



## PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

The environmental challenges and the follow up of "Our Common Future".

Sørmarka, 2. juli 1994

We social democrats see political democratic work as the only viable path towards positive and sustainable change. We believe that people can take charge of their own future and that active governments can act as engines of change and renewal.

We have been pivotal in translating our values into policies. Today's challenges require more social democracy, more solidarity and more common action. Today, the environmental challenges clearly show that there is no limit to the number of generations which our solidarity must comprise. Environmental responsibility and the willingness to share resources in an equitable manner must underpin all our actions. Not every inequality is unjust, but every unjust inequality must be a target for social democratic action. Prosperity must be shared if it is to be real.

To us, the concept of prosperity signifies not only economic growth and material welfare, but also employment for all, social justice and social security, environmental quality, equality between men and women, and a meaningful life.

Policy goals include health for all, equal access to education, safety at the work-place, not only physical safety but also protection from unjustifiable dismissal, and the opportunity to take part in decisions at the work place.

Today, I have been asked to speak about our environmental challenges and the follow up of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Having been active in shaping environmental policies for 20 years, I have experienced how the climate for political change has differed, how public opinion has been more or less attuned to environmental problems.

At present many environmentalists again feel that much of the momentum has been lost. I believe this is partly true, but only partly. There have been many breakthroughs over the past seven years since the report of the World Commission was published. Pollution has been reduced in a number of areas. Knowledge about environmental issues has increased.

The Commission's report "Our Common Future" was issued in April 1987. It set out to capture that whether we live in affluence in an industrialized country or whether we belong to the 1,2 billion people who live in absolute poverty, we are all neighbours in an interlinked world. We have no other option than to cooperate with each other to overcome all those dangerous trends that threaten the human race and its natural environment.

The Commission's concept of "sustainable development" goes much further than mere conservation or protection of nature. We define "sustainable development" as a political concept of change which comprises democracy, participation, openness as well as environmental objectives and targets.

We found that sustainable development could not be achieved as long a poverty is endemic and that it is a moral imperative and enlightened self interest to bring more equity into this world.

We tried to capture the directions we have to pursue if we shall avoid suffocating from pollution, reversing depletions of the earths forests and its myriads of living species, contaminating water and land resources.

We pointed to how we should bring the uses of energy into line with what nature can tolerate and how we should ensure that enough food is available for an expanding world population.

We were unanimous in focusing on the international economy as a force multiplier that needed major adjustments. We found a desperate need for a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity, both between countries -and within countries.

We found the only sane policy to be one of international burdensharing between rich and poor countries, in which debt relief, development assistance, transfer of environmentally sound technology and a general climate conducive to investment were key components.

Above all we became convinced that we have the potential and the capacity to change. But for this to happen we need to realize people's full potential. We must shift resources from arming our people towards educating them and providing health services and more equal opportunities for all.

The Commission proposed that an international conference should be convened to review progress towards sustainable development and to agree on follow up of the Commissions recommendations. That Conference took place in Rio two years ago.

In an ideal world, the political climate for cooperation should now have been conducive to global agreement on profound changes. The East-West antagonism has vanished, and democracy is gaining ground around the world.

There is a growing recognition that today, the threats to our future come not so much from military aggression, as from business as usual, from tacit acceptance that poverty and destitution are facts of life, and from shortsighted abuse of resources. We may have to face the next generations inquiry into what we did when when we realized what was at stake.

The hole in the ozone-layer will give some of us skin-cancer, but it is our human nature to close our eyes to this fact and to hope that individually we may be spared. But the odds are beginning to mount against our children and grand-children. And if global warming remains unchecked, food-production may suffer, and droughts, storms and floods may upset our delicate production and transport systems. This all may happen because our generation has become to extravagant in using resources.

While we do our best to prevent accidents where we live, we have been unsuccessful in alleviating the silent tragedy of the poor and underprivileged. 13 to 18 million people, mostly children die from hunger-related diseases each year. That is about the same human toll as if 100 fully loaded 747 jets would crash each day.

And still many in the North don't feel that the label "rich" aptly describes our life situation. We strive to get an education. We hope that there will be jobs available when we want one. We pay our bills, we hope be able to support our children and to help them towards a decent start in life. Increasingly many of us are unemployed.

I am pointing to this because "development" is not something for the third world alone. Indeed the industrialized countries are also developing countries, but their path of development is based on patterns of production and consumption that are unsustainable. We are facing

increasing difficulties in putting more people to work, even though there is so much that needs to be done. In this way, we are all countries in transition. We need change, and social democrats provide the hope that change is possible and the conviction that we have to change today to provide security for tomorrow.

Modern media offer us a bewildering array of reports of disorder, portaying a fragmented world. The increasing contrast between a more globalized and interdependent reality and a more fragmented perception of this reality, is also evident. Integration and disintegration exist side by side.

In Western Europe, North America and in some other regions, nations are joining forces in an intensified effort to abolish previous barriers to trade and economic cooperation.

In the one truly global world organization - the United Nations -there have been very positive moves towards a new, more effective management of global change in the field of international peace and security.

But in the fields of economic, social and environmental development, global efforts to deal with change are lagging far behind the pace of change itself. The world economy has become global, but the management of economic and ecological interdependence has not.

In the 1990s, we shall have our last chance to prevent another doubling or tripling of the world population. We will have no chance of coping effectively with the population explosion unless we deal squarely with the poverty issue in the developing world.

The Cairo conference in September this year will be the third United Nations Conference on population. It will deal with the population explosion and couples and individuals can be given real rights to decide the number of children they will have. Access to family planning, contraceptives and adequate sex education are in my view minimum requirements to that effect.

But the population explosion is not only about numbers. It is also about the use of natural resources. Clearly we in the industrialized countries place a much greater burden on the earth's resources than most people living in the Third World. We have a clear responsibility to reduce our strain on natural resources and our polluting activities at the same time as we leave for the Third World enough "environmental space".

We cannot say to the third world, "sorry, we have filled the waste basket. There is no more room for you". Solidarity requires that we share equitably across borders and across generations.

Human activity is putting unprecedented pressures on the global environment. Global warming, depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer, rapid population growth, massive loss of species and biological diversity, accelerating desertification, deforestation and soil erosion, - these are all threats that will soon lead to breakdowns of vital support systems for life on Earth.

I remember well how some conservative governments reacted to the Commission's report. The best environmental results, they argued, would be achieved if the market forces were left alone. Hands off - business will, by the grace of good fortune bring us towards "sustainable development". This of course is non-sense.

The most important needs for environmental protection are public needs that only people who work politically can define and articulate.

The biggest achievement of social democracy has been to harness the market forces and to reap the benefit of the wealth created, redistribute the benefits in pursuance of more equitable and just societies, and define the rules of the economy.

The establishment of tougher environmental standards has, for instance, been instrumental in reducing emissions from production processes and consumer products, such as cars.

Market forces can be changed. But today, this cannot successfully be done only at the national level. Norway does not produce cars. It would not make sense to define pollution standard for cars so strictly that no cars would meet them. But it would make sense to be present at those meetings where car-producing and car-importing countries determine such environmental standards.

A country can have its own taxes and duties on polluting activity, but if such taxes are too high, the real beneficiary will often be competing companies in countries with more lenient rules. Consequently, the best

recipe for success is to work for stronger, but harmonized international measures.

We need more unified international systems for better pricing of environmental resources. Market mechanisms must be adjusted so that prices reflect the true environmental costs of what we produce and what we consume. This will be particularly important in the field of energy. Current energy prices bear little relation to the true environmental costs of energy-related emissions.

The costs of some of the environmental measures now being discussed will be high. However, we often estimate such costs by comparing them with the free use of natural resources, including the atmosphere and the oceans. If these resources had been assigned a value and a price, both today and in the future, a larger number of environmental investments would be made.

We must use environmental taxes and fees in a combined carrot and stick strategy to encourage environmentally-friendly practices and to discourage those that damage the environment. Such incentives or disincentives could be used without increasing the tax burden.

Today we underuse work and overuse finite resources. We cannot rest until we allow everyone who is capable to work and until we are sure to leave enough resources to coming generations.

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Many international agreements have been concluded since the Commission's report was issued in 1987. The Montreal protocol on protection of the ozone-layer is one. Other new global agreements deal with the climate, hazardous waste and protection of species.

Earlier agreements, such as the ECE convention of transboundary air-pollution, has proved very important in our region. Major reductions have been achieved.

This agreement can be rated as belonging to the "first generation" of agreements which mainly addressed the "end-pipe" of economic activity, and dealt with problems of a relatively low cost. The method of these early

agreements was to define a common percentage target for reduction of pollution.

This was effective as a start. Norway, for example has reduced emission of sulphur compounds by about 70 per cent since 1980

The new generation of agreements, such as the new agreement on sulphur emission signed here in Oslo three weeks ago take account of the fact that individual nations have very different points of departure for dealing with the issues involved.

Some countries, including Norway, have already been working for years to reduce emissions to air and water, and the costs of further clean-ups are quite high. In other countries, emissions can be reduced at far less costs per ton.

In addition, the new type of agreements take account of the fact that nature is not equally vulnerable everywhere. The soil in Scandinavia, for example, can absorb far less sulphur than the soils further south in Europe. Consequently, the sources which damage our country must reduce more. These sources are located in other countries. 90 per cent of the acid rain falling on Norway comes from other countries.

The early conferences on climate change led to adoptions of national targets for reduction of climate gas emissions. The good thing about such targets is that all countries started examining their potential for reductions and many adopted measures. From a global point of view however, it would make little environmental sense if national emission ceilings would prevent activities that would benefit the global environment.

If Norway produces natural gas, that gas will often replace more polluting forms of energy in the countries which buy our gas. Gas production, however, leads to CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions, which influence the national emission accounts. Some regard this as an environmental problem, forgetting that the use of gas reduces the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the gas-producing and gas-consuming countries taken together.

This is why Norway has been a proponent of cost-effective implementation of the targets set to limit global emissions of greenhouse gases. Rather than looking at each individual country in isolation, we need to look at the

effect on the global atmosphere. It is awkward that some environmentalists criticise us for taking the responsible view that it is the results that count, and not the longitude and latitude of the source of emission.

Perhaps the most cost-effective projects are likely to be found in Eastern Europe and in developing countries. Norway will soon be exporting gas to the new German L ander where our gas replaces their heavily polluting lignite.

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While few of the solutions agreed upon at Rio came anywhere near to being final, the conference set many trains in motion.

Rio helped bring about a greater safety net for the world's species. Not since the dinosaurs became extinct some 65 million years ago has the earth witnessed a loss of biological diversity of such a scale as today. Although mass-extinction of species is not a new phenomenon, never before has it been caused by a single species, as it is today by man. But we have the capacity to save nature as well as to destroy it.

The Convention on Biological Diversity goes beyond the scope of conserving individual species. It includes ecosystems and genetic diversity as well, from the wilderness to the crops on a farmer's field. It focuses on conservation not only through protection but also through sustainable use. Moreover, it focuses on the fair and equitable sharing of burdens and benefits arising from protection and use.

The acid test of the Convention will be if it will be guided by solidarity over borders and across generations. This is a clear responsibility for both developed and developing countries alike.

Important challenges under the Convention include the development of a financial mechanism. Here developed countries should honour their commitment to burden-sharing transfers of financial resources to developing countries.



At the national level it is important to start preparations for the implementation of the Convention as soon as possible. In Norway, we have chosen to draw up a National Action Plan to be completed by the end of 1994. The plan will be based on sectoral strategies and will involve the role of regional and local authorities.

In many countries there is a growing awareness of the importance of sustainable development. Mobilization of this awareness in favour of certain environmental issues should, however, not be based on an oversimplification or emotions.

A lasting commitment to sustainable development can only be based on sound factual arguments. It is of fundamental importance that those wishing to enhance environmental awareness respect and base their argumentation on the full biological and cultural complexity concerned.

A main challenge for national and international conservation measures is to strike the right balance between conservation and sustainable use. All cultures depend on use of natural resources. Countries are free to decide not to use specific resources but they should not be dictated from the outside on the basis of emotions in other countries.

The issue of Norway's whaling policy has been in the focus of much public attention internationally in recent years. Pressure groups such as Greenpeace are calling for boycotts and are spreading information about our policy on whaling which fails to meet the test of truth.

The whaling issue is one which allows people and groups to appear as environmentalists without any cost to themselves or their own societies. The fact is that if our whaling policy had allowed threatened whales to be taken, we would of course never have allowed it.

The basis of international cooperation will be threatened if knowledge and science are expelled from the decision-making bodies. International cooperation on resource policy and management of natural resources will be undermined if countries patronize each other and venture to mobilize support through accusations which are not based on reality. We have opposed any such attempts by pressure groups to dress in green mantle at the expense of our coastal communities.

We need environmental agreements if we are to move forward. This requires that we must act in good faith when we negotiate and implement agreements. We all have to honour our obligations. We cannot accept that resource management agreements are used for other purposes than those agreed. For me this is a question of respect for the rule of law in international relations.

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Developing countries need new capital to tackle the more immediate environment and development problems at the regional and local levels. It is a sad fact that many countries are not fulfilling their commitments to provide development assistance on a scale reflected in internationally agreed documents. The old target of 0.7 per cent of countries gross national product as development assistance should be seen as a minimum international taxation - as the funding basis of minimum solidarity.

Traditionally the Nordic countries and the Netherlands have been very much alone on the top of the list of donor countries. It has proven hard to increase further contributions from other countries, not least as public budgets are running deficits and with high unemployment rates in many countries.

It took all of human history to grow to the 600 billion dollars world economy of the year 1900. Today, the world economy grows by more than this every two years. Each year, economic expansion corresponds to the entire economy of South America. Only a lifetime away, our 14 trillion dollar world economy may have grown fivefold.

An 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 all. 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.

Our dilemma is that all countries - at the very best - are pursuing two potentially conflicting goals: to improve environmental quality and to

ensure a high level of economic activity so that tomorrow's societies will be hold more promise for the majority of people. But we also know that we cannot continue to perpetuate present production and consumption patterns.

However, neither the necessary change nor full employment will come about as a result of reduced economic activity.

Some argue in favour of no-growth societies. But no growth will mean no change. Growth is necessary for change. It is growth that will finance sustainable development.

But the content of economic growth will have to change. Our economies will have to rely less on finite natural resources, and generate less waste.

Economic growth in our societies has historically meant the production of more and more goods using more and more natural resources and placing increasing strain on an already fragile environment.

These aspects cannot be imitated uncritically on a global scale. However, recent research have taught us that the negative aspects of economic growth are not necessary for continued growth of prosperity. Growth does not mean more goods, it means also better goods, and prosperity and welfare should be seen as wider aspirations, not only as growth and material welfare, but as an inclusive concept covering employment, environment, gender equality and a meaningful life.

In Norway, the private consumption of goods has increased by 7 per cent since 1980 while consumption of private services increased by 40 per cent. Our strategy is to reconcile the need for growth with the need for change. In the coming decade, growth is likely to take place in the field of services rather than in the production and consumption of goods.

One of the promising features of our time is how we are proceeding in decoupling growth in energy consumption from GDP growth. If we exclude off-shore activities and maritime transport, energy consumption in Norway has remained stable since 1980. In that same period, our mainland GDP has increased by 20 per cent. And we are shifting the use of petroleum from heavier oils towards lighter by means of taxation and towards hydro-based electricity.

Thus, we are constantly changing the content of growth. The switch away from heavier fuels have contributed to a more than 60 per cent reduction of our SO<sub>2</sub>-emissions. This is a change in consumption patterns going on right now. Its further success will depend on how effectively countries will be able to agree on new measures.

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Increasingly we should focus on knowledge as the ultimate resource and as an engine of growth and change. It is not natural resources themselves that give us wealth, but the way we utilise these resources.

If resources alone made us wealthy, we would have reached our standard of living millions of years ago. Waterfalls, for example did not become a source of general wealth until Benjamin Franklin helped us understand electricity, until Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, and until the Norwegian engineer Sam Eyde developed large-scale industrial use of electricity. Similarly oil yielded little prosperity until Henry Ford found new ways to utilise it.

These developments were major steps forward in the history of mankind, fundamentally changing our daily lives. The best prospect for our future seems to be the inexhaustible potential of the human mind.

Joint international efforts in the field of research and education, openness and cooperative efforts in the relations to the outside world are conditions conducive to change and renewal.

The prospects of being part of future European efforts to achieve sustainable development is one of the main reasons why Norway has applied for membership in the European Communities, - now the European Union. Protecting the environment for present and future generations is perhaps the single most important task on our political agenda. Without forceful European co-operation it is difficult and in fact impossible to see how each of our countries can manage such daunting tasks alone.

The problem in Europe is not too much co-operation but the fact that co-operation so far has been too weak. Now that sustainable development is placed solidly on the European agenda, we can look to the future with greater expectation that Europe will lead and not trail in the quest for a more secure tomorrow.

Five years ago close to 30 Heads of State and Government came together in the Hague to sign a declaration calling for more use of majority voting in matters of importance to the global environment. The initiative was taken by socialist Prime Minister Michel Rocard of France, Ruud Lubbers of the Netherlands, not socialist, true, but the Dutch are good environmentalists nevertheless, and by myself.

Regretfully, progress towards the realization of the declaration has been slow. Too often in a world run by consensus progress is slowed down by those who are most reluctant to move.

The only organization that uses majority voting in environmental affairs is the European Union. So let me ask the following: Is it in fact so that many people are in favour of more effective international decision-making - only in principle - but against the reality?

At Corfu, the leaders decided a major programme of assistance to the closing down of the Chernobyl plant. Norway is not a part of this programme. Is that an advantage for us?

We face serious environmental threats in the North where we have a common border with Russia. The challenges are such that Russia and Norway alone can not resolve them. Our prospects for success will be greater if the problems in the North are made part of Russias relations with Europe as a whole. Social democrats have always been internationalists. Now we must consider carefully if we can allow ourselves to be in favour of international cooperation in principle, but not in practise.

The issue on Norwegian membership will be decided by a referendum five months from now. All of you know that the Labour Party and the Government are in favour of membership, but that there is a minority concluding differently. Maybe it could be an interesting discussion to raise the following question in your conference: What would serve the environment and European solidarity with the Third World most. A European Union with Norway and the other Nordic countries, or a Union without the voices of Sweden, Finland and Norway?

And to the guests from Central and Eastern Europe I will ask: Many of your countries want to join the European Union. Many of your countries

have been wounded by environmental mismanagement. What kind of European Union do you want to join - one with Norway, Sweden and Finland - or one without us?