



## PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Nobel Prize luncheon

Akershus Castle, 11 December 1994

Nobel Laureates, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

This castle was once a fortress - a symbol of strife and warfare. Now it is a venue for peaceful gatherings and a fitting backdrop for the occasion we are celebrating today. We are gathered here in honour of three courageous men - this year's Nobel Peace Prize Laureates; PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres of Israel. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all of you on behalf of the Government and the people of Norway.

On 13 September last year the impossible became possible, when the Declaration of Principles was signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Old enemies decided to put hatred and fear behind them and invest their energies in building a common, just and peaceful future. The year 1993 will forever be regarded as a watershed in the Middle East conflict. To quote our common friend, the late Johan Jørgen Holst: "In international relations you seldom get to choose your enemy, but it is with your enemy that you make peace".

Peace can never be taken for granted. It has to be won afresh every day. Our distinguished guests deserve great credit for their courage and commitment in continuing to build the peace despite opposition and violent attempts to derail the peace process. Chairman Arafat has often referred to the Peace of the Brave. Mr. Rabin has said that we must fight for peace as if there was no terror and fight terror as if there was no peace. In doing this you have demonstrated beyond doubt that there can be no going back to the old days of conflict and confrontation, and that there is only one way forward: continuing dialogue and negotiations. The prospects of peace and stability will help to realize the great potential for economic development and trade in the region, in line with your visions for a new Middle East.

However, high hopes and great expectations are not sufficient to build peace. Peace only becomes meaningful for the ordinary man and woman when they can enjoy security and a better life for themselves and their families. The international community must now fulfil its promise to provide financial resources to secure peace and promote economic development in the Middle East. This will be a sound investment in a more peaceful and stable future.

The current economic situation in the autonomous Palestinian areas is bleak, especially in Gaza. The lack of rapid and visible improvements in people's living conditions could endanger the whole peace process. As donors we must act with determination and flexibility in order to secure sufficient funding for the Palestinian Authority to meet the most pressing

needs. If we fail to act now, the long-term prospects for political stability and economic growth could be seriously undermined.

In this context, I was pleased to learn that last week's meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in Brussels was able to mobilize sizeable new contributions for the short-term needs of the Palestinian Authority. However, much remains to be done. As Chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee Norway will continue to work closely with the parties and the donors. The decisions from Brussels must be followed up and implemented on the ground.

In Norway the Middle East holds a special place in our hearts and minds. We are proud and honoured to have served in a facilitating capacity for the process that led to the Oslo Agreement, and that Norwegians - over time - have established relationships of lasting friendship and confidence with representatives of both parties.

We are also honoured by the fact that the parties have become frequent guests in our country, and that conflict-solving endeavours seem to bring you to the North. Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres are here together for the fourth time this year. And Prime Minister Rabin, we have been looking forward to your visit. You are a most highly welcome first visitor. In view of the fact that our cold Northern climate seems to have a beneficial effect on Middle Eastern temperaments, we will do our best to maintain the "Oslo spirit" and can assure you that you are welcome here at any time - also when you do not have problems to be solved.

I can promise you that Norway will continue to provide steadfast support for the peace process. May the Nobel Peace Prize awards encourage and commit you in your efforts to create a comprehensive, just and permanent peace in the Middle East.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to ask you to join me in a toast in honour of the three Peace Prize Laureates and to lasting peace between all peoples of the Middle East.