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Nobel Symposium
"Beyond the Cold War"

Oslo, 8 December 1991

Introduction

As we approach the next century, peace, democracy, environment and development must be the core issues of our common agenda. These are not separate issues. They are closely linked.

These linkages need no better illustration than the situation facing the winner of this years Nobel Peace Prize. Without basic human rights and democracy, the process of development will suffer. Environmental concerns will be disregarded. Military force will be used - not to defend a country against external threats - but against the people itself as an instrument of oppression.

But these links between the issues can also be used positively, as opportunities for new common action to tackle the global challenges facing us. Democracy is on the rise. The principle that no state has the right to violate the basic human rights of its citizens is almost universally established.

An essential element is therefore at hand. Now, we should use the new opportunities.

The Challenges.

As the threat of a superpower conflict has waned, we have become more aware of new and a different kind of threats to our security. These may be caused by social unrest caused by poverty and inequality, by environmental degradation, by internal conflicts leading to new flows of refugees. We are already seeing increased competition for rights, resources and territory in many parts of the world. The pressures on the environment from a rapidly growing world population will increase the likelihood of such conflicts.

Climate change, desertification, deforestation, massive loss of species and biological diversity, depletion of freshwater resources and soil erosion are global trends that are not sustainable. The hard truth of the matter is that most of these negative processes continue unabated, in spite of all our knowledge and increased awareness. Moreover, there are

powerful circles expressing doubts about how real these problems truly are.

Sustainable development.

There is no way that we can win the battle to save our global environment unless we mount a full-scale, committed offensive against world poverty and underdevelopment.

While climate change is mainly caused by our present state of development in the industrialized world, other environmental problems are caused by under-development. Already at Stockholm, in 1972, Indira Gandhi said that "poverty is the greatest polluter". Poor people are forced to overuse their lands and scarce resources. They have no alternative if they are to survive. And the number of people living in absolute poverty is increasing.

No strategy will be more effective in alleviating world poverty or in promoting better environmental awareness than a massive investment in human resources - in education, basic health services, and family planning. The world's poor must be given a realistic hope that they have a future of their own.

The World Commission on Environment and development defined sustainable development as a political process of change. We must mobilize the instinctive sense of responsibility that all human beings have for the future and the security for their children. Women's experiences and qualities are vital in our efforts to combat poverty, inequality, and ecological degradation.

We need women as part of a conscious public opinion that can keep democratic pressure on political decision-making, to set new targets to increase environmental accountability and to ensure a better future.

The spread of democracy and the right to participate in political and economic decision-making can help us in the efforts now needed.

In our effort to save the global environment, a special responsibility lies with the industrialized countries. The wealth accumulated in the industrialized countries is based on a long process of growth during which environmental concerns were given small or no attention. Our economies have been built on cheap and abundant fuel, and we have been using it as if there was no tomorrow. We have drawn upon the natural capital left to us by our forefathers, we have not paid the environmental costs of our growth, and we have passed most of the bill to the generations coming after us.

In the South, the rise of democracy is bound to lead to a shift of priorities away from military spending and prestige projects and to a more people-oriented approach to development. As much as 5,5% of the gross national product of the developing world is now being absorbed by military

spending. This is also an unsustainable trend which must be changed in the global restructuring of priorities that is now necessary.

The international community is likely to examine such national priorities. How can it be justified to allocate high percentages of state budgets to military spending when education and health receives far less, and when the future of those countries lies not in arming but in educating a healthy population?

We need a new partnership between North and South. The South is now responding to the call for democracy and a more market-oriented approach to development. The industrialized world must help the emerging democracies in the Third World to put sustainable development on its own feet, both within individual nations and through international cooperation.

This will not be possible if developing countries must continue to use all their export earnings to service a crushing debt burden, or if their products are denied access to world markets. Unless we in the North start showing through concrete policies that we understand that four fifths of humanity have a legitimate say on world development, we have no reason to expect the South to support our views on how global challenges can be met.

The atmosphere.

The most global - and potentially the most serious of all the issues facing us today, is how we should deal with the threats to the world's atmosphere.

70 per cent of all emissions of greenhouse gases which accelerate global warming come from the countries of the North. The industrialized countries must therefore assume the main burden of reducing the global level of emissions.

It may be academically interesting to question the solid predictions of global warming and a rise of the sea-level. But the issue is deadly serious if you happen to live in the Maldives. There, people are seriously debating where to migrate once their country disappears from the surface of the earth. In Bangladesh and in Egypt, millions of people will be equally affected.

A delegate to an international conference recently demonstrated how countries should not deal with these issues, by saying: "This is not a disaster, it is merely a change. The area won't have disappeared, it will just be under water. Where you now have cows, you will have fish".

What we need now is a new partnership for a new generation of environmental agreements. Additionality, equity and efficiency are the only principles that will work. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in

Rio in June 1992, the nations of the world have an opportunity to agree on a new agenda for environment and development for the 21st Century. Unfortunately, it is by no means self evident that the Conference will be successful. But it is clear that must spare no effort in making it successful.

To ensure that we get most environmental value for our money, our future strategies and agreed solutions must be cost-effective.

The first generation of agreements, such as the ECE convention of transboundary pollution - that we fought hard to get - have proved very important in our region. Major reductions have been achieved, but without an optimal pay-off of the investments made. This is so because this first-generation of environmental agreements are based on equal per-centage reductions in all countries regardless of their present level of emissions.

The new generation of agreements must take account of the fact that individual nations have very different points of departure for dealing with the issues involved. Some countries, including Norway, have already been working for years to reduce emissions to air and water, and the marginal costs of further clean-ups are quite high.

In the current negotiations on a world climate convention, Norway has proposed an approach based on a cost-effective implementation of the targets set to limit global emissions of greenhouse gases. There is now increasing support for the principle that nations can reach emission targets individually or jointly. Under such an approach, we would reach effective results more quickly and at less cost than through national measures alone. Under such a scheme, the most cost-effective projects are likely to be found in Eastern Europe and in developing countries. Such an approach could also lead to more assistance to these countries, and relieve public budgets for expenses that will have to be undertaken anyway.

To solve global environmental problems such as ozone depletion and climate change, we clearly need new and truly additional resources to enable developing countries to join the global agreements now being negotiated, i.a. on climate change. We cannot transfer the main burdens involved in implementing global targets to the developing countries, and block them from energy use that is necessary for them to promote their economic development. Thus, transfer of new and additional resources must come out of the Rio conference.

We in Norway have already started down this road on our own. We are earmarking a part of our CO₂-taxation to be transferred to developing countries. Last year, and again this year, about 75 million Norwegian kroner are being channeled to projects abroad that reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

These transfers are additional to our official development

assistance which is the highest in the world.

The objective of our policy is an equitable burdensharing. An equitable burdensharing was also the essence of The Hague Declaration of 1988. On the initiative of France, the Netherlands and Norway, 24 Heads of State and Government signed this declaration about protection of the atmosphere.

The declaration calls for assistance to be given to countries whose responsibility for the problems may be only marginal. It calls for international measures which recognize the different levels of development of various states. This means that many developing countries must be allowed to increase their emissions while other developed countries reduce theirs. The declaration calls for effective international measures and possible majority voting.

More effective international cooperation.

The Hague Declaration remains a vision for future cooperation. Still we need to be ambitious. Nothing less will serve us.

At the global intergovernmental level, we have not come very far. Our responses are still divided in some 160 different parts, all claiming national sovereignty.

As national politicians we experience that the nation state is too small a scene for addressing regional and global environmental challenges. It will become increasingly contradictory to promise to remedy international challenges through national measures alone. We need to lift the decision-making of democratic institutions to the international level. As nation states we must have the maturity to unite our sovereignties. Still, however, most international negotiations proceed at the pace defined by the slowest wheels on the wagon, by the least common denominator.

We need global institutions that are strong enough to set new directions or to implement effective global policies. We need to develop an international public sector, based on the United Nations, which act more effectively to meet global challenges. Still, we seem to have a long way to go before international cooperations reach such a stage of maturity.

An informed and environmentally conscious public is the most effective line of defence against inaction and stagnation. To generate public awareness, we need people of vision and integrity who can set an agenda and stay firm. As much as we need truth and facts, we need compassion, conviction and direction. We can and we must take responsibility for the coming generations.