

STATSMINISTER WILLOCHS TALE VED ÅPNINGEN AV EUROPEAN
DEMOCRAT UNIONS PARTILEDERKONFERANSE I OSLO FREDAG
29. JUNI 1984.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to associate myself with the words of welcome expressed by the chairman of the host party. We are indeed most pleased and honoured with the decision of the European Democrat Union to accept the invitation to hold the 7th Party Leaders Conference here in Oslo. In addition to the Party Leaders of the EDU we also appreciate highly the presence of representatives from the International Democrat Union and other affiliated organizations.

We have met here to discuss several important questions facing mankind today. We may differ on individual matters. But we are guided by the same general political principles and share the same basic political views. Therein lies the very importance of our organization and of our meetings. Our Conferences provide political leaders from the larger part of the world with a unique opportunity to discuss - in private and informal consultations - some of the problems which we are all facing, irrespective of whether we are in government position or at present in opposition.

I do hope that we, when this conference is ended will share a feeling that our discussions and the conclusions we have arrived at will act as an inspiration in our

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daily work and as a guideline in our political activities. But the significance of these meetings reaches beyond that perspective. Our deliberations of national and international questions are of direct importance also to the national political life of our home countries.

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This Conference takes place at a time when international relations are characterized by uncertainties and tension. The relationship between the superpowers is in a difficult stage. The main challenge to our countries stems from the disrespect of totalitarian regimes for the dignity and liberty of the individual and the self-determination of nations. This becomes an important security problem when such regimes acquire formidable military power.

The present situation, therefore, certainly requires increased efforts to reach early and concrete results in the field of arms control and disarmament. Our objective must be to obtain security and a balance of conventional and nuclear arms on the lowest possible force level. We wish to see a speedy resumption of the suspended arms negotiations. In this connection we welcome the United States' willingness to restart nuclear arms control talks without preconditions. We also hope that the Soviet Union will act - and react - in a positive and constructive way. We are convinced that East and West have important common interests in preserving peace, in enhancing

confidence and security and in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, we are decided to pursue with determination the search for extended political dialogue and long term cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact countries. The East-West dialogue must be based on realism and should not be limited to military security. The human aspects of East/West contacts as well as economic questions rightly have their place in the dialogue we are searching for.

The situation therefore requires of us that we are ready to initiate negotiations with the East while at the same time maintaining the ability to defend ourselves. Dialogue and cooperation with the East on a broad range of questions are important and integral parts of our efforts to enhance our security.

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We must, furthermore realize that we are not only challenged by political problems, but also confronted with economic issues with severe social implications. Our security is closely linked to the social and political stability of our societies and our ability to achieve sustained growth and an improved employment situation. We therefore must reestablish monetary order, stem protectionist tendencies, and endeavour to alleviate the heavy debt problems, particularly among developing countries. National decisions and domestic action will

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obviously not suffice in overcoming these and other problems. What we need is a common approach and better international cooperation.

The world economic situation has undoubtedly improved over the last year, although formidable problems remain unsolved. It should be stressed in particular that the economic recovery in the United States has an important and favourable impact on the world at large. At the same time, it must be added, however, that the large American budget deficit, which leads to high interest rates and a high exchange rate for the US dollar, no doubt makes it more difficult to solve the debt problems and to put vulnerable parts of the world economy into better shape. Given the tremendous impact of American economic policy, I think it is natural to mention these points of view to our American friends also on this occasion.

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Economic order and growth are closely connected with the energy problem, which also relates more directly to security. I would like to mention in this context that Norway is already a substantial supplier of oil and gas to Western Europe. In view of recent important gas finds on our continental shelf, we would be in a position to maintain and to increase our deliveries of gas in the 1990's in such a way that Western Europe need not become unduly dependent upon external sources of supply.

It is our hope that Western Europe will make use of this availability. Marketing agreements should, understandably, make it economically feasible to develop the fields in question.

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The Party Leaders Conference of the European Democrat Union, with the participation of observers from likeminded parties in other parts of the world, gives us a possibility - and a responsibility - to review also "out-of-area" questions. We must not forget the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or the war between Iran and Iraq with its terrible consequences for millions, and its threats to international shipping and oil supplies. The more general situation in the Middle East has not shown signs of improvement. We are gravely concerned about developments in Southern Africa, although we would like to see a glimmer of light. We hope for the Contadora-process and other initiatives in Central America to lead to a positive outcome, which may also contribute to solve those social and economic problems which are at the root of the conflict, and at the same time prevent that any part of that region becomes a springboard for subversive activities.

The agenda of our Conference also includes reports from committees on European policy, on Satellite Broadcast, on Transnational Environmental Problems, as well as the paper to be presented on the specific problem of Youth Unemployment.

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I would also like to make the obvious, but perhaps still necessary, observation that there is no contradiction between an extended Western European cooperation and maintaining close relations with North America - and to extend our cooperation with all nations represented here. The one can not act as a substitute to the other, but only as a supplement. This also applies to Norway. We do not envisage any situation where we would be faced with a choice between Europe and friends in other parts of the world.

Western Europe and North America are particularly dependent upon each other. Our views may differ on certain matters. We should make no secret of that. But it is very important that unnecessary misunderstandings or confrontations are avoided on both sides. We must be aware of the damage to the real interests of all of us if political differences across the Atlantic are being used in a way which question the political motives or reliability of the other side. The Conservative and Christian democrat and likeminded parties should strive incessantly to diminish the negative effects on western solidarity and mutual understanding caused by certain left-wing activities, or caused by tendencies to isolationism.

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Norway is a part of Western Europe geographically,

politically, economically and culturally. We are in no sense placed between East and West. Although not a member of the European Communities, we have established a close cooperation. In addition to the strong economic interlinkages we also share basic social and political objectives. And we share our security policy with the majority of the Community member countries.

In the field of political cooperation we have worked out certain contact arrangements with the Presidency of the EC which allow for a two-way channel of communication. Our relationship with the European political cooperation - the EPC - is a clear demonstration of our wish to strengthen the political ties between Norway and the Ten.

In this connection, I would also like to add that we follow with great interest the ongoing work with the view to re-activate the West European Union.

Thus, Norway is strongly in favour of extended Western European Cooperation, provided, of course, that it takes place on a basis which is not detrimental to the interests of other countries represented in this audience. The political and economic questions on our Agenda are truly universal in their character. The conclusions which we arrive at will, therefore, also have to reflect and take into due account the interdependence between Western European views and the views and positions of our colleagues from the Americas and from the Far East and the Pacific Area.

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Because of the overwhelming importance to the whole world of every aspect of nuclear weapons, it is natural that the defence concepts of the nuclear powers and the military alliances which they are leading members of, are discussed intensively by both aligned and non aligned nations. For this reason I would also like to add, before I conclude, a few words on nuclear strategy.

It is of the highest importance to reduce the risk of having to rely on nuclear weapons if the Western Alliance should be attacked. There is no doubt that improved conventional strength would indeed contribute to this end. This creates a strong case for more adequate conventional forces. We must not place ourselves in a position where we first relinquish the use of nuclear weapons, on the assumption that conventional forces will be increased instead, and then do nevertheless not increase our conventional forces, because we think that we cannot afford it.

Politicians also ought to realize the danger that debate on such issues may get out of control, leading to a situation in which the west will not defend itself with nuclear weapons, and cannot defend itself with conventional weapons. The catastrophic consequences of such a situation do probably not need any further elaboration in this audience.