

**Prime Minister
Gro Harlem Brundtland**

**Opening address - CSCE Seminar on Democratic Institutions,
Oslo, 4 November 1991.**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the opening of this important CSCE event. I take particular pleasure in welcoming the representatives of the Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania who have now regained their rightful place among the free and independent states.

Europe has undergone profound changes since the Final Act of the CSCE Conference was signed in Helsinki sixteen years ago. In times of confrontation and set-backs in East-West relations, the CSCE remained a forum of dialogue even if that dialogue at times was unproductive and stale, and Europe was divided by seemingly insurmountable ideological and political barriers.

But the belief endured that Europe could not in the long run remain divided by the Cold War and barbed wire. The firm conviction that suppression would one day have to yield to openness and pluralism remained alive. The widespread support of the CSCE process became a part of the struggle for enhanced human rights and democratic freedoms. Non-governmental organizations on both sides of the former East West divide used the CSCE and its principles as a platform and a legitimate outlet for their aspirations for the future.

Today, in a rapidly changing world, the CSCE remains the one institution that brings together all the countries of Europe and North America in a search for joint solutions to problems faced by all. It remains a key forum for arms control and crisis management. It remains a catalyst for peaceful change and a stronghold of stability.

The historic transformations that have taken place over the last few years have greatly enhanced the potential of the CSCE process. In Paris last year we all solemnly pledged a common

commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law as the basis for our future cooperation. These rights and principles remain the foundation of a Euro-Atlantic Community reaching from Vancouver to Vladivostok and from the Barents Sea to the Mediterranean.

The security situation in Europe has improved radically. The threat of a large-scale military confrontation has been significantly reduced as a result of the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and a series of breakthroughs in arms control. The CFE Treaty will effectively eliminate the capability for major offensive operations and surprise attacks. The START Treaty and the recent initiatives of Presidents Bush and Gorbachev open up entirely new vistas in nuclear disarmament. The nuclear threshold will be significantly heightened and strategic stability strengthened.

However, in spite of all these heartening developments there is no cause for complacency as we ponder on the outlook for Europe in the nineties. Whereas the potential for joint action and joint solutions has been enhanced, the CSCE community is facing new challenges. There are less threats, but there are also new risks.

The protracted crisis in Yugoslavia is a tragic illustration of the kind of emergency and instability that can threaten European security in the future. It is totally unacceptable that the armed conflict continues in defiance of the untiring efforts of the European Community, supported by the CSCE. Those Yugoslav leaders who envisage a future for themselves in European politics must bear in mind that there is such a thing as a standard that must be met if they want to participate in European cooperation. No political objectives can justify what is now going on.

We, the 38, must be able to respond to present and future crisis situations, and we must do so at several interrelated levels.

Firstly, we must provide the CSCE with the means to become quickly involved in emerging conflicts as well as acute crises. Fundamental decisions must be taken at next year's CSCE summit in Helsinki. A broad range of CSCE crisis management procedures and mechanisms must be elaborated as a matter of urgency. Peace-keeping under CSCE auspices is in our

view an option deserving careful consideration in this context.

Secondly, we must build a stable and sturdy, but above all cooperative, new security order. In the new Europe of the nineties, security can only be shared and common security. We must build on existing CSCE principles and documents and use other existing institutions to pursue a wide range of objectives. These objectives include market economies with a strong social dimension and a human face, free flow of thoughts and ideas as well as environmental excellence and sustainable development. NATO must remain a source of stability and cooperation. Its role must be adapted to changing realities. We must build interdependence, not least with regard to economic integration. The European Community and the new European Economic Area will increasingly be a centre of gravity which gradually must include more countries in steadily widening and deepening European cooperation.

A web of cooperation must be woven through this network of institutions that is strong enough to withstand the severest of tests and capable of both preventing and resolving conflicts. If we are to succeed in preventing a new poverty gap from dividing Europe, we must act quickly and with determination. Otherwise we may increasingly be facing unrest, aggression and violence. A comprehensive effort on the part of the affluent countries is required in order to support our partners in the new democracies. Social stability must be maintained while painful reforms are being implemented.

And thirdly, we must cooperate both within and outside the institutions we have created to consolidate democracy and expand its reach. Important as it is, crisis management alone cannot ensure stability and security. Democratic systems of government, the rule of law and respect for human rights are fundamental prerequisites if Europe shall truly be termed whole and free.

This is why Norway proposed holding this meeting. This is why we have been reinforced in our belief that joint efforts to shore up democratic institutions in the Euro-Atlantic area should be one of the key fields of CSCE cooperation in the nineties. Recent events, such as the aborted coup in the Soviet Union, have further underlined its importance.

Through a system of checks and balances, a stable democratic

order ensures that no segment of society becomes all-powerful. It is a safeguard against oppression committed in the name of authoritarian and all-encompassing ideologies. It protects the rights of the individual. At the same time, a firmly embedded democratic culture based on division of power and viable democratic institutions is a barrier against adventurist, aggressive foreign and security policies.

The new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe have come a long way in an amazingly short time. Basic political and economic reforms have been implemented. More are under way. The new democracies deserve and have a right to expect from their CSCE partners generous and consistent support for their efforts to build democracy.

No doubt, established democracies have gained experience that could be useful for those who have recently embarked upon this road. Yet it would be wrong to conceive of CSCE cooperation on democracy-building as a one-way street.

People who have been deprived of democracy probably know a lot more about its importance and significance than those who sometimes seem to have become all too used to having it. The "old" democracies have an important lesson to be learned from the democratic revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe: Freedom, democracy and human rights are values that cannot be taken for granted. They must be fought for. And, they are worth fighting for.

The unveiled ecological crisis in former totalitarian states show too clearly what can happen when governments exempt themselves from public criticism. People must have a right to information about activities which affect their environment or their health. People must have a right to participate in democratic decision-making and to speak up when their interests are trespassed upon. Partnership, participation and pressure from the people are the requisites of change and for sustainable development

Therefore, it is so vital that people use their democratic freedoms. We should not sit idle and let others make decisions for us. An active and informed population is the best line of defence against environmental degradation. So I say; take care of our common interests. Don't be sure that others will do it for you.

Democracy is not achieved once and for all. Democracy is a never-ending process. In this process, we must learn again and again how to strike the right balance between the search for the common good and the rights and the freedom of the individual; between the principle of majority rule and the respect for the rights of the minorities; between the need for efficient decision-making and the need for broad and effective participation in the decision-making process.

Freedom, the rule of law and human rights cannot be taken for granted. As democracies mature and develop, some problems may be done away with, but new ones arise. There is no such thing as a perfect democracy. We must all be willing to subject our democratic systems to the critical scrutiny of ourselves and our partners.

Mr. Chairman, this seminar can make a lasting contribution to future of democracy in Europe. In addition to the actual findings and conclusions of the seminar, the bringing together of so many people from different walks of life will help creating the network that we need.

The problem is not a lack of clear standards and commitments. The Paris Charter and the Copenhagen and Moscow Documents, have provided us with a firm foundation of shared democratic values. Rather, what is needed are practical ideas, projects, measures and contacts between people who can make a difference in their own countries.

Finally, this seminar must also deal with the question of how the CSCE community is to organize and structure its future cooperation in the field of democracy-building and democratic institutions. The proposal to transfer the Warsaw Office of Free Elections into an Office for Democratic Institutions, which in fact could function as a Center for Democracy and Human Rights - is a key one in this regard.

Democratic institution-building is not exclusively a governmental responsibility. I would like to emphasize the importance that we as host country attach to the parallel NGO activities. Non-governmental organizations have always played an important role in the CSCE process. The new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe sprang mostly from independent civic movements such as Charta 77 and Solidarity. We would do well to seek advice and support from non-governmental organizations and involve them actively in our future

cooperation in this area.

The tasks we are facing, in the CSCE and at this seminar, are daunting. We must secure the basic democratic values of the Euro-Atlantic Community.

Many of you have lived with fear for decades. Now is the time for freedom and opportunity. Democracy originated in Europe. For 2000 years Europe has been a laboratory of ideas that have gained ground on a global scale.

European nations have become linked together in a common destiny. With democracy also gaining ground where its roots are anchored on the thinnest soil, we can have a vision of Europe regaining its rightful role in the world. Democracy is no mere recent phase of human history. It is human history. And human history is being made now. Thank you.