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Akershus

Prime Minister

Gro Harlem Brundtland

SPEECH AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED BY THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT
IN HONOUR OF THE THAI PRIME MINISTER ON 28 SEPTEMBER 1989

Mr. Prime Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me, on behalf of the Norwegian Government, to welcome you, Your Excellency, and your delegation to my country and to this official dinner. We are very pleased that you have included Norway in your itinerary on your first trip to Europe as Prime Minister. It is the first time a Thai Prime Minister has made an official visit to Norway, and I feel certain that it will not be the last.

As the end of this century approaches, we see many signs of the growing interdependence between nations and peoples. An increasing number of the challenges facing us are global. Despite the great distance that separates us, there are more and more links tying together countries such as ours. Your visit, Mr. Prime Minister, has confirmed that Thailand and Norway have important interests in common both in our bilateral relations and on an international level.

The bilateral contacts between our two countries have increased over the years. Our close relationship is clearly reflected in our economic relations. Today you have addressed a gathering of Norwegian and Thai business representatives on trade and investment possibilities in Thailand. I am convinced that your visit will give new impetus to trade and cooperation between our two countries.

Thailand is one of the leading representatives of the rapid economic development in South East Asia. Mr. Prime Minister, the Norwegian people is impressed by both the economic and the political developments taking place in your country.

You took office last year as Thailand's first elected leader since 1976, and your government is a strong proponent of democracy. At the same time, under your dynamic leadership, Thailand is playing an increasingly important role in international politics and regional affairs. As a prominent and active member of the Association of South East Asian Nations, Thailand has made valuable contributions to the search for a peaceful solution to the Cambodian conflict.

We also know, Mr. Prime Minister, that your country is carrying the heavy burden of sheltering hundreds of thousands of refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The flow of refugees that we are witnessing in many parts of the world represents a challenge and a moral responsibility for all nations. These burdens must be shared and greater efforts must be concentrated on finding international solutions for dealing with the new exodus of our century.

The protection of our environment is another important area in which global action is called for and in which Thailand and Norway thus share vital interests. The report from the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, made one thing clear; if we are to win the struggle against the increasing degradation of the environment, we must find ways of developing better mechanisms for international cooperation.

We need increased economic growth if we are to protect our environment and at the same time ensure a desperately needed development for millions of people. But this growth must ensure sustainable development by satisfying the needs of today, without compromising the ability of future generations to realize their aspirations. I am grateful for the opportunity we had this afternoon to exchange views on these fundamental questions, and I look forward to working together, bilaterally and multilaterally, to find ways of managing the growing global interdependence.

Mr. Prime Minister, the longstanding, close relationship between our two Royal Families illustrates the excellent bilateral relations between Thailand and Norway. As early as in 1907, H.M.

King Chulalongkorn visited Norway and spent 3-4 weeks travelling all over the country by ship, train, car and even horseback. I doubt that any other monarch, except our own King of course, has visited so many places in Norway.

King Chulalongkorn was one of the first foreign monarchs to visit the North Cape, where he wrote his initials on a large stone which has been preserved and is now the centrepiece of the Thai Museum at the North Cape. I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Prime Minister, to express once again our gratitude for the many beautiful and interesting objects exhibited in that museum.

This museum, located on the northernmost part of the Euro-Asian continent and filled with objects reflecting the proud and impressive Thai culture, is a symbol of the friendship between our two nations. This is a friendship that we Norwegians wish to see flourish and grow.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to propose a toast

- to the friendship between Thailand and Norway,
- to the prosperity and well-being of the Royal Family, the Government and the people of Thailand, and
- to the health of you, Mr. Prime Minister, your wife Khunying Boonruen and to all the other members of your delegation.

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