



General Assembly 66th Session

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General Debate

Mr. Espen Barth Eide
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

President, Excellencies, fellow delegates,

Since we last met here, major changes have swept through the world.

We have been witnessing the Arab spring. People are standing up against authoritarian rule, demanding respect for the fundamental values that underpin this very institution. Autocrats who have failed to offer the prospect of a better life in freedom and dignity have been overthrown. Now, popular calls for reform in Syria have been met with a violent response. We urge the Syrian regime to respect the people's legitimate demand for democracy and fundamental human rights.

In July, a new flag flew up in Juba, as we celebrated the birth of a new state. Last Friday, President Salva Kiir of South Sudan addressed us from this podium as the leader of our newest Member State. This is first and foremost thanks to the vision and will of the people and leaders of the Sudan and what is now the Republic of South Sudan. But it would not have been possible without the active support of the international community. This demonstrates the importance of mediation and settlement of disputes through peaceful means.

Yet we know that peace is fragile. The international community must coordinate its assistance and align with the priorities of the South Sudanese Government. Outstanding issues must be settled through negotiations. We must contribute to laying the foundation for two viable states so that they can live in peace.

In Cote d'Ivoire and Libya, the United Nations has once again proved its worth by addressing some of the most challenging situations in the world. The resolve shown by the Security Council in Libya has reconfirmed its pivotal role in global governance and international security – the role that the Member States bestowed on it through the UN Charter. There are times when there is no alternative to the use of force. When the Security Council acts, it is up to us – the Member States

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– to put its decisions into practice. Norway’s active participation in the military campaign in Libya was first and foremost an expression of our belief in a UN-led world order and the principle of responsibility to protect.

The response to Libya was also a landmark in terms of international justice. For the very first time, a unanimous Security Council chose to refer possible crimes against humanity to the International Criminal Court. Combating impunity and promoting Rule of Law and fundamental human rights are key to prevention of conflict and protection of civilians.

Promoting and strengthening human rights and gender equality is a common responsibility. Failing to adhere fully to universally agreed principles in this area is simply not acceptable. Investment in and empowerment of girls and women so that they can participate fully in the political and economic lives of states is also essential for economic growth and prosperity. There is fundamental evidence that states that fail on these accounts, and continue repressive and discriminating gender policies, will remain poor.

President,

Last year we all reconfirmed our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. We agreed to accelerate our efforts. Last week, we received new evidence of a dramatic break-through in our quest for reducing child mortality and maternal deaths.

Strong political leadership, new partnerships and innovative ways of working have brought real progress.

The Secretary General’s Global Strategy “Every Women and Every Child” has been instrumental in this respect.

But further progress must not be taken for granted. Norway will continue to focus on women’s rights and promoting the role of women in development. We will strongly oppose any efforts to reverse progress. We must maintain our resolve to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Millennium Development Goals have proved to be a formidable tool to improve the lives of millions of people. Yet much remains to be done. There are vast untapped resources within many of the countries that are struggling to achieve the MDGs. Broadening the tax base, making tax collection more effective, halting illegal capital flows and fighting corruption are all measures that must be fully used in the fight against poverty. Getting this right will also improve the social contract in countries emerging from poverty or conflict.

This is a responsibility that lies firmly with individual states.

President,

With the climate conference in Durban only two months away, we must all play our part in making it a success. Implementation of the Cancun agreements is crucial. The Green Climate

Fund must be made operational. Durban should provide a roadmap that can bridge the gap between Kyoto and a new and more ambitious climate regime that includes all major emitters.

Today, 1.4 billion people lack access to affordable and reliable electricity supplies. We must combat climate change while promoting development. The Secretary-General's call for Sustainable Energy for All is therefore highly welcome.

Together with partner countries, Norway will launch a new energy initiative this autumn. The purpose is to boost sustainable electricity generation and accelerate change towards energy efficiency. New funding will promote incentives of the energy sector in partner countries. Such incentives will in turn attract fresh capital for energy projects. We are determined to ensure concrete progress in Rio on the access to energy agenda.

20 years after the first UN Conference on Sustainable Development, the nations of the world must renew the partnership for sustainable development. Civil society and the private sector are crucial in this partnership. Norway is committed to a successful outcome of Rio2012.

President,

Back in 1947, Norway voted in favour of the establishment of two states in the former mandate of Palestine in this assembly.

In 1949, we also heeded the call in resolution 181 (II) to give sympathetic consideration to an application by either state for admission to membership in the United Nations. We voted in favour of admitting Israel as a Member State. We then based our decision on the declarations and explanations provided by the Israeli delegation. Israel had persuasively explained why recognition and membership should not await resolution of the outstanding issues regarding borders, refugees, Jerusalem, and peace with neighbouring countries. When it admitted Israel as a member state, this assembly referred to these declarations and explanations.

Since then, Norwegian policy has been based on the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Norway has consistently stood by Israel and its inherent right to self-defence in accordance with international law. We have also supported the Palestinian right to statehood and the building of the Palestinian Authority.

One of the main issues before this General Assembly is the Palestinian quest for recognition.

It is legitimate for the Palestinian people to turn to the UN under the current circumstances. This is neither incompatible with a negotiation process, nor an expression of unilateralism.

Norway welcomes the call by the Quartet for negotiations on a comprehensive agreement on the outstanding final status issues, to be completed within a year.

But, the situation on the ground is changing in several ways.

A few days ago, the donor support group to the Palestinian Authority affirmed the success of local institution building. The performance of Palestinian public institutions was scrutinised by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations. Their joint conclusion was that the Palestinians are fully capable of running a state.

President Abbas on Friday confirmed his commitment to resolve the final status issues through negotiations. He also ensured us of the Palestinian Authority's commitment to comply with the UN Charter, relevant UN resolutions, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

The main obstacle to full institution building remains the occupation. Measures taken under the latter are changing the shape of the territory in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in ways that undermine negotiations and may soon render the two-state vision physically unattainable. The Security Council, the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice have all rejected the legality of such unilateral changes.

Both the Palestinian readiness for statehood and the declarations and commitments they have made should be acknowledged. Norway looks forward to welcoming Palestine as a full member of the United Nations.

President,

It is vital that we continue to improve and strengthen the United Nations so that it can serve us effectively in times of change. We, the Member States, have not ensured sufficiently wide-ranging reforms. We have not equipped the UN with the resources needed to carry out the mandates we adopt. We define noble objectives, only to undercut them in the budgeting process. We keep on asking the UN to do more with less. If that is what we want, we must give the Secretary-General greater flexibility.

In a time of major geopolitical change, the UN system must reflect new economic and political realities. As the Secretary General reminded us here on Wednesday: with power comes responsibility.

We, the Member States, have a crucial role to play in achieving greater system-wide coherence. At times, the vision of a UN that "delivers as one" is undermined by our own interference and insistence on pet projects, earmarking of funds, and cross-cutting, awkward and at times internally conflicting financial reporting requirements. Fragmentation does not begin at the UN. It is a reflection of the priorities and actions of Member States.

Before concluding, let me make one last remark. We deeply regret that this podium has once again been abused to promote extreme views and unfounded allegations. This only serves to incite conflict rather than bridge differences. We will not give up the authority of our presence in this hall, but rather confront such attitudes from this podium. The purpose of the General Debate

is to draw attention to current challenges, express and share our views and lay the basis for constructive dialogue.

President, fellow delegates,

In a rapidly changing world, the UN must be able to adapt to new challenges, new actors and new geopolitical realities.

The UN is only as good as the results it delivers. We are not judged by our words, but by our actions.

Thank you President