

Prime Minister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

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It is fair to start with what the Vinland Revisited is not about. It is not about the "discovery" of America or about laying claim to the roots of today's American civilization.

Clearly we all know that America was discovered by human beings in the early dawn of human being's movements across the continent. The Norse sagas comprise telling evidence of the mutual curiosity and suspicion between the people who already lived here and the Vikings who came from across the sea.

Moreover, the earliest Norse settlements did not last. Clearly it was the British, the French and the Spanish who came to shape the young North America.

The fact remains, however, that the Norse Vikings became the first Europeans to set their foot on this continent, to see its nature, wildlife and enormous riches.

Why did they come? They came searching for resources and they found plenty of it: timber in dense forests, fine grazing grounds, fresh water in fast-running brooks and salmon in the sea offshore.

The Viking crossings have been brought to life for a dual purpose. The one is to highlight the earliest chapter in the common history of North America, Norway and Iceland.

The other is to inspire common thinking about the age of discovery and exploration which is still before us. Just as the Vikings set to sea in search of new resources, humanity now must penetrate new frontier land if we are to secure the energy, the food, the air and the water that we shall need for a doubled world population some time in the 21st century. It is our responsibility to protect and develop the resources on Planet Earth so that future generations will be able to pursue sustainable development.

Scientific evidence is showing how serious the problems are. We are overloading the planets ability to absorb the effects of human activities in ways never before experienced in our history. While we still have the time to make necessary changes, that time is soon running out.

Today, we have become more aware of the mounting threats to our global environment. Global warming, depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer, rapid population growth, massive loss of species and biological diversity, accelerating desertification, deforestation and soil erosion, - these are

all threats that will soon lead to breakdowns in vital support systems for life on Earth.

And as if this were not enough, we see clear symptoms that the world may be hit by a development disaster. Hunger, famine and infant mortality are again on the rise, causing pressures which lead to internal conflicts and social breakdowns.

The World Commission on Environment and Development, which established by the UN General Assembly, and which the Secretary-General asked me to chair, found that we will have to make profound changes in the relationship between humanity and its natural environment. Yet, the commission found that these changes are possible, that we have the knowledge and capacity to change global trends.

Today we see signs of stagnation in our environmental cooperation. We must all realize that we must break this impasse in order to move further.

Industrialized countries are still the biggest polluters. But we need a climate of cooperation between the North and the south if we are to conclude the international agreements that we need. And unless we will be able to provide additional money and technological cooperation to developing countries in order to tackle their existential environmental and development problems chances are less that they will see their best interests served by global agreements.

That is why we need a new generation of environmental agreements based on additionality, equity and efficiency. This is the only option that will work.

Efficiency means that we must search for cost-effective solutions to environmental problems. If we fail to do so, then we risk stagnation of the whole process and a bleak outlook for sustainable development. Our goal must be to achieve maximum environmental benefit for the minimum cost. We will all benefit if we reduce emissions where reductions cost the least. This must be the primary objective of a new generation of environmental agreements.

In the ongoing negotiations on a climate convention, Norway has proposed a cost-effective implementation of targets set to limit global emissions of greenhouse gases. Targets can be reached by states acting individually or in cooperation with other states. This would encourage investments in countries where reductions can be achieved at lower costs than in high-cost countries. This could tap new resources and encourage the private sector to take part.

Through a clearing house, we need to make concrete projects known which can attract potential partners in the North and the South, projects that are economically profitable and which will lead to reduced total emission of the countries involved. Then we can truly pursue the common good by pursuing common interests.

The issue of climate change alerts us to the scale and magnitude of the changes needed. Climate change is not merely a pollution problem. It is the very essence of lifestyles and consumption patterns on a global scale. The problem goes to the core of the North-South gap. It is a fundamental part of the economic life and industrial level of states.

The process of change is in itself a dynamic restructuring process which requires economic activity at a high level. We will see the need to replace capital stock at a high rate to promote energy efficient technology. We will see investments in infrastructure required to meet an entirely new model of future activity. Consequently, environmental protection should not be seen as a cost we cannot afford. Instead we should see new great opportunity for investments, and for employment. History will judge us harshly if we failed to make necessary and positive changes at a time when we had the chance to do so and not pass the bill on to future generations.