

**ADDRESS DURING THE DINNER OFFERED BY THE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE KINGDOM OF
NORWAY, MR. THORBJØRN JAGLAND. Oslo, April 24th, 2001**

The world is, fortunately, becoming increasingly smaller. This allows us to, in spite of distance, share and enrich ourselves with cultural differences and dreams, as is done by both the people of Norway and Colombia.

To hear our kind host, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, Thorbjorn Jagland, speak of my country with such interest and affection, about his appetite for Colombian literature and for our aromatic coffee that crosses the ocean to please Nordic palates, is hard proof of how wonderful modern times can be if we avail ourselves of its breakthroughs for the benefit of mankind.

In Colombia we also hear and feel the Norwegian spirit through its outstanding representatives of art and thought. Ibsen's "Doll House" or Knut Hamsun's "Hunger" and "Earth Blessing" form an essential part of our cultural influences. Edward Grieg's passionate and evocative music is embedded, without many knowing this, in our collective

subconscience. And what can we say of Edvard Munch who's blood-curling "Scream" continues being the best example of expressionism and human anxiety. And more recently, Jostein Gaarder, who delighted us with his fantastic incursions in philosophy and in the study of the origin of the universe.

It is precisely Gaarder who reminds us in his last "Maya" that *"the human being is the only living being in the entire universe that has a universal conscience. In such case, it is not only a global responsibility to preserve the habitat of this planet, it is a cosmic responsibility"*.

Our people are called to this cosmic responsibility and it is our duty as their leaders to do everything in our power to make sure that the problems afflicting the world today become nothing more than an enlightening memory for future generations.

Colombia recognizes Norway as a peace-loving country. Its cooperation with the United Nations, particularly with the Security Council, is very meaningful for maintaining

international peace and security, as well as for promoting democracy throughout the globe.

Now that our country holds, together with Norway, a seat as non-permanent member in the United Nations Security Council, it is well worth our joining efforts to make it more effective. Colombia attaches great importance to the process for enhancing and reforming such Council, to correcting the imbalances in its present composition, improving decision making mechanisms, and according greater transparency to the fulfillment of its duties, to ensure a more legitimate and balanced representation of the Organization's member countries.

In this forum, as in many others, we can work together to achieve the common goal of having a safe world in peace, where diversity is a form of cultural enrichment and not grounds for controversy. We will continuously promote dialogue, negotiated solutions, and political and diplomatic solutions as the only means of ensuring peace and international security on the basis of truly stable and durable foundations.

We will continue defending and fostering the principles of international law as the fundamental pillars for peaceful coexistence and solidarity among nations. We will respect, within this framework, the free self-determination of peoples, the sovereign equality of States, their political independence and territorial integrity, the non-interference in internal affairs, and international cooperation, as the fundamental underpinnings and genuine expressions of that better world we want for our children.

Mr. Minister Jagland and dear friends:

As you well know, my country faces today the challenges of the world drug problem, violence, and poverty.

Colombia has suffered for almost four decades the brunt of an internal conflict that is bleeding it to death, a conflict promoted by a minority that does not believe in democratic means and whose members do not even represent one out of every thousand Colombians.

I have personally led the process with the oldest guerrilla group of our country in an attempt to recover peace. This peace process is presently in the negotiation stage. These negotiations are taking place inside a Detente Zone created with the sole purpose of holding these talks. We have also established contact with the second largest rebel group, with a very good outlook, and with the unanimous and generous support of the international community that has given us its political support to make this process the engine that will lead us to our ultimate goal: peace.

The road to peace is not easy, nor does it produce immediate results, yet it is the only road. I am very pleased to know that we can count on the respectful and solidary support of Norway as we travel this road!

In effect, Norway, with overwhelming generosity, has played a leading role in the two processes underway with the FARC and the ELN. As for the first group, Norway hosted one of the stops in the European tour conducted by government and rebel negotiators earlier last year, and acted as facilitators during the International Hearing on Illegal Crops and the

Environment held in San Vicente del Caguan last June. And Norway recently became part of the Commission of Facilitating Countries.

As far as the process with the ELN is concerned, Norway makes up, together with other four countries, the Commission of Friendly Nations that are fostering the creation of a Meeting Place for holding the talks.

Unfortunately, violence in Colombia is exacerbated by the evil interests of and financing by narcotics traffickers who breed death and corruption throughout the globe. This is a world problem, and the international community cannot leave Colombia on its own. You and I know that we can only solve this problem if we confront it together, guided by the principle of shared responsibility.

My government has designed an integral strategy aimed at strengthening our institutions and increasing social investment. This strategy also seeks, among other things, to provide productive alternatives to those farmers presently

engaged in growing coca leaf or poppy seed for their subsistence.

To this strategy -which also includes the peace process, improving the justice system, servicing the people displaced by violence, programs for disseminating and protecting human rights, and building social infrastructure works- has received the enthusiastic support of several countries and international agencies, both individually or through the Support Group of the Peace Process set up in Madrid last year and to meet again in Brussels next week.

Norway's participation in this group, which resulted from a concrete offer made by Norway during the first meeting, has been and will continue being an example of effective cooperation that I am sure will inspire other European nations.

The people of Norway have put in practice, like no other, Henrik Ibsen's phrase: "*A single action is easier to engrave than a thousand words*".

Therefore, interpreting the sentiment of 40 million Colombians, I wish to say to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway tonight, and through you to all the people of Norway: Thank you! Thank you very much for contributing your efforts and willingness to the resurgence of Colombia!

It is with passionate words and a passionate heart that I raise my glass in friendship and I toast to you Mr. Minister Jaglan, I toast to the happiness and prosperity of your dear Norwegian people, and may our relationship be blessed with good fortune.

Thank you very much.