



STATSMINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Lunsjtale for Ugandas president Yoweri Museveni

Hotel Bristol, 31. mai 1994

Your Excellencies,

Dear guests,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you and your delegation to Norway. As you are already aware, Uganda is a country with many friends in Norway, particularly among those who have had the opportunity to be part of the development cooperation between our two countries which dates all the way back to the 1960s. This was before the coming to power of General Amin, which was the beginning of a dark period in your country's history.

In this country we have been following with great interest and admiration the efforts of the National Resistance Movement to rebuild your country and reconcile your differences after the devastation caused by dictatorship and civil war. We have also noted with satisfaction that, in spite of many difficulties, you have already succeeded in bringing the country back on the track towards economic growth and political stability.

This in itself is a great achievement, but we are all well aware that the road ahead is still long, that there are many obstacles to be overcome. Therefore, Mr. President, I feel that the Investment Workshop you attended this morning is a very timely initiative, and I hope it will lead to closer contacts and cooperation between the private sectors in Norway and Uganda. This would be of mutual benefit to both parties.

As a doctor by profession, I have a special interest in public health, and I am of course well aware of the problems that many countries in Africa are facing in this field, especially with regard to AIDS. This is a difficult matter to deal with and I have been impressed by the openness with which you have confronted it. This is an example to be followed by other countries, in order to stop the spread of the disease in the near future, and to cure those who have already been infected.

It is impossible to avoid any mention of the terrible tragedy that has struck your neighboring country Rwanda. We are all deeply shocked by the ruthless massacre of hundreds of thousands of innocent people there, and we implore those responsible for these horrible deeds to come to their senses so that peace can soon be restored to this suffering country.

For many years Norway has had a special relationship to Eastern Africa. Many Norwegians have close ties to this region. We rejoice when things go well for our friends there, and are saddened when they do not. We are very happy to see that after many years of internal troubles, Uganda again seems to be one of the countries on the way forward.

Uganda was once called "the Pearl of Africa" because of its natural beauty and richness. We all hope that this will soon be an appropriate name once again. The wise leadership and the commitment that you, Mr. President, have shown to the development of your country, give every reason to believe that this will be the case. I wish you all the best of luck in this endeavor.

Once again I would like to welcome you to Norway, and I propose a toast to you Mr. President, to Uganda, and to the friendship between our two countries.