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## Nordisk FN-konferanse

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### The UN of tomorrow

For 50 years, the United Nations has, for better but also for worse, reflected its members, their problems and their aspirations and good will to work together internationally in the cause of peace and social progress. It has reflected global political trends, contrasts, conflicts and confrontations.

The Nordic countries, and indeed my own, have used the United Nations to increase our voice internationally, to pursue our values and interests in a better organized world. Our support for the idea of multilateralism, for the UN, its organs and its secretary-generals, the first two of which we have provided, has been strong and unbroken.

Decades have passed where Nordic countries in the United Nations have demonstrated solidarity with present generations around the world who are less fortunate than us. New decades have begun of solidarity also with coming generations - those who will be affected by our choices today. Our support for the UN is articulated also by the comprehensive contributions we have made in real terms and by our clear lead in per capita contributions to the work of the UN.

This conference will demonstrate how eager we are to celebrate the 50th anniversary in a climate pointing toward a renewed, strengthened and invigorated UN, which we will desperately need into the next century.

During the 50 years that have passed, the climate for international cooperation has been unstable, ranging from the iciest days of the Cold War, through years in the 70ies of overambitious belief that a majority of nations in the General Assembly could rule the world by resolutions, to a virtual freeze on globalism in the early 80ies. The late periods of "perestroika" opened up for a new, more constructive era, and the beginning of the nineties was marked by widespread optimism. In recent years, the UN has been overburdened with work and its progress in various areas has been uneven. This has led to its being judged, unjustly, more by its failures than by its successes. 1995 must mark a turning point towards an new and increasingly positive picture of the UN in the opinion of the world.

The founders of the United Nations seized the opportunity in 1945 to ensure commitment to new principles of international cooperation. Their ambition was to manage interdependence, based on the power structures of the post-war period. They sought to avoid a third eruption of global self-destruction and to create institutions to manage what was

already at that time a global economy, even if minuscule compared to today's.

During this anniversary year, we will have time to recall the great achievements of the UN. The integration of scores of new member states, peace-keeping operations, promotion and protection of human rights, field activities in developing countries bringing relief and consolation to millions of destitute people - all of this bears witness to how the UN has harnessed the best of humanity and civilization. This is part of the history of the UN so far - a history which also encompasses protracted stalemates, abuses, bureaucracy and empty rhetoric.

Our common challenges facing us today are of such a scale and magnitude that they threaten to outgrow our present capacity to deal with them. They require new bold steps of change and renewal in the UN. Let me mention some of the most compelling issues we face:

Population growth threatens to disrupt beyond recovery the equilibrium between people, resources and the carrying capacity of the planet. The Cairo Conference gave us at least some hope that we may be able stabilize our numbers before it is too late.

1 billion people are living in absolute poverty, and the number is still growing. Although the proportion of destitute people is decreasing as a percentage of the total world population, this is largely due to the high growth rates in populous Southeast Asia. In Africa and Latin America the situation of the poor has gone from bad to worse, and it is difficult to see how this can be changed unless policies change profoundly.

Brutal facts of science tell us how the natural resources on which people depend, that will feed them and provide them with a livelihood, are already today being severely depleted. Not only are the rainforests vanishing, and topsoil eroding. Even the total food production of the world is reaching limits. The prospects of feeding a growing world population are grimmer than ever.

Each year the world economy grows by figures corresponding to the entire economy of South America. Only a lifetime away, our 14 trillion dollar world economy may have grown fivefold. The ecological implications may become disastrous. 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 so as to create a more just world in which we bridge the present gap between the rich and the poor. We are forced to make changes in our economies which reduce the strain on the environment, and we are compelled to find new solutions to unemployment.

Unfulfilled is also the just aspiration of millions to take part in the shaping of society by participating in democratic political processes. We are far away from having ensured freedom from fear of violence, crime, and war, freedom from corrupt governments and judicial systems. Our vision must include ensuring for all access to a political system which is such that people acting together can shape their own future and leave the next generation at least the same options as we have had.

We are living in a world that is constantly changing. The current speed and scope of global change are unprecedented. Member states have been slow in providing the United Nations with the resources, ideas and commitment needed to ensure that an organization designed decades ago can meet and respond to the challenges of the next century.

Member states, acting in the UN, too often operate in accordance with the tenets of the past. Any organization that fails to change is bound to lose its effectiveness. We do not maintain the UN to be ineffective. The responsibility for renewal rests with us, the member states.

The renewal that is now needed will take place in a world of changing power structures. It will take place while we are undergoing a technological revolution, and while the position of nation states as the predominant international subject and actor is receding. But it will also take place while our collective knowledge rise to new heights and while our capacity for change is unprecedented. There is a growing need to focus on knowledge as the ultimate resource and as an engine of growth and change. We must increasingly focus on dissemination of knowledge. The best prospects for our future seems to lie in the inexhaustible potential of the human mind. It is a source of optimism for the future that knowledge is an infinite resource.

Classical inter-state relations are no longer the most frequent source of conflict. The internal affairs of states affect the international community so greatly that the concept of non-interference must be tempered by the recognition of mutual interest and concern, even as regards issues which, in the wording of the Charter, are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of the member states.

If drafted today, the Charter of the United Nations would have looked different. Both its principal organs and the specialized agencies would probably have been different.

If we had sat down at the drawing board to create the UN today, we would possibly have grouped the most closely interlinked challenges together and designated agencies to deal with them in a concerted manner. Population, education, and health could have been the responsibility of one agency. Energy, environment, science and technology those of another. We would probably not have created several separate development funds but ensured better coordination of international redistribution for sustainable development.

We should be open for looking at this kind of change in the UN system. We need a sound, relevant and effective international public sector which can serve as an umbrella for regional cooperation and national development aspirations.

And we should define a global principle of subsidiarity to ensure that those decisions are taken by the UN which best can be taken by a global forum, while regional cooperation is strengthened and founded on the characteristics of each region.

The UN is probably too large to deal with some issues, while other problems are too large for the UN in its current form. 1994 was a good year for regionalism, with summits expressing new visions of cooperation, development and trade in Asia and all the Americas. Visions of regional cooperation in the Middle-East are also expressed more frequently, and a democratic South Africa can now serve as an engine of change and progress in that region. The enlargement of the European Union is by no means the only move towards strengthened and peace-promoting regional cooperation, even if it is the most comprehensive and the best organized of them all.

The establishment of the World Trade Organization clearly shows us that the perceived contradiction between regionalism and globalism articulated some years ago was exaggerated. We clearly need both. But the dynamism of regional cooperation, and the strength of integrative efforts and disciplined, binding decision-making pose a challenge to the global institutions. The latter are often draped in the deceptive tranquillity which so often is prevalent where consensus is expected, even on pressing and controversial issues.

The UN needs a rationalized, more effective method of work, and rules for decision-making which enable us to act both timely and quickly. We live in a world which, in the words of the secretary-general, is still not fully understood. A great many reports have been presented which have enhanced our understanding of pressing problems. We have adopted workprogramms and plans of action, - even priority programms which have been acted on with a conspicuous lack of dynamism.

There is widespread agreement that most conflicts are rooted in lack of economic opportunities and in social inequities. As a rule, however, the UN come under pressure to act once the root causes have had their effect. Funds, people and resources are often available for conflicts which have escalated enough to dominate the evening news, while the quiet tragedies of famine, environmental degradation and underdevelopment are left without sufficient attention.

In essence, the complexity of international challenges has been grossly underestimated. It has proven almost impossible to remove outdated issues from the UN agenda, and almost equally impossible to mobilize adequate resources for preventing future problems. The responsibility rests with the member states. They have been far too eager to put issues on

the UN agenda and far too reluctant to mobilize resources for global burden-sharing.

The reasons are only partially of an organizational nature. But we can hardly envisage issues of peace and security being managed by a series of governing boards meeting annually such as in the various development funds. There is a striking difference between the way in which the peace and security agenda on the one hand and the social and economic agenda on the other are dealt with.

The Security Council reflects the world of 1945. But it could have lost much of its clout had it not been for the principles of decision-making developed already at Dumbarton Oaks. Today, the more than 180 member states would hardly have voted for the same composition. Even at San Francisco there were countries such as Brazil, Canada and Australia which disliked the two-tier system of membership. But the rules adopted then have made it possible for decisions to be taken and for action to be initiated. The permanent members should, however, be sensitive to the legitimate requests by many states for greater influence in security affairs.

Today there are countries which, in keeping with the size of their population and the strength of their economies, have similar aspirations. It would be fatal for the organization if we were to disregard changes in the world order. It would be equally fatal should changes lead to a loss of interest and greater reliance on unilateralism on the part of major states. The question of enlargement is one that requires a careful assessment of how to balance the criteria of legitimacy and effectiveness.

The issue of enlargement of the Security Council will not fade away. Neither will the need to overhaul the UN agenda. The establishment of democracy in South Africa and the totally changed situation in the Middle-East are examples of issues which absorbed a great deal of UN capacity, which now can be used for new purposes.

What should then be our agenda on the doorstep to a new century? This agenda must include the disintegration of states, humanitarian disasters, management of the environment and natural resources and redistributive needs articulated by the concept of sustainable development. We know how interlinked these issues truly are. But we have not yet found the organizational answer to how environment and development efforts, humanitarian efforts and the building of democracy can best be addressed together with the more traditional concepts of peace and security.

Our knowledge has never been greater about the links between peace, environment and development. Several independent commissions have added to our knowledge, such as Brandt, Palme, the World Commission on Environment and Development, the South Commission, and others. We are now awaiting the report of the Carlsson/Ramphal Commission on Global Governance and look forward to Sonny Ramphal's presentation later during this Conference.

From my own experience of working on the World Commission I would particularly emphasize how the cost of poverty, in human suffering, the wasteful use of human resources and in environmental degradation has been grossly neglected. Most countries have a social policy, an environmental policy and a redistributive system. While only a minority of countries are welfare states in our Nordic sense of that word, the international redistributive system is in shameful condition. To blame is not only the lack of generosity of countries who like to assume the mantle of donorship. The recipient countries are responsible as well, as governments have often failed to recognize that budgets for development in the North have to carry democratic support. The effective use of funds and the social profile of their policies are relevant also to the donors.

In the past, development has been delayed by rivalry between blocks, and by the blind faith in the supremacy of absolute free market liberalism so prevalent in the 1980s. But fairness was the loser. Regardless of how effective markets are at allocating resources, the market can never provide equality or justice, or pursue the larger visions of civilized society that only people acting together politically can define.

The UN can never manage the global economy. This is neither feasible nor desirable. But the UN can pursue and define common standards and norms. It can bring the countries of the world closer together. It can mobilize resources from a strong international public sector, to help states to develop their own social and economic policies. The World Social Summit in Copenhagen is being convened this year in recognition of these needs.

Meanwhile, we must defend development assistance as a needed handshake between people. The long-standing target of 0.7 per cent of GDP for ODA needs to be fulfilled urgently.

Today, growth takes place in an internationalized private sector. Transnational corporations are now frequently much larger than the UN and even larger than states in terms of employees and resources. There is a shift in economic power away from governments, international institutions and even federal banks into boardrooms and to anonymous processes, stock-markets and branches of industry. The speed and magnitude of these processes threaten to outpace the capacity of the national and international public sectors to adapt the working of politics to new realities.

The disintegration of states and the erosion and weakened legitimacy of national institutions will pose a major challenge in the time ahead. We should not profess the sanctity of today's political map, but focus on how we can alleviate contention and human suffering, even between people who choose to go separate ways.

Even if there is now a certain disillusionment with the practical results of some UN operations, such as in former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda, in most cases there are no

effective alternatives to the action decided by the UN Security Council. However, the need for an accepted global instrument to identify potential conflicts and the need to handle erupting conflicts will continue to be with us. The number of conflicts caused by ethnic rivalries or by the collapse of state structures are not likely to decrease. Regional organizations can and should play an important role in managing conflicts in their respective regions, but they are often impeded by lack of agreement between their members or by lack of resources.

We have repeatedly seen how vulnerable communities have suffered because too little relief came too late. The Nordic countries have been taking initiatives to improve the coordination and efficiency of the emergency assistance efforts of the international communities.

Certain structural improvements have been made. The establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the appointment of an Emergency Relief Coordinator, and the creation of CERF (the Central Emergency Revolving Fund) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee mean that we already have at hand several important new instruments that are improving our efficiency in international emergency assistance. We feel, however, that more work is still required in order to improve the practical coordination of humanitarian efforts, particularly in the field.

Thus, in Norway we have taken practical steps through the establishment of the Norwegian Emergency Preparedness Systems (NOREPS). Carefully selected relief items and lifesaving equipment have been organized into preparedness stocks both in Norway and in disaster-prone areas. All supplies can be airborne in less than 24 hours.

NOREPS also include a standby force - NORSTAFF - of 300 experienced professionals who are trained and prepared for deployment in the field within 72 hours.

Since 1991 goods and personnel from this system have been utilized in various parts of the world to an increasing extent by the UN agencies and other international relief organizations.

In NORWAY we have also established NORDEM, a resource bank of experts prepared to assist the UN and others in their struggle for human rights on short notice .

Based on recent experience in such tragic and complex disasters as those in Somalia and Rwanda, we are today working to further improve our preparedness systems through the creation of what are known as "service packages". In order further to increase our support for international humanitarian efforts we want to coordinate our resources in the form of goods, services and personnel within NOREPS and NORDEM. And here again we are dependent on close cooperation with our NGOs. This is sometimes referred to as "the Norwegian Model".

We wish to see a development where these measures were global rather than a random sum of national efforts. Early relief to restore or protect civilized society should be a priority for the future, and we should design our institutions and use our resources accordingly.

Our comprehensive agenda also includes the strengthening of peace-keeping operations. The resources of the United Nations are stretched to the limit as are those of many troop-contributing nations. The United Nations is faced with a serious financial situation which is adversely affecting peacekeeping operations. These problems need urgently to be solved on a permanent basis.

We must strive to make the larger contributors recognize that the UN budget for peacekeeping operations is no larger than the defense budgets of countries such as my own and that peace-keeping yields high returns.

As was stated by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna last year, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. One of the major challenges for the next century will be to protect human rights and democracy in societies characterized by anarchy. In exceptional situations there may be no alternative to intervention in a country by the UN or other organizations in order to assist in the reconstruction of the basic human and civil infrastructure.

The widening gap between ambitious political decisions and the resources provided to the Organization undermines its authority and credibility. The secretary-general has stated on occasion that the UN is like a good doctor, who cannot turn away the patients who need him, no matter what his own circumstances are. Yet as pointed out in the Volcker-Ogata report, "peace is a bargain in relation to the alternatives".

In the Secretary General's statement on the critical financial situation of the United Nations last October, he said that the problem has assumed a proportion which undermines the effectiveness of the Organization as a whole. He drew the conclusion that the ability of the United Nations to perform the tasks for which it was created is in peril, and that this is no longer simply a financial question; it is an urgent political question. I agree with this analysis, and I fully support the introduction of the financial incentives, sanctions and reforms he has suggested, as a political measure to meet the threats we perceive to the Organization.

As I said at the outset, the Nordic countries have a sound record in the UN. Each of us can point to a consistent and active policy of support for the UN from its inception. Acting together, the Nordic countries have often taken the lead in important areas of cooperation.

I strongly feel that the Nordic countries have an important role to play in the UN. 50 years of us working together must



be kept alive. The fact that three Nordic countries are EU members while two are not must not have effects on Nordic cooperation in the UN which none of us have wanted or intended. We cannot exclude that the Nordic cooperation in the UN will be different from before. EU countries will be involved in a dynamic consultative process, with more than 650 meetings pr. year at various levels. This is a challenge to Norway. We shall have to work harder to assert our influence and we shall be looking for flexible means of cooperation with the EU. We will be guarding our Nordic traditions to the best of our endeavours. I believe this is an interest that is shared among the people of the Nordic countries. The historic and cultural bonds that bind the Nordic countries together, and which bring us together here today, will be essential to our work in the UN.

Our struggle to uphold and renew multilateralism is an ongoing battle. It is not something that is won once and for all. UN reform, like reforms in national and local government, requires a clear sense of purpose and priorities, a willingness to delegate authority and responsibility to the level best suited for execution, and an ability actively to address opposition to necessary change.

Traditionally, Norway and the other Nordic countries have cooperated best with small and medium-sized powers to safeguard multilateralism. Small countries have always had more to gain by pooling resources and political will to achieve common goals. But increasingly, even the larger powers experience political or economic constraints in their ability to face global challenges alone.

Although there are now some disturbing signs that funding for UN purposes will face difficulties in major countries, my deep conviction is that there is still no real alternative to multilateralism in addressing common global problems.

As our secretary-general said: The United Nations is the repository of hope for humanity and the future. That hope deserves our deep and continuing commitment.