

Norway – 1990

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34. **Mr. HODNE** (Norway) said that, with democracy and international responsibility for the earth at the top of the world’s political agenda, it was possible, for the first time in history, to deal effectively, through the United Nations, with the serious threats to mankind’s existence. Action, or failure to act, today would decide the living conditions for people tomorrow. Unless action was taken now to slow down population growth, attack poverty and protect the environment, future generations would inherit a dying earth. Vast resources could be saved through disarmament and used to promote the development of a sustainable society. Young people had led demands for environmental protection and would have to live with the consequences of political decisions made today. It was important, therefore, that youth organizations should participate in the preparations for the Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992.

35. A recent conference for youth organisations in the European Community region, held in Bergen earlier in the present year, had stated that the industrial countries of the European Community must assume a leading role in action to create a sustainable society. Norway believed that Governments should adopt, through the United Nations system, an environmental charter to include a set of rights providing for the public, on a well-informed basis, to make decisions on environmental questions. All people must have the right to receive full information on the environmental implications of products and services. Sustainable development depended on action across national borders to save a common environment, which in turn depended on understanding and knowledge and hence on [*10*] education about the environment and the dangers of ecological crisis. Only the rule of law could secure a sustainable global society, and the United Nations Decade of International Law (1990-1999) should help to strengthen international institutions and legal instruments, as the most efficient way of enforcing the action needed to avoid an environmental disaster.

36. There were two preconditions for securing a sustainable environment. First, the industrialized countries must help the developing countries to obtain stable sources of income, to ensure the efficient use of resources and a fair distribution of wealth. That meant a drastic change in the lifestyle and pattern of consumption in the developed countries. Secondly, population growth in the developing countries must

be controlled. Youth organizations had a responsibility in creating awareness of the need for those changes, in order to avoid tensions and develop new attitudes. Most industrialized countries neglected their commitment to devote 0.15 per cent of their GNP to the least developed countries.

37. Young people had an important part to play in democracy, although in many countries they were still not fully integrated in the decision-making process, and were even denied the right to organise. Youth organisations were good schools for democracy, instilling in young people political awareness, tolerance, respect for other people's opinions and an interest in public life. In order to safeguard new democracies it was important to facilitate exchanges between youth organisations in different countries. Communication within the United Nations framework was important and greater participation of youth organisations in the United Nations system was essential. For many years, the Norwegian delegation to the United Nations had included two youth delegates, and as a representative of Norwegian youth, he appreciated the opportunity to participate in the General Assembly. Only three delegations at the present session – Denmark, Netherlands and Norway – included youth delegates and those delegates had therefore sent a letter on the subject to all delegations in the Committee. He hoped that more Governments would include youth delegates in the future.

38. Billions of young people in both industrialised and developing countries lacked jobs and educational opportunities and thus felt that society did not need them. It was essential to build up educational structures in developing countries, minimise youth unemployment and protest against the closing of schools and universities for political reasons.

39. It was important for young people to be given the opportunity to take part in international youth exchanges, since international contacts fostered mutual respect, cultural understanding and solidarity between peoples of different race, colour and national origin and thus countered the ignorance, fear and mistrust that led to ethnic conflicts. Contacts between cultures were the best weapons against xenophobia.

