

Norwegian National Day

17th May

Message from the Ambassador

It gives me great pleasure and honour to address the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of the Norwegian Constitution Day, 17th of May. It gives me a particular pleasure to address you on the 17th of May this year - 2005 - as we observe our 100 years of independence, after being in union with Sweden since 1814. In 1905 there was a real threat of war. Norway and Sweden were engaged in a bilateral arms race and our national armies had been mobilised. The Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* wrote in an editorial that "... a mere spark could ignite this dangerous fire." But in the end violence was avoided and Norway and Sweden together managed to arrive at peaceful, and lasting, solution. The relationship between Sweden and Norway in particular, and between the Scandinavian countries in general, is an example to others: Norway was dominated and governed for more than 500 years. First by Denmark and then by Sweden. But the fact that the Scandinavian countries are bound together by a common history, common culture, common language and not the least many personal bonds, is recognised in all our countries and has since 1905 overshadowed the different conflicts that have between us.

Norway's independence in 1905 had been largely determined through the Constitution of 1814 - at the time one of the world's most modern constitutions.

So, starting in 1905, the rest of the world acknowledged that Norway could speak on its own behalf and was ready to take its place in the international community.

Bangladeshi-Norwegian relations

The features of Bangladesh and Norway are different, but there are also similarities:

Both countries are young as independent nations, but both have long and rich history and traditions. Both countries see the importance of international co-operation through the United Nations, seen in the fact that both Bangladesh and Norway are among the main contributors to the UN Peace keeping forces.

Norway was among the first to recognise Bangladesh, and after the independence our two countries have been co-operating as development partners. Our main areas of co-operation are good governance, human rights, education and private sector. These are vital areas for a sound and democratic development in any country, and we believe that through our co-operation we can make an impact in Bangladesh.

Children

The children represent hope and the future - in Norway and in Bangladesh. To secure the right and the access to education for all is therefore fundamental. Bangladesh has made a lot of progress in this area, and I am happy that Norway can contribute to the further improvements, both in quality and quantity, in the educational sector



The important role of children is manifest in our celebration of the 17th of May. It is rightly called the Children's Day as it is the children's parade most Norwegians have come to associate with the Constitution Day. No matter how small a place is, the children will parade. And in the capital, Oslo, all schools will walk the main street of the city up to the Royal Palace where the Royal Family will greet them. Also in Bangladesh we will have the children's parade and I believe you will all enjoy this together with us.

17th of May 2005 is special. It represents 100 years' independence. But maybe more importantly, it represents an example of peaceful settlements of conflicts, and the importance of developing co-operation and friendly relations between countries. The Centennial Anniversary 1905-2005 is therefore also a tribute to the governments and people of Sweden and Norway for the good and friendly relations they have developed since 1905.

Aud Lise Norheim

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100 years' independence:

A Voice of our Own

By Aud Lise Norheim, Ambassador of Norway

A voice of our own is the title of the programme for Norway's Centennial Anniversary 1905-2005.

Starting in 1905, the rest of the world acknowledged that Norway could speak on its own behalf and was ready to take its place in the international community.

The story of how Norway won her independence is an amazing story. It is a true story of conflict resolution, with elements that we can learn from also in today's world.

In 1905 the political situation between Norway and Sweden was very tense. The union between the two countries had lasted since 1814, and the time had now come when the Norwegians said "we want to govern ourselves, we want independence".

The people elect the king

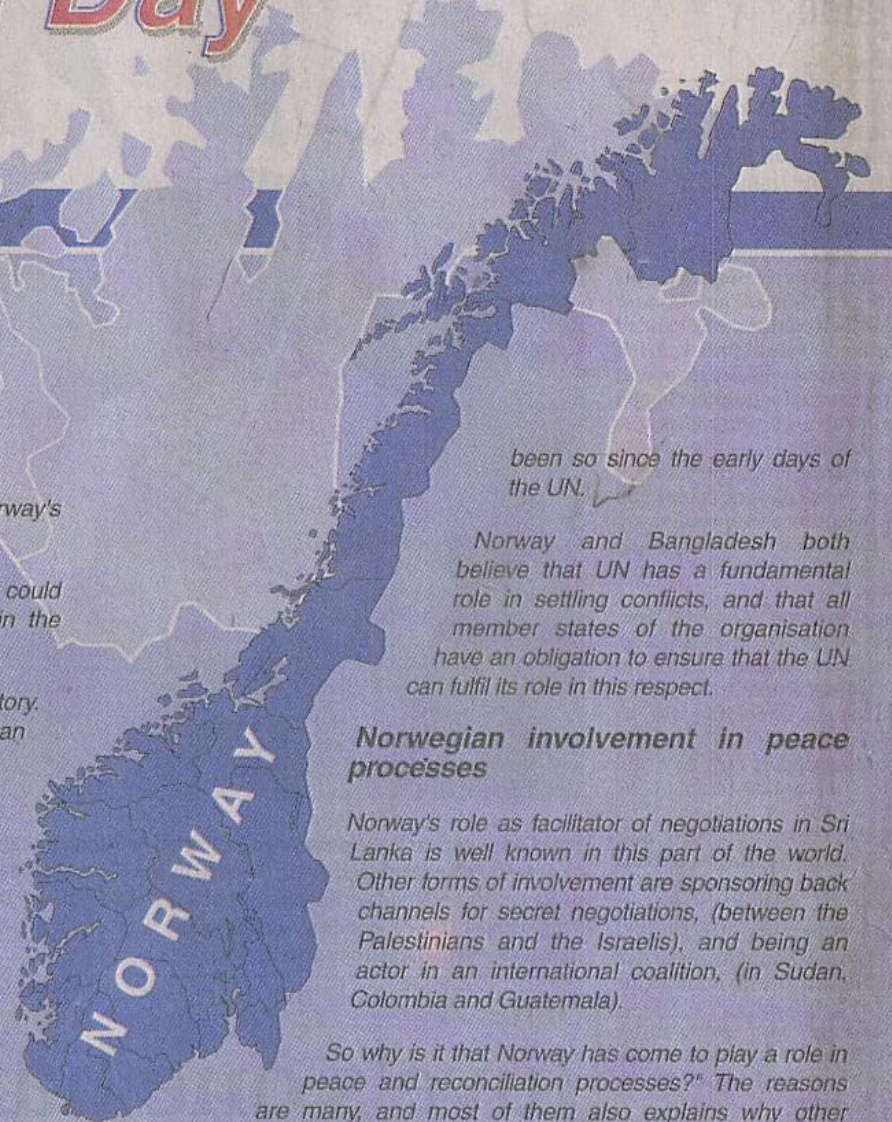
After arriving at a peaceful solution, Norway became an independent monarchy, with the Danish prince Carl accepting to be king under the name of King Haakon VII. How we became a monarchy is in itself an interesting story as it was decided through a popular referendum. And Prince Carl insisted to have the approval of the population before he accepted to be the King of Norway. A second referendum was conducted, and a great majority said yes to him as a King. Therefore it is only fair to say that Norway today is a democratically elected monarchy!

Dialogue and co-operation

The Nordic tradition of peaceful resolution of conflicts is based on a shared set of values - human dignity, human rights and democratic ideals. It seems right to say that we feel a moral obligation to pursue peace and stability when and where we can. This can also be seen from a strategic point of view: Small countries, like the Scandinavian, can be particularly vulnerable to insecurity and instability outside their borders. Promoting peace and security requires political dialogue, close multilateral co-operation and strong alliances.

Although the great majority of conflicts are internal, their consequences are international. The widespread human suffering and violations of human rights and humanitarian law caused by these internal conflicts often have spillover effects in the form of terrorism, migration and poverty.

At first sight, the differences between Bangladesh and Norway are far greater than the similarities. A closer look will show us that there are indeed similarities. We are both fairly young nations with a voice of our own in the international community. Both our countries emphasises the role of the United Nations (UN) in their foreign policy. Bangladesh is at the top of the list as far as troop contributions to UN peacekeeping operations are concerned. Norway is also a big contributor and has



been so since the early days of the UN.

Norway and Bangladesh both believe that UN has a fundamental role in settling conflicts, and that all member states of the organisation have an obligation to ensure that the UN can fulfil its role in this respect.

Norwegian involvement in peace processes

Norway's role as facilitator of negotiations in Sri Lanka is well known in this part of the world. Other forms of involvement are sponsoring back channels for secret negotiations, (between the Palestinians and the Israelis), and being an actor in an international coalition, (in Sudan, Colombia and Guatemala).

So why is it that Norway has come to play a role in peace and reconciliation processes? The reasons are many, and most of them also explains why other Nordic countries have played and play, a similar role in other conflicts:

- our efforts are always part of a broader setting, as a continuation of our long-standing support for the UN mandate for peace and security, and of our tradition of humanitarian action and development co-operation

- there is a broad political consensus in Norway on the policy of promoting peace and reconciliation

- Norway has no colonial past, and as a nation we are usually perceived as having no hidden political or economic agendas.

- we stress that our involvement is as peace-helpers, not peace-makers. As a facilitator we try to play in supporting the parties, but it is clear that the will to peace must come from the parties themselves.

Differences but shared values

In 1905 Norway and Sweden arrived at a peaceful and lasting settlement that has led to the co-operation and friendly relations we see today. There is a strong co-operation between all the Nordic countries, based on shared values, common history, culture and traditions. We believe, through this experience, that we have a role to play in peace diplomacy.

We are indeed happy that Norway and Sweden in together celebrate Norway's 100 years of independence from Sweden.



The Norwegian Oil and Gas Adventure

The North Sea and the Norwegian continental shelf are synonymous with oil and gas in Europe. This applies in particular to the Norwegian sector of the North Sea since Norway exports 90 per cent of its entire oil production. Today Norway sits on approximately half of the remaining reserves of oil and gas in Europe. It covers 10 per cent of Europe's gas consumption and within a few years will increase gas exports dramatically and account for 30 per cent of European gas imports.

When the Ekofisk field was discovered in 1969, Norway started to look around for "oil political solutions". How were oil operations to be run? When major natural resources were to be exploited in Norway - from hydroelectric power to fisheries and the smelting industry, the state had traditionally been involved. But oil activities? This was a major challenge. It required enormous amounts of money and technical know-how, which Norway did not have. It had no geologists, petroleum economists, or lawyers specializing in petroleum issues. It had only transported huge amounts of oil across the world's oceans. But within oil prospecting, production and



submarine gas pipelines and is now preparing to meet the challenge that the liberalisation of the gas markets in Europe will present. The new century has been dubbed the Gas Century. In 2020, gas will outstrip oil as the major money-maker in the Norwegian oil and gas industry.

refining Norway had virtually no knowledge to build on.

Norwegian gas pipelines go from the North Sea and the Norwegian Sea to England, Germany, Belgium and France.

Norway is the world's biggest operator of

The oil crisis in 1973 sent prices soaring and was the start of Norway's oil adventure. Norway, the new member of the exclusive international club of oil producing countries set up a Norwegian management model for its petroleum reserves. A ministry for the formulation of oil policies was established, and oil legislation was formulated in the Parliament. A national oil company was built up and a Petroleum Directorate - whose job was to procure the necessary professional competence - was established. Norway took the helm in the development of its oil industry. Norway had doubtless reason to believe that it had entered a higher industrial division. Suddenly, through the 70s and 80s, enormous new finds of oil and gas were made, finds that were among the biggest in the world. Oilfields were developed with the aid of a sophisticated technology made possible by the high oil prices of the 70s. And this continued, right up to the collapse in 1986.

But though Norway took control of its own oil and gas operations, it has always encouraged participation from overseas oil and gas companies. The world's biggest oil companies operate today on the Norwegian shelf. In this way Norway procures the widest possible professional basis for the extraction of its oil reserves.

Today, the situation on the Norwegian shelf has entered a new phase, a ripening phase one might say. The era of the gigantic

oil finds is over. Norway's petroleum bank consists today of a number of small and medium-sized finds which must be developed with the aid of new, simple and environment-friendly technology. Around one hundred oil and gas finds are awaiting development during the next 25 years and the expected investments during this period will be as great as those that have been made so far.

The Norwegian Parliament has decided that the oil and gas are to be extracted on a long-term perspective. The oil and gas riches are to be converted into financial riches in the shape of an oil fund to ensure the welfare of future generations. Norway also has ambitious environmental policy goals for the development of its energy.

Norway has a clearly defined goal: To continually simplify technology so that Norwegian oil and gas are competitive even when oil prices are low. Norway is a member of the International Energy Agency (IEA) but not of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Opec. Nevertheless, Norway, as the world's second biggest exporter of oil, has a pragmatic relationship with Opec. Through reductions in its oil production it contributes towards keeping oil prices on a reasonable level, in recognition of the energy strategic and national strategic value of oil for both the rich and the poor countries of the world.



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