



PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Address to Environmental seminar
Beijing, 6 November 1995

The purpose of today's seminar is to establish contacts and to promote a dialogue on environmental protection and pollution control. We are not only presenting Norwegian industry and its expertise on environmental issues. We are presenting how key environmental institutions work and how they cooperate with the private sector.

We are also celebrating the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation signed earlier today. That memorandum is a framework we should fill with substance. There is so much we can do together and there is so much to gain.

I am convinced that the contacts and common activities between Norway and China in the field of the environment will develop in scope, in quantity and in quality.

The beneficiaries will be China, Norway and the global environment.

It might seem daring for a country like Norway to engage in how China, with its 1.3 billion people, should reconcile its dual ambitions for development and for environmental excellence.

But we have received the message from previous meetings here in China and from the many Chinese delegations to Norway. You invite us to contribute. You encourage us to share our experience. We are here to answer that call.

We are prepared to make a modest, but still significant contribution. We have gained experience. We have technology that can make a difference. We have companies that are ready to invest. We have civil servants ready to share with you how we have developed our policies, regulations and systems of control.

The world population will double some time in the next century. 90 per cent of the population growth is taking place in the developing countries. It took all of human history to grow to the 600 billion dollars world economy of the year 1900. Today, the world economy grows by more than this every two years. Only a lifetime away, our 14 trillion dollar world economy may have grown fivefold.

China's future path of growth is the best illustration of the new global interdependence. The way China grows and the way it uses natural resources will have crucial effects on the rest of the world.

China has more than 20 per cent of the world population, but only 7 per cent of the Earth's fresh water and arable land, 3 per cent of the woods and only two per cent of the oil.

With the present growth rates, China's economy will double every eight years. Coal represents 75 per cent of primary energy consumption. At present growth rates, coal consumption will double in the next 20 years.

CO₂ emissions per capita places 50 countries ahead of China. But 20 years from now, China may be on the top of the list of emissions by country.

Throughout history, China itself has been vulnerable to climate changes, including drought and flood.

The nature of China's economic growth preoccupies not only you. It is important to the whole world. Much of China's industry needs to be renewed. And China now has the option to choose the best available technology and management principles.

China may anticipate risks by making the right decisions. Investments in water development, means of mass communication, energy, sanitation, - they can be made in time.

The market is effective in directing resources. But the market is less effective in promoting equity, equal opportunity and environmental requirements for clean air, safe water, sanitation and public health. These are needs which are not articulated by market forces alone. These are needs defined by people and their political representatives.

Meeting these needs requires responsible and effective public institutions - transparent societies - sharing of knowledge - consensus on the existence of real problems - and of the need for change.

Environment technology saves costs, reduces consumption of materials and energy and expenditures for waste handling. It brings gains to society as a whole through increased health and higher productivity.

A study by the International Institute for Energy Conservation showed that by investing 3 billion dollars in measures to improve energy efficiency, China could save 16 billion dollars by greatly reducing the need for new power plants and oil refineries.

Choosing the energy mix of the future is one of China's greatest challenges. You have the right to expect that the outside world is there to assist you. And - you have the right to develop.

We in the industrialized countries cannot and should not ask developing and middle-income countries to hold back on their quest for growth and prosperity.

We cannot say: Sorry, we filled up the waste-basket. There is no more room for you to develop. What we can say and what we should say is: We have made experiences. Some of them cost us dearly, and we are stuck with the huge costs of cleaning up past mistakes. Do not copy those mistakes.

We in the West have developed at the expense of the environment. London still holds the record for the world's worst killer smog, a distinction achieved in 1952, but many cities in developing countries, including here in Asia, are now running close.

We are here to offer our cooperation. Tap our bank of experience. Use our technology. Leap-frog past the most polluting stages of development. Prove that sustainable development is possible.

Your institutional framework for environmental control has been steadily developed since the late 1970s.

100 000 people are presently engaged in the environmental sector.

Investments in modern environmental technology is expected to increase by some 250 - 400 mill US dollars annually over the coming years.

Many countries should learn from China's plans to follow up the Rio Conference and Agenda 21.

I wish the Chinese officials and the representatives from our State Pollution Control Authority, who are included in my delegation, a rewarding meeting later today, hoping that their sharing of experiences will be very fruitful.

I am pleased, also, that Norway has been invited to become a member of the China Council for Sustainable Development, perhaps the most important policy forum for international dialogue on China's environmental challenges.

It is our wish to contribute to institution building in China. As a token of our respect and our support, it is a pleasure for me to announce that Norway will provide the new headquarters of NEPA with audiovisual and other equipment.

The existing research agreements between China and Norway will be further exploited to stimulate more research cooperation in the field of environment.

The Norwegian Government firmly supports the strategy of the Norwegian environmental industry to engage in China on a long-term basis. In next year's budget, we have proposed to reserve 20 million dollars to support environmental efforts in Asia. In order to assist Norwegian environmental industry, we have also decided to enlarge our Embassy staff here in Beijing.

Norwegian companies, many of which are represented in my delegation, have succeeded in home markets which have the world's most stringent environmental regulations. Being competitive in Europe means complying with the requirements of sustainable development, which should be a prime growth sector in the years to come.

Norwegian industry delivers a range of services and cost-effective, high quality environmental products.

I am glad to be able to say that Norway has the best environmental technology in the world in many areas of particular interest for China. Let us work together, Norway and China. We have so much to gain.