



Speech at Official Luncheon  
Vienna, 21 October 1996

Federal Chancellor  
dear Franz Vranitzky  
Dear Mrs. Vranitzky  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

The recent State visit to Austria of their Majesties the King and Queen, and the cordial reception accorded to me and my delegation here today are all expressions of two countries bound together for common goals.

It is natural for me on this occasion to take as a point of departure two changes of government which took place in Europe ten years ago. One happened in Norway in May 1986, when the new Labour government was appointed and I took over as Prime Minister. Only one month later, another change took place in Austria, when Franz Vranitzky was appointed Federal Chancellor.

The political situation internationally has changed completely in those ten years. If we had been told in 1986, that ten years from now:

- Germany will be united and the Wall can be sold in pieces as souvenirs.
- the Soviet Union will fall apart, Communism will be gone as a political force in Europe and instead there will be free and fair elections all over Europe.
- nuclear weapons will almost be completely removed from Europe, and all immediate military threats will be gone.
- Austria, Sweden and Finland will join the European Union, and Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians will be preparing for their entrance, together with independent Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians.

If we had been told that, most of us would have smiled wryly. But it happened, and there is more.

- We have become aware of global environmental threats, such as the threats to the ozone-shield, and the global climate. In fact, it was an international scientific gathering here in Austria in 1986 which delivered the first scientifically approved evidence that the human-made emission of greenhouse gases could cause global warming.
- And while we have been working to prevent that from happening, Asia, with its enormous population, has embarked on a path to

enormous economic growth, and the world has become a global market place. Anything can be produced anywhere and sold anywhere.

These ten years have been a metamorphosis, unprecedented in human history. It has opened a future of opportunity. It has been a peace-time for peoples who for centuries were engaged in and affected by wars. But it has also meant war and devastation for millions in the former Yugoslavia - just south of Austria. It has meant suffering for several other unfortunate countries, and today, two scores of deadly conflicts are raging on several continents, most often within states.

It took a year or two before Chancellor Vranitzky and I actually met each other. Since then however, I believe we have met more frequently than most. We had the privilege to build on old ties and friendships within the same political family. Austria and Norway have been pursuing many of the same goals, and we have done it together.

Yes, together we launched the process which led to the EEA-agreement, in a common EFTA response to the new dynamism in the European Union leading to the internal market.

Chains of events led us to launch parallel efforts to join the European Union as members. The Austrian people agreed, the Norwegians did not. But we are still part of the same European Economic area, and the Chancellor has personally taken a series of initiatives to include us in the political deliberations about the future of Europe, and for this I want to thank you and the Austrian Government. The ties forged between us remain strong.

Our two countries both play different but important roles in the new security pattern being established in Europe. By building interdependence, we aim to make war and tension as inconceivable as it is today within the internal market.

Together we have worked, and will work, to strengthen and renew the European welfare state, so that Europe can remain safe, so that there will be new jobs created, education provided and social security schemes upheld that will sustain change. We will continue to inspire technological change that will reduce the strain on the environment and leave for future generations at least the same opportunity that we have.

Together we must make Europe a safe place for immigrants, refugees and displaced persons, and keep this part of the world as a refuge of enlightened diversity. Together we must stand firm against xenophobia, racism and intolerance.

Austria and Norway are closer partners than the figures of bilateral trade should indicate. But even those figures are rising. Major Norwegian companies are investing here. Norske Skog invested more than 3 billion schilling in a newspaper plant in Steiermark. Two years ago natural gas from the North Sea reached the Austrian grid. By 2005, Norwegian gas will



have a 20 per cent market share - providing Austria with a stable and reliable energy source.

And scores of Norwegians continue to travel to this magnificent country - to Vienna and Salzburg and the numerous ski resorts. In both countries the language of winter sports is spoken fluently. We know what to expect when Austrian ski jumpers are ready to fly. Ernst Vettori - winning in Holmenkollen in 1986 and in 1991 even had his own Norwegian fan club. And the board of the Norwegian Opera could not have made a wiser decision than picking an Austrian - Mr. Manfred Honeck - as it's new musical director.

Dear Franz, the past ten years have brought our countries closer together than we have ever been before. I was told that you were surprised that I had never been your guest in such an official framework. I have made a similar shocking discovery that you have not been our official guest either, and I invite you to come and rectify that deplorable situation real soon.

Please join me in a toast to the Federal Chancellor of Austria and his wife, - to our excellent relations and their longevity, and to the friendship between Austria and Norway.