to individual citizens whose daily lives were directly affected by issues related to environment and development made a profound impression upon us. It is to all these people that the Commission addressed its report.

The honour which you have bestowed upon me today is one which I share with every member of the World Commission. We came from all parts of the world, we had different backgrounds and experiences. Some of us had already had experience with environmental issues; others had been most involved with development issues. We all went through a process of sharing and learning. We all experienced a growing spirit of friendship and a meeting of minds. As we worked, the differences between North and South, East and West, receded. Instead there emerged a common concern, and a deeper understanding of the interrelated economic and environmental challenges we face. We shared a conviction,

of the vital necessity of sustainable development, when we offered our consensus, "Our Common Future", to the international community.

We found that contrary to the dark prophecies of continuing environmental decline and increasing poverty, there is also reason for hope and optimism. Growth is possible. Growth can be managed. Growth can enhance our resources, not degrade them. There are untapped human resources which need to be unleashed. People themselves are our greatest resource. It is an ethical imperative and a sound policy to invest in people and their future. Together, we must pursue a broad participatory process of political and economic change.

The World Commission has completed its task, but we believe that its message of hope will live on beyond the turn of the millennium. We believe that "Our Common Future" will serve as a source of inspiration to present as well as future generations. Our common future will be shaped by the small farmer, by citizens' groups and grass-root movements. It will be shaped by governments acting together based on shared perceptions and goals. It will be shaped by industry, which is the main transformer of resources, by boardroom meetings and consumers choices and attitudes and, not least, by a strong and authoritative United Nations which serves as the stalwart of peace, environment and development.

I am greatly honoured to receive the prize in Zimbabwe and in Africa. The Commission met in Harare and in Nairobi. We focused very strongly on the situation in Africa. We found, too, that Africa was indeed receptive to the Commission, and that the response in Africa was particularly encouraging.

The coming OAU Conference on the major issues facing Africa, environmental protection, ecosystem conservation and toxic wastes, and the prevailing economic crisis, convened by the Chairman of the OAU, His Excellency Moussa Traoré, President of the Republic of Mali can prove to be a milestone for sustainable development in Africa.

Likewise, the First African Conference on Environment and Development, which in June will consider the World Commissions report and discuss a broad follow-up process shows that environment and development is placed solidly on the African political agenda. Africa is essential to Our Common Future. Our meeting here today give us all a reason to hope that Africa is on the road towards sustainable development.

Thank you.