



NORWAY

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ADDRESS BY

MRS. GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND
PRIME MINISTER OF NORWAY

AT THE 47TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON

21 SEPTEMBER 1992

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great pleasure for me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to this high office at such an important juncture in the history of the United Nations. I would also like to greet the many new members who have been admitted to our organization in recent months. We wish you all welcome and look forward to cooperating closely with you in our efforts to strengthen the United Nations.

Many of us had hoped to see a new, more equitable world order emerge in the wake of the profound changes we have experienced over the last years. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

The tragic conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia illustrate the challenges we are up against and, in many ways, they are similar. Underlying ethnic, religious, social and economic problems were "frozen" during the Cold War. They were suppressed rather than dealt with in a constructive way. Democratic traditions were not allowed to develop. Some leaders have exploited the absence of democratic traditions, appealing to narrow ethnic and even clan interests. The disastrous consequences of this are brought home to us daily on our TV screens. In Somalia the political crisis has been deepened by extreme poverty and environmental degradation.

Mr. President,

We must strongly condemn the unspeakable cruelties being committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and other parts of the former Yugoslavia. We cannot accept, and will not recognize, any attempts to change international borders by force. The parties must understand that they cannot achieve their goals by armed force. I urge the parties to the conflict to cease fighting at once.

The ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia is an unacceptable violation of international law. It must be brought to a halt. An international tribunal should be set up to punish all those responsible for the war crimes that are now being committed.

All prison and detention camps should be closed down immediately, and the captives must be allowed to return freely to their homes without any further harassment.

Strict observance of the sanctions introduced by the UN Security Council is essential to exert maximum pressure on the parties concerned. As the former Yugoslavia no longer exists, Serbia-Montenegro must apply for membership of the UN along with other new states.

We must all give our firm and unequivocal support to the London Agreement and the Geneva Process. All parties to the conflict must now honour their commitments. The UN Protection Force, in which we are proud to take part, is doing a tremendous job under exceedingly difficult circumstances, particularly in Bosnia. We must all stand united behind the UN and refrain from actions that will only prolong the conflict.

Our first priorities must be to alleviate the sufferings of the civilian population by providing humanitarian assistance. A great

number of human lives will depend upon how the UN manages to protect humanitarian supplies and monitor heavy weaponry.

I strongly condemn the cowardly attacks on UN forces engaged in humanitarian supply operations around Sarajevo. Those guilty for these crimes must be found and brought to trial.

It is now of utmost importance to prevent the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina from spreading throughout the Balkan area. We must consider all available means and support those measures which have already been applied. The recent decision by the CSCE to send observer teams to Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina is an important step.

While we are grieved by the tragic war, we must not lose hope. We must assist the people of former Yugoslavia to accept and respect each other and to come to terms again, making peace through reconciliation. We must encourage the forces of moderation and good will, we must ensure that all parties take part in a peace-making process. We must act justly - and if need be, forcefully.

Mr. President,

In Somalia, the UN must give top priority to providing sufficient food and medical supplies to the starving people. This will be an important test of our collective ability to respond quickly and effectively in the face of natural and man-made disasters. Somalia also needs assistance in finding political solutions to its internal problems, and equally importantly, in building a more sustainable economy. Norway supports a UN peace-keeping presence in this war-torn country, and we are willing to participate in such an operation.

The time for peaceful change in South Africa is running out. We

condemn the recent killings of innocent people in Ciskei and call on the South African Government to restrain the police and the army throughout South Africa, including the so-called homelands. We are confident that this can be achieved, if they really want to.

We urge the South African Government to meet the reasonable demands of the ANC so that negotiations can be resumed in order to work out the framework for adopting a new constitution and establishing an interim government. Norway is prepared to contribute at a practical level by sending observers to monitor the violence and facilitate the negotiation process in South Africa. We will maintain our economic boycott until we see some real progress in the negotiations.

Mr. President,

All these crises and conflicts demonstrate the need for more effective international crisis-prevention and crisis-management mechanisms.

The end of the Cold War has opened a "window of opportunity" for the UN to live up to the great objectives of its Charter. We must seize this opportunity. The Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace is a starting point for a serious discussion on how this can be achieved.

We need to consider further the circumstances under which the UN should resort to real enforcement, mindful of our obligations under the Charter.

Burdensharing is essential with regard to peace-keeping. Every country has a duty to participate, including those which so far, for various reasons, have refrained from getting involved.

Some 35,000 Norwegian men and women have participated in a total of 16 UN peace-keeping operations. We are prepared to intensify our efforts in this field. But our collective efforts must move beyond traditional peace-keeping, into such fields as refugee repatriation, electoral assistance, human rights monitoring etc. This concept proved successful in Namibia and is now being put to a new test in Cambodia. As a means of improving our capacity for such broader operations, we have proposed the establishment of a special UN institute for education and training in peace-keeping and related activities.

Mr. President,

There can be no lasting peace in the world as long as a large part of humanity lives in misery and despair. Maintaining international peace and security is a prime responsibility of the United Nations, as is promoting economic and social progress and the respect for human rights.

We must adamantly oppose any tendency to ignore the fundamental challenges of the continuing North-South divide. Otherwise the very future of our planet is in danger.

In spite of remarkable economic and social progress in many developing countries, the inequalities persist. According to the UNDP's latest Human Development Report, the richest 20 per cent of the world's population receive 83 per cent of total world income, whereas the poorest 20 per cent only have 1.4 per cent.

We cannot allow these inequalities to persist. The African continent has been particularly hard hit by economic decline, and a concerted international effort must be mounted to reverse this unfortunate situation.

To break out of the development impasses, increased contributions from the industrialized countries will be needed, in the form of better market access for developing countries, more investments, increased development aid and debt relief for the poorest countries.

But the slow rate of economic growth and high level of unemployment in most OECD countries limit demands for products from developing countries. The outlook is uncertain and the unfinished business of the Uruguay round adds to this uncertainty.

Capital needs are enormous, competition for capital is fierce. Developing countries are the losers.

The current financial and monetary instability poses great risks to countries and individuals. We need to impose stability and prevent speculation from throwing national economies into peril. There is no alternative to effective coordination of financial and monetary policies. But it can only succeed when coupled with social purpose, a fair distribution and public efforts to create employment.

In fact most economic problems that we are faced with are linked to lack of coordination, rivalry and laissez-faire attitudes among industrialized countries.

The developing countries are as always the ultimate losers. Their best line of defence is to undertake policy reforms to mobilize their people, educate them and diversify their economies. Development is not likely to accelerate without good governance, democracy, respect for basic human rights, reduced military spending and improved redistribution systems with increased emphasis on health and education.

Alleviating world poverty is necessary if we are to reduce the rapid population increase in many parts of the world. At present rates the world population now doubles every 40 years and could reach somewhere between 8 and 14 billion by the middle of the next century. Keeping to the low end of the scale will make all the difference to life on earth.

We must deal with population growth through an integrated human rights approach, including education and the enhancement of the status of women, improved public health, and family planning.

Confronted with these great challenges it is a sad paradox that development aid flows continue to stagnate and remain at less than half of the UN's target of 0.7 per cent of GDP. Norway's official development aid has exceeded 1 per cent of our GDP for more than 10 years, which reflects our strong commitment to the fight against poverty.

Mr. President,

At the Rio Conference on Environment and Development it was made clear that we are heading towards a crisis of uncontrollable dimensions unless we change course. The North as well as the rich in the South will have to change consumption and production patterns.

Developing nations came to the Rio Summit with open economic demands. And understandably so: For them, the conference was essentially about development and justice.

At Rio, we achieved progress in many fields, too little progress in most fields, and no progress at all in some fields.

We opened two important conventions for signature. It is imperative that we make them more effective. They will not work

unless all major countries sign, ratify them and implement them.

Furthermore, Rio made it clear that the challenges of dealing with environmental threats and poverty are cross-cutting, long-term, predictable and unavoidable unless we establish a world order of burdensharing, common perceptions and common responsibility.

Critical decisions remain to be taken. Traditional international conferences run by consensus can only advance at the pace of the most reluctant mover in each field. The future requires stronger decision-making procedures. Nothing less will serve us. I welcome the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development and expect it to become effective under a revitalization of the economic and social responsibilities of the United Nations. We proposed the establishment of such a Commission and expect to take an active part in its work.

Mr. President,

The challenge of economic and social development requires a more unified approach and stronger direction within the UN system. Over the years the number of agencies, programmes and councils has mushroomed, with too little inter-agency cooperation. This can not continue. We must streamline our organization to avoid duplication and improve effectiveness.

The Nordic countries have addressed these challenges through the Nordic UN Project. Although we have made some headway, we need to proceed during the present session of the General Assembly.

In view of the greater demands now being made on the UN we must stress the importance of sound and predictable financing. Being the eighth largest contributor to the UN system in absolute terms and by far the largest in per capita terms we find it exceedingly

difficult to understand why so many countries fail to honour their obligations.

It is disappointing to say the least to read in our Secretary-General's report that, I quote: "Perennial shortages, the absence of reserves, and a debilitating uncertainty over the immediate future, are the main characteristics of the financial situation of the United Nations". Immediately preceding this sentence, the Secretary-General points out that some 900 million dollars in assessed contributions are unpaid together with some 844 million dollars towards the peace-keeping operations.

This is an unworthy situation. We must increase our financial discipline. The permanent members of the Security Council have a special responsibility in this respect. And the question must be raised if countries should at all be eligible to the Security Council if they have not paid their dues.

Mr. President,

We must be willing to provide our Secretary General and his staff with the necessary means to promote peace, and to wage war against environmental degradation and underdevelopment.

Our daily diet of printed and electronic news presents a picture of a world in need of better governance, and of more coordination. Our present forms of cooperation, developed in a less interdependent world, are yet too weak and unlikely to stand the test of time. We should not pretend that they can.

Thank you, Mr. President.