



## PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Address to The Foreign Correspondents' Club

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### **Facing up to our global responsibilities**

In the present television era, our sense of reality is often influenced by what the networks define as news. We are offered a stream of fleeting impressions, often lasting only for seconds at a time. We become emotionally involved in certain crises and disasters, but too often we disregard those that are not covered by the media. Long-term global trends are often ignored, intentionally or unintentionally. However, these trends will have devastating impacts unless we promote political change. It is my hope that the opinion shapers of the media will devote more attention to the trends that will decide our future.

I have chosen to focus on three interrelated areas which require the increased attention of the international community: environment and development, population issues and peacekeeping.

Environment and development are probably the areas where growing global interdependence and the need for international cooperation are most clearly evident. Two years ago, when the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Río de Janeiro, there was a high level of public attention and awareness. The Río Summit was actually covered extensively by the media. But public attention gradually waned, and there is now a danger that environmental issues are given too little attention. We risk failing abysmally in our duties towards coming generations if we neglect these issues.

Given our widespread knowledge, and the advances of modern technology, we should have a real chance of reducing pollution, improving energy efficiency and increasing the recycling of resources. We have the capacity to counter soil erosion, deforestation and desertification, but many governments have too little support at home to make a more global commitment. Given the fact that there are more than 20 million unemployed people in the OECD countries alone, this is understandable, but this does not make it acceptable. The transition towards sustainable development, which will give coming generations at least the same range of choices as we have had, will be too slow unless we constantly press for political change.

Let me illustrate this by addressing the global climate issue. Every country will be afflicted by global warming. Not only climatically, but also politically. Just imagine what would happen if the Pacific islands were

flooded, if the Asian heartland were stricken by drought, or if economies based on agricultural production were disrupted. The political upheavals would endanger even the most stable societies. We would regret deeply that we did not take action earlier, and we would not be able to say that we did not know.

The World Commission on Environment and Development pointed out the need for production patterns that use less of our non-renewable resources. It maintained that there should be no need to lower the standard of living as long as we succeed in changing the quality of economic growth. Let me emphasize that we cannot choose between economic growth and sustaining the environment. From a global view point, growth is imperative if poverty is to be alleviated. Growth is necessary to create the resources needed to solve environmental problems. What we need is a type of growth that enhances the quality of life for all instead of leading to congestion, more pollution and the overexploitation of resources.

Economic growth as we know it has traditionally meant producing more and more goods using more and more natural resources and placing an increasing strain on an already fragile environment. This pattern cannot be repeated uncritically on a global scale. To illustrate my point: the average person in North America consumes almost 20 times as much as a person in India or China, and 60 to 70 times more than a person in Bangladesh. It is simply impossible for the world as a whole to sustain a Western level of consumption for everyone. In fact, if 7 billion people were to consume as much energy and resources as we do in the West today, we would need 10 worlds, not one, to satisfy all our needs.

We are thus faced with a gigantic task: how to make changes in the world economy which will lead to a more just world where we bridge the present gaps between the rich and the poor. We are forced to make changes in our economies which will reduce the strain on the environment. Effective change will not be free. Thus, measures that make perfectly good sense if implemented by all countries at similar levels of development may become prohibitively expensive if one country is to make these changes alone. For example, the European Union has for a long time, so far without success, discussed the introduction of a CO<sub>2</sub> tax. One reason why this has been difficult is a fear that Europe would suffer trade losses and increasing unemployment if Japan and the United States did not introduce similar taxes. This deadlock between major trading partners makes it difficult for a country like Norway to maintain the high level of the CO<sub>2</sub> tax that we introduced nationally as early as 1991.

This example shows that a more active use of economic instruments to benefit the environment will also require international harmonization of rules. Countries must be able to implement measures which are conducive to the sustainable management of their natural resources, confident that they will not be met by arbitrary or unjustifiable actions by other countries.

The technological competence and know-how possessed by Japan, often marked by particularly high energy efficiency, are also well known. This knowledge and these resources are increasingly being transferred to and drawn upon in other countries. I regard the actual and potential role of Japan in these fields as a most important element in a strengthened global partnership for sustainable development.

I would also like to commend Japan on its increasingly active role in population issues, another area which is of primary relevance in our efforts to promote sustainable development. In January this year Japan hosted an important meeting on population and development which was attended by a number of eminent persons. Under the able chairmanship of Mr. Taro Nakayama, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Japanese Parliamentary Federation for Population, the meeting adopted the *Tokyo Declaration* entitled "Towards a Global Partnership in Population and Development".

I fully support this important declaration, which sets the standard against which the success of the Cairo Conference on Population and Development this coming September will be measured. Indeed, the Cairo Conference will be an important test of our ability to shape the future of humanity and fulfill our vital obligations towards coming generations. This task is the very essence of sustainable development.

Will Cairo be more successful than Río in formulating a satisfactory program of action on population issues? Even at Río we had a historic chance to meet the challenges of the vicious poverty spiral of rapid population growth, underdevelopment and environmental degradation. Strong policies could have been adopted on population and environment, but the Río documents represented a step backwards.

In fact, a small, well-known minority of participants both in Río and in New York claimed the exclusive right to define what is morally and ethically correct in population issues. These same forces and attitudes have obstructed progress towards universal access to family planning in the past as well. This minority has effectively impeded consensus on key elements such as universal access to reproductive health services, fertility regulation and information and family planning for adolescents.

Even the wording "safe motherhood" was opposed by this minority, because it would involve medical assistance to women who suffer complications from unsafe, illegal abortions. Based on the experience from Río, we should in this situation ask ourselves whether we can really afford to let the Cairo Conference be run by consensus.

Universal access to basic reproductive health services, including family planning, must be fully confirmed as a human right for all at Cairo. The specific moral code expounded by a small and exclusive minority becomes hypocritical if it means accepting mothers suffering or dying from unwanted pregnancies and unsafe, illegal abortions. The same attitude

implies full acceptance of unwanted or motherless children living in abject poverty.

Traditional religious and cultural obstacles can be overcome both by enlightened political leadership and through economic and social development which is human-centered. For example, Buddhist Thailand, Moslem Indonesia and Catholic Italy all demonstrate that sharp reductions in fertility can be achieved in a remarkably short space of time.

Education is vital. It is important as a means of providing people, in particular women, with the right to make informed choices. The economic returns for investment in women's education are generally comparable to those in men's education, but the social returns are far greater. Throughout the world educated mothers have fewer and healthier children than their less educated sisters. In several societies with high fertility rates, women who have completed primary school have about three children less than uneducated women. These and other strong reasons for allocating far more public funds for basic education should be forcefully expressed at Cairo. Basic education is one of the most important investments of society, but at present it only receives a small percentage of government budgets in the developing world, and only about 2 per cent of all development assistance. More than any other region, Sub-Saharan Africa needs support from the world community in this respect.

This being said, we should never lose sight of the specific challenge posed by the Cairo Conference: finding the most efficient, most economical means of meeting rapid, uncontrolled population growth. Coercion in every shape or form should rightly be rejected. The focus must be on objectives to ensure access to basic reproductive health, including family planning services for all. It is still essential to agree in Cairo on firm targets and timetables, not to rely on good intentions.

There is no better insurance policy for developed and developing countries than funding population and family planning programs. Much of the contribution must come from developing countries themselves. A strong commitment by the South to reduce population growth should be coupled with an equal commitment by the North to reduce the strain of consumption and production patterns on the global environment. I expect Cairo to reconfirm that poverty is the root cause of population growth, just as it is a basic cause of environmental degradation. The reduction of global poverty calls for a redoubling of the efforts of the donor countries of the world.

We need to overcome the present aid fatigue. Norway's contribution to development assistance is in excess of 1 per cent of our GDP, and we have been deplorably alone among developed countries in meeting internationally agreed targets both for family planning and for overall development assistance. In absolute terms, Japan is now the world's leading country in development assistance, providing an impressive amount of more than USD 10 billion annually. It is of great significance that Japan plans to increase its development assistance by 40-50 per cent

over the next five years. I have also noted with great pleasure the Japanese announcement to increase official assistance for population purposes, including measures to combat HIV/AIDS, to approximately USD 3 billion over the next seven years. At the New York meeting, Japan expressed the view, which I fully support, that the document to come out of Cairo should be as clear, as concise and as action-oriented as possible, so that it will be fully understood and implemented throughout the world.

We very much look forward to working more closely with Japan to improve the situation and the outlook for the world's poor. The recent signs and indications that Japan is assuming a greater share of the responsibility for global peace, environment and development are greatly needed and most welcome. Together we can encourage other countries to follow suit.

Peace is of course a basic prerequisite for sustainable development. The expansion of the responsibilities of the United Nations in the field of peace and security is most significantly illustrated by the enormous growth in UN peacekeeping operations in recent years. They have increased both in number and in size, as well as in the broadening of their range and, of course, in their expense.

From the foundation of the UN until 1988 altogether 13 operations were launched by the Security Council. During the six years that have passed since then, 19 new operations have been launched. Three years ago, around 11,500 UN military and civilian personnel were deployed in peacekeeping operations. Today there are about 70,000. In past years, the main core of the personnel was provided by the Nordic countries and certain other European and "like-minded" countries. Today 70 countries from all over the world participate on a voluntary basis with personnel in the 17 ongoing peacekeeping operations. This increased participation is in itself very encouraging proof of the growing recognition that the maintenance of international peace and security is indeed a collective, global responsibility.

Norway has warmly welcomed the increased interest of Japan in participating in UN peacekeeping operations. I highly commend Japan's involvement in UNTAC (Cambodia), which was crucial to the success of that operation. Further acknowledgment of Japan's importance in UN crisis management can be found in the appointment of Yasushi Akashi as Special Representative of the Secretary General in Former Yugoslavia and Ms. Sadako Ogata as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - incidentally, both as successors of Thorvald Stoltenberg.

I understand the particular situation of Japan concerning participation in UN peacekeeping operations. However, a further increase in Japan's overall contribution to UN peacekeeping would mean a significant boost to the UN's capabilities in the field and would send positive and encouraging signals to other countries that are not yet participating.

Along with the increased ability of the United Nations to operate according to its intentions, the expenses for peacekeeping have also seen an enormous increase. From approximately USD 630 million in 1991, the budget has risen to a total of about USD 3.6 billion for the 1993 fiscal year. The budget for the peacekeeping operations, which used to be a third or half of the regular UN budget, is now approximately three times larger than the regular budget. Given the fact that some nations fail to meet their commitments on time, it goes without saying that this becomes an enormous strain on UN finances. I do hope that Japan's announcement last September that it would pay all its debts to the United Nation's peacekeeping operations will serve as an inspiration to other nations that are in arrears.

In fact, one of the main challenges faced by the UN is the discrepancy between what is expected of the organization and the resources available. The increased demands on the UN have put heavy strains on the organization in terms of planning capacity and personnel as well. Troop-contributing nations are increasingly concerned about the need to improve the capability of the United Nations to plan, conduct and coordinate peacekeeping activities. Thus, I am very pleased to note Japan's support of the Nordic initiative to strengthen the UN's capabilities in the coordination, command and control of peacekeeping operations. As a follow-up of the UN General Assembly's resolution last November, we are currently involved in establishing an expert group, linked to the UN Secretariat, that will put forward concrete suggestions as to how present command and control structures should be revised and strengthened.

The search for a more effective and strengthened United Nations, particularly in its role as peacekeeper, must be a priority issue. The challenges are formidable. Sometimes we demand more of the United Nations than can be expected of any international organization. We must anticipate and prepare ourselves for setbacks as the United Nations explores new ways of solving conflicts in a changing world. There is a growing understanding that peace and security do not depend merely on military factors. On the contrary, security and stability should be seen in close connection with social and humanitarian questions, civilian and human rights problems, and various aspects of international economic, environmental and development-related issues.

In order to take due account of these interlinkages, there is a need for a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution, an approach that views peacekeeping as interrelated with peace-making, peace-building, and preventive diplomacy. These issues are eloquently presented in the Secretary General's report "An Agenda for Peace", which has become the main point of reference in the continuing debate on how to strengthen the UN in the field of peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

I have great respect for the way in which the Secretary-General seeks to define the challenges faced by the United Nations. The world community should be eager to respond to this initiative. Peacekeeping is our collective

responsibility. We are constantly reminded of the fact that the UN can only do what the member states make it possible for it to do. Contributions in terms of financial resources and personnel are concrete expressions of commitment.

This is generally the case in all areas. There is such a thing as global responsibilities, and we must shoulder these. We need to share equitably the global bills for peace, environment and development. I am pleased that Japan is working more closely with us in the United Nations, and that Japan seems determined to gradually assume its rightful role in world affairs.

To my mind, the very realization of the fact that there is such a thing as global responsibilities implies a moral obligation to translate this realization into concrete expressions of commitment. The world needs more commitment, just as it needs more compassion and conviction.