

Ronneby  
2 September 1990

Prime Minister Jan P. Syse

**BALTIC SEA ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Generals are often accused of fighting the last war, or even the one before, rather than the next one. Politicians are just as prone to it. But now we are gathered to fight a war that has never been fought before. Let us not make any mistake. So we shall not repeat old mistakes. Let us get our priorities right.

The 1980's brought a new public awareness of the serious threats to our environment. At the doorsteps to the 90's the call is for action. As one delegate expressed it at the Bergen conference in May - We don't expect you to be heroic. We only expect you to be bold." So let us be bold. We know of course that nothing needs so much reform as other people's habits. I am glad that we have in mind to start at home!

I am grateful that Norway has been invited to the Baltic Sea conference. We share no frontier with the Baltic Sea. But we share large parts of its environment. It is also our mare nostrum. And we share the threats facing it. Much has changed since the Baltic countries signed the Helsinki Convention. The walls have come down and let in freedom.

We have seen that environmental awareness depends on the individuals' right to express his concerns and worries. It depends on a system of checks and balances which is what democracy and free markets provide.

Our ambition is to restore the environmental balance of the Baltic Sea. Then it is crucial that the whole area - including Lithuania - be gathered around the table to effectively elaborate - and implement the relevant measures.

For the pollutants, Europe never was divided. We need no further scientific evidence to prove the need to act. The situation in the Baltic Sea is indeed dramatic. This Conference should give a green light for a programme of ecological restoration. The declaration we are about to adopt points in the right direction. My gratitude goes to the governments of Poland and Sweden for having taken the initiative to convene us. We are ready to join you in your efforts. When the parties to the Helsinki Convention now establish a Task Force to prepare a joint comprehensive programme of ecological restoration, Norway is ready to take part in that work.

The governments of Eastern and Central Europe are clear in their message: Gigantic investments will be needed to reduce discharges and emissions of polluting substances to the atmosphere and to the sea.

The environmental cooperation among the Baltic states will be a test of Europe's ability to reverse the negative trends. To come to grips with the destructive emissions to air and water, new principles must be adopted. Equal reductions in each country is the old concept. It needs to be supplemented by others. Our focus must be on the sources that pollute the most. Where they are located is less important. Today, the cost of reducing the sulphur dioxide emissions by one kilo in Norway would be sufficient for a ten kilo reduction in many parts of Eastern Europe. Such basic facts must be reflected when we address our regional situation.

This is precisely what we are doing at this conference. We are joining our forces and pooling our resources. This will mark a new era in our environmental policies and set the example for others. In the North, a similar project of cooperation must now be established: The Northern parts of Finland and Norway are severely damaged by the sulphur and heavy metals emissions

from Soviet factories on the Kola peninsula. Even the northern part of the Baltic Sea is affected. The case is clear: No effort on our side of the border can solve the problem. We must attack the problem at the source. There is no other alternative.

Together, Norway, Finland and Sweden propose a broad project of cooperation with the Soviet Union. Together we have the technology to bring down the emissions. Together we must mobilize the financial resources that will be required. This project will also serve as a powerful engine for cooperation in other fields, bringing us together in the North in a way which was hitherto impossible.

We do not abandon the "polluter pays" principle. Not at all. That must continue to be the guiding principle. But to solve the complex problem of transboundary pollution we must introduce new ways of constructive cooperation.

Cost-effectiveness must become another guiding principle. We must ensure - wherever possible - that environmentally sound processes, based on the cleanest possible technology, are chosen. Industrial modernization means a more rational use of raw materials and energy. The economic output will increase. But so will the ecological outcome. We will then be able to say: "What is good for the environment is good for the economy."

A regional strategy of cost-effective measures should be elaborated. Funds must be made available. A broad process of technology transfer must be initiated.

Important first steps have been made. Extended credits are available from the Nordic Investment Bank. Institutions such as the Nordic Environmental Financing Corporation and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development must play important roles.

This summer, Norway launched a number of environmental projects with the Governments of Central and Eastern Europa. The Norwegian Government will take its share.

Prime Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last few years, we have witnessed a sharp increase in the number of conferences on environmental issues. That is encouraging. But we must avoid a thinning out of responsibilities and too much fragmentation of efforts. If I may quote Margareth Thatcher from a few days back in Helsinki where we dealt with another deadly hazard to a health world, the Gulf crisis: It is deeds that count, not words.

We need to bring our efforts more closely together. We need a more efficient European machinery to elaborate and implement a regional environmental strategy. To some of you I have raised this idea already. My Government has presented that proposal as part of the preparation to the CSCE Summit in November. We have to make use of existing fora. We must make full use of the political momentum of the CSCE process. Saving our common environment should be a priority issue of the wider European cooperation.

Much has been done to reduce emissions and turn disastrous trends. But we need more. We need a binding environmental "code of conduct", building on procedures which are in force in other fields. In the OECD, regular reviews of the economic policies of member states are presented - with recommendations for corrections to be made. In arms control, comprehensive exchange of information is compulsory; intrusive monitoring and inspection has become the norm. Let us apply the experience we have gained in other fields to meet the threat to our environment.

I invite you to join us in a thorough reflexion on how we

should now proceed; to demonstrate the boldness required in dealing with the most important challenge of the 1990's.

The topic of this conference is environmental protection. At the same time it is much more. We are launching a new era of cooperation in the Baltic and Northern region. Let us be bold!