

Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland

ADDRESS TO VICE PRESIDENT FRANS ANDRIESEN

- Berlevåg, 5 April 1991

Dear Frans,

You may have been somewhat surprised when you learned that your visit to Norway would take place far from Oslo.

But the Norway that extends beyond Oslo is nothing new to you. Some years ago you regularly spent your summer holidays on the southern coast of our country. Now you know something about work and daily life on the northern coast: In short, you know something about Norwegian diversity, which in turn is an integral part of European diversity.

Here in Finnmark you have met people who are facing the future with optimism and dedication. Although we generally speak of two pillars in the EEA negotiations, in large parts of coastal Norway there is only one pillar - and that is fish. Fish has been, and always will be, the natural resource on which the future of coastal Norway depends. Fish is the immediate reason for local settlement. Finnmark is vast, as you have seen from the airplane. The population density is 1.6 inhabitant per km<sup>2</sup>. There can be no doubt that this local settlement is vital not only to the security of Northern Norway, but also to the security of Europe in a wider perspective. This will be discussed in more detail at the briefing in Tromsø on Saturday.

We have had an opportunity to raise a number of European issues both yesterday evening and today. And we have done so in a setting that differs greatly from that of our capitals. This is not because our arguments change when we leave Oslo. On the contrary, it is to demonstrate how vital the situation up north is to us in these negotiations. Our fishing communities have high hopes and aspirations as regards a successful outcome of the EEA negotiations. Northern Norway relies heavily on exports. Båtsfjord and Berlevåg are in fact two of our export giants. That is why the concept of a European Economic Area has become relevant for Finnmark as well. We have free trade in fish in EFTA. You have free trade in fish in the EC. Let us have the same in the EEA!

Dear Frans,

Tonight you will be sailing to Honningsvåg, through waters familiar to a Dutchman. In 1596 the Dutch Government sent a naval expedition to the northern reaches. The captain, the famous seafarer Willem Barents, was successful in his endeavours. Not only did he discover Bjørnøya and Spitzbergen, but an entire ocean was also named after him - the Barents Sea.

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Much has happened since then. The northern waters, however, have constantly been the focus of international diplomacy. Back in 1906, the British Foreign Minister, Lord Grey, told the Norwegian ambassador to London that Great Britain was prepared to go to war against Norway over the issue of fisheries jurisdiction, which Norway extended to four nautical miles at the time.

Our business is far more peaceful. The negotiations on a European Economic Area reflect the shared ambition of 19 European countries to promote cooperation and integration. We have come a long way since the process was launched two years ago. Your personal efforts have contributed to the progress we have achieved so far, and will continue to be essential for the successful conclusion of our common endeavour. I wish you luck - I wish us all luck: I am grateful for the opportunity we have had for broad discussions on European development and the status of our negotiations, as well as for the time we have spent together.

Fish is a key outstanding issue in our negotiations. But we don't want you to associate fish solely with problems. That is why fish has been on the menu throughout your visit in Finnmark. Tonight a real national specialty has been chosen. You yourself helped to catch it during our successful fishing expedition in Båtsfjord earlier today.

For an equally successful conclusion of our negotiations, I raise my glass to you and your delegation - to Finnmark - and to what is soon to be the European Economic Area. And while you enjoy your meal, remember that for once you are eating Norwegian fish that has not been subject to customs tariffs. Let us hope that will be a permanent reality as from 1 January 1993!