

STATSMINISTER ODVAR NORDLIS TALE PÅ ARSMØTET I
DET INTERNASJONALE FOND FOR JORDBRUKSUTVIKLING,
ROMA 8. DESEMBER 1980

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address the Governing Council of IFAD. I do it with pleasure because my government is strongly dedicated to this Organization. I do it with a sense of urgency because of the difficulties IFAD is facing at the present moment.

In the North/South context 1980 has been a difficult year. We have witnessed a worsening of the international economic situation. This has affected us

- 2 -

all, but there is no doubt that the poorest oil-importing developing countries have suffered most severely. Their need for international support has increased while the capacity and willingness of the international community to respond to these needs seem to have diminished.

Twelve months ago we were hopeful that the North/South-dialogue would now move into a more productive phase. We looked forward with expectations to the Eleventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assambly, which was to adopt the New International Development Strategy for the 1980s and launch the new round of global negotiations on North/South economic issues.

The Special Session was only able to fullfil part of its mission. It reached agreement on a new Development

Strategy, but failed to get the global negotiations started. In all probability we shall enter a new year without real agreement on the procedures and agenda for the global round.

These developments and other disappointments have raised doubts in many minds about the way in which the North/South-negotiations are conducted in the United Nations system of organizations.

I do not want to dramatize the situation. But we cannot merely dismiss 1980 as a bad year and hope for the best in the future. An effective and responsible system of international cooperation is indispensable for world peace and development.

I believe that the time has come for all UN members to rededicate themselves to the task of making the UN system

efficient and responsive to the needs of the modern world. This - I am sure - is in the enlightened self-interest of all countries, not least the developing countries.

IFAD has also been affected by lack of progress in NORTH/SOUTH-relations. To my mind this is all the more regrettable because IFAD, after a lifespan of only three years, has amply demonstrated its usefulness. In this connection I would like to pay my respects to the President, Mr. Al-Sudeary, and compliment him on his able leadership of our Organization.

At the last meeting of the Governing Council it was agreed that the resources of IFAD should be replenished at a level which would permit an increase in real terms in the activities of the Fund.

Since then a number of meetings and consultations have been held, but an agreement on the replenishment seems to be as distant today as it was last January. We have come to the point where the lack of agreement has become a danger to the very existence of our Organization.

Having been called upon to address this meeting of the Governing Council, I feel justified in trying to bring home to member governments the seriousness of the situation.

Should IFAD fail, the repercussions would be felt throughout the UN system. It would mean another important setback for North/South-relations. Let me in this connection remind you that the Brandt Commission paid particular attention to IFAD and recommended a replenishment of its funds.

IFAD was created for the specific purpose of contributing to agricultural development in the developing countries. Our Organization was to reach out to the poor and the landless in rural areas and bring them into the process of development. It was felt that this approach would provide an important key to economic and social progress.

There is no doubt in my mind that IFAD has started off on the right track. Rural poverty was and remains a major obstacle to economic development. The figures tell us that more than three-fourths of the world's poor live in rural areas, often in remote and isolated villages.

These people are overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture, but lack some of the basic means for improving their situation. I am thinking both in terms of land

ownership, irrigation, equipment and other agricultural inputs and in terms of health, education and other human development measures.

Progress in both sectors is necessary for sustained economic growth. Experience from many countries, including my own, has shown that investment in efforts to mobilize rural populations in the development process usually pays rich dividends in terms of economic progress. It is in this dual approach to agricultural development that IFAD has its mission and its unique opportunity.

But IFAD is unique in more ways than one. In the very structure of our Organization we find certain elements of a new pattern of international cooperation. The division of IFAD membership into three separate categories with equal voices in the decision-making

of the Organization was established not only for reasons of financing but also because it was felt that such a structure would make the Organization more efficient and more responsive to the needs of the developing countries.

The special structure of IFAD represents an experiment in the organization of international cooperation which so far has worked well at the operational level. This has implications for the efforts to establish a New International Economic Order where the structure for international cooperation represent an important issue. This is an essential reason why we cannot afford to let the IFAD experiment fail for lack of an adequate replenishment.

My country has been a strong supporter of IFAD ever since the idea of a fund for agricultural development

was launched at the 1974 World Food Conference. We have had the privilege of being represented on the Executive Board during the first three years of the existence of IFAD. We are thus among those who have had the opportunity to follow the work of IFAD during the initial period at close quarters. This experience has convinced us that IFAD deserves our continued support.

On behalf of my country I pledge a contribution of 100 million Norwegian kroner to the planned replenishment of IFAD. This amount represents an increase of 33 % compared to our original contribution to the Fund.

I earnestly appeal to all member countries to make the necessary decisions which will allow for generous contributions to the replenishment of IFAD. We have the opportunity to make IFAD an encouraging example

in a year which has been full of difficulties and disappointments. Let us make the most of it!

I thank You.