

World Summit for Children, New York, 30 September 1990  
Intervention by Prime Minister Jan P. Syse, Norway

We all know that the best eloquence is the one that gets things done. We also know that the importance of this Summit can be measured only by our deeds.

Most of us in this assembly have children. We would all "go the extra mile" for them, to use a Biblical expression. If my two children starved or were abused, nothing could stand in my way for helping them, and I am sure that all the mothers and fathers in this assembly feel exactly the same way. What we must learn is to lift our eyes from the particular to the general - because the general is nothing more than the sum of the particulars; the children we are talking about today are not an abstract entity. They are living human beings. And they need us, just as our own children need us.

Children face problems all over the world. But the overwhelming challenge is the catastrophic situation in many developing countries. A mobilization of resources from the rich countries is urgently required. We do not need Robin Hood to teach us that the rich must give. But the developing countries must assume their responsibilities. They must accelerate reforms. They must put the rights of the individual at the centre, to release the potential of their human resources.

Children are always among the most vulnerable. Our aid must be restructured to give them protection and opportunities. If more than 100 jumbo-jets filled with children crashed every day, there would be an outrage. But that is the number of children who are dying every day of starvation and disease.

Earlier today we heard of the need to establish the right instruments to monitor the implementation of our Plan of Action. I agree. In Norway we have established a special institution for securing the interests of children. He is called the Ombudsman, or Commissioner, for Children. He acts as a watchdog to bring about progress, and his work has shown us that child suffering and abuse are certainly not reserved for the developing world. Watchdogs such as our commissioner are badly needed everywhere.

Today, more than 10 per cent of Norwegian aid is spent on health, mother and child care and family planning. I urge donor countries to structure their aid to meeting the commitments of this Summit.

Norway is the largest per capita contributor to UNICEF and, in spite of our small size, the fourth largest contributor in absolute terms. We are proud of that fact. But this is not a race we would like to win: it is a race that we must all win.

The real work will start when the Summit is over and the world leaders return back home. I am tempted to say: Let us go home. Or - more to the point - let us go to work.