

Prime Minister  
Gro Harlem Brundtland

DINNER SPEECH IN THE HONOUR OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN OSLO,  
19 JANUARY 1993

Excellencies  
Dear Guests,

We are reminded that some things are constant even under the most changing conditions. The Government's annual dinner at Akerhus Castle in the honour of the Diplomatic Corps has become a real tradition.

Diplomats deserve a fair share for the credits for the many recent successes in the field of disarmament which will make the future more safe for our children. There were no disarmament agreements in the 13th century, when construction of this military bastion was begun, and so - luckily for us now - there were no diplomats charged with negotiating away this fortress.

The Start II and the chemical weapons agreements are so fundamental, and public reaction to them so sparse, that one stops and wonders if we are gradually becoming immune to such good news. Do people fully understand the depth of these breakthroughs? Are people able to grasp the significance of such milestones in a period where the world is constantly evolving, challenging familiar perceptions.

We should be grateful to Presidents Bush and Yeltsin for the many improvements in East-West relations. On the final day of president Bush's term of office I find it natural to congratulate him on his many achievements that have helped to make this world a safer place. We are looking now with great expectations to the new, young and dynamic leadership in Washington.

While there are positive trends, the beginning of 1993 has been characterized by increasing uncertainty. We are deeply concerned about the tragedy in former Yugoslavia, the atrocities committed there, and our own inability to stop them.

In other countries, new sub-cultures are emerging based on xenophobia and extreme nationalism. We must sound the alarm against these trends. History has been defined as the science of what never happen twice, but we are now reminded of darker chapters of our European history.

So when we wish each other a happy new year, that statement is more substantially complex this year than or two years ago.

The year that just ended was one of hesitation. Hesitation when confronted with the Balkan crisis. Hesitation on how to accelerate the integration of Russia more firmly into Western

cooperation, Hesitation in the Middle East peace process, and hesitation inside the EC regarding the road from Maastricht. The Rio Conference on Environment and Development succeeded in defining new global challenges, but only partly succeeded in defining the answers and remedies.

What lesson can we learn from this? Above all we are confronted with overwhelming evidence of the need for more international cooperation and more common responsibility. What we do as separate states is not sufficient - in international relations we cannot say as Ibsen that "The strongest man upon earth is he who stands most alone".

We have not yet come to a stage where freedom from want, fear, and oppression have reached every corner of the globe. Returning from Paris a few days ago I was reminded about what a Chinese statesman said some years ago of what to his mind were the most important results of the French Revolution. His answer was: "That is too early to say."

Many of us here are accustomed to living with imperfection, but we cannot accept an obvious organizational and leadership deficit in the face of the immense unsolved challenges which only countries acting together can provide regarding security, environment and development.

I believe that Europe bears a main responsibility and that it must put its house in order. Because if Europe cannot organize itself and provide political and institutional answers to its many different needs, which community of nations can then do it?

Europe shall be able to assume a leading role it should rightfully be able to take. 1992 was indeed a troublesome year for European integration. The only comforting thing about setbacks in European integration is that they have always been followed by progress - or as the former President of the EC Commission, Walter Hallenstein put it: "Anyone who does not believe in miracles in European affairs is no realist."

I feel sure that I am a realist when I expect 1993 to be a professionally rewarding year for the Diplomatic Corps in Oslo. The favourite subject of our relations with the EC will undoubtedly keep you fairly busy.

Norway will be negotiating the terms of accession to the European Communities in parallel with its Nordic neighbours. Today, we hear little about the risk of coming too late with our application. As French Prime Minister Bérégovoy put it the other day: The Community will be rehearsing a couple of weeks on the other EFTA applicants before Norway sides with them.

One might stop and reflect for a while on the trends we see in Europe, where so many people in Denmark, France and other countries now seem so eager to debate the EC, Maastricht and the future of Europe as we in Norway have done for quite some

time. It could hardly be a sign that Norwegians are already beginning to have greater influence upon Europe?

I would like to conclude by inviting you to join me in a toast to the Corps Diplomatique in Norway, and to continued inspiring cooperation in the year ahead.