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If we take the number of Norwegians that have served in UN peacekeeping operations since the first UN observers were sent to the Middle East in 1948,

- if we calculate that figure as a percentage of the population of Norway,
- and if we assume that an equal percentage of the American people had also served the UN,
- that number of Americans would be close to 3 million

More than 40 thousand Norwegians have actually worn a blue helmet. That number equals more than 1 per cent of the Norwegian people.

So we are not only sponsoring this excellent seminar on peacekeeping and peacemaking. We have been and we are a major contributor to the cause of the UN and its peacekeeping operations.

That is why I am so pleased to be here this morning to inaugurate this new annual seminar under the auspices of the International Peace Academy. But it is not the only reason.

The President of the Academy, Olara Otunnu and I are both members of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, - and independent commission that has been set up to study and recommend how the world can deal more effectively with emerging dangerous situations among and within states.

Increasingly also such conflicts arise within states - as we have seen around us - tragically tearing apart countries like Somalia and Rwanda, - not to speak of the Former Yugoslavia.

That Commission will report to you next year on its findings, and Olara's work at the Peace Academy is a true inspiration for our work. I recognize in the audience important members of the Commission.

I told the co-founder of the Commission, David Hamburg that he was excused from being with us here today. He is in Washington today to be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which is the highest distinction any American civilian can receive. It is good to know that the President's admiration for David Hamburg is equal to mine. He is truly a fine and internationally minded American.

The courageous provisions of the UN Charter were cast in time of war. Perhaps it was only under the spell of war that countries could agree to the far-reaching charter. We know that the system decided at San Fransisco never came to be used that way. And that the world took a different turn. The collective security system was virtually frozen under the cold war.

Instead came the unwritten practice of peace-keeping operations. And often countries far removed from the region of conflict proved to be more acceptable go-betweens than other countries, and smaller and medium-sized countries have traditionally been among the major contributors.

To this day, the Nordic countries, Canada - and Fiji, are among the most loyal contributors to peace-keeping operations. Together, the Nordic countries have provided 25 per cent of all UN peace-keeping personnel.

Rethinking peacemaking and peacekeeping - that is our challenge. Peace-keeping is an idea which time came decades ago. Some of the UN's greatest contributions to world peace have come within peace-keeping and UN peace keepers were rightly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1988. And yet - this contribution has still not been sufficiently acknowledged outside the foreign policy establishment.

Think about the frequent media coverage of conflicts focusing on the gap between a fragile cease fire and an ideal situation of peace. All too often there are people ready to blame the peace-keepers for that gap. And all too often, cameras and microphones are there to spread this biased version.

This is highly unjustified. What we never see is an estimate of what would have happened if there were no peace-keepers - if there was no UN to stabilize the situation, to monitor a cease-fire, to facilitate talks or to bring relief services to the most vulnerable.

What would have happened in Sinai if the UN didn't make the first bold steps back in 1956? Would Southern Lebanon be a safer place without UNIFIL? Would there have been less human suffering in Bosnia if UNPROFOR hadn't been there? Would we have felt more relaxed if there were no blue helmets to calm tensions on a divided Cyprus?

A cartoon in the New Yorker some years ago made a point. It portrayed a news reporter presenting the evening news. "These were the headlines", he said - and continued: "we'll be back in a minute to blow them out of proportion."

That has been the case for much of the focus on peace-making and peace-keeping. Now we must get proportions right. It is a good starting point to agree on what the world looks like. Aren't we often preparing to fight the last war over again, rather than looking ahead, assessing the real dangers?

The UN charter is designed to deal with conflicts between states. Out of around 40 cases of armed conflict in the world today, hardly any occur between states.

When a situation arises for which the charter prescribes a procedure - there is a strong moral obligation for countries to heed a call for resources, peacekeepers and other assistance - in particular when the Secretary General himself calls on a country. And that is how it should be.

But when the peacekeepers are ready to go - it may already be late - often too late. The conflict has erupted. Battles have been fought. Dividing lines are cemented. And reconstruction - of infrastructure, of civil society, and the human mind has become immensely complicated and expensive.

Everybody seems to agree that we would save a lot of money by getting involved before hostilities erupt. But there are no efficient procedures for dealing with emerging conflicts and there are serious obstacles to early preventive action.

First, there is the situation of international law. The concept of sovereignty sometimes protects renegade regimes who stop at nothing to protect their power base.

I believe we have to focus on this. The rules on intervention, mostly humanitarian intervention, are still not clear enough. The principle of non-interference is an established norm of relations between states. But that principle, or perceived notion of sovereignty, should not be an easy means to cover up striking abuses of human rights.

Second, the information base is often too weak. The UN itself is ill equipped to gather information about emerging danger-situations. If the UN had access to the information that many member states possess, we would have the choice to get active as an organization at an earlier stage. We have experienced that the information that we badly needed at a crucial moment actually was available somewhere, but not generally accessible.

Thirdly, failing a compelling obligation under the charter, states too often seem to feel relatively free to choose not to get engaged in a situation. It is a sad fact that leaders may chose not to generate support for an early action or intervention.

A situation which is not visibly dangerous, which does not offer spectacular pictures for the evening news, is all too often silenced out of the news picture. And since those who suffer have vote in any of the countries which command the resources to help, it may be all too convenient to look the other way.

In every developed country there are unmet needs. There is strain in national budgets - there is always a lobby for tax-cuts - there are people of influence who actually don't care if scores of hutus are slain or if the Balkans go up in flames.

Bismarck made that point bluntly at the time of the Balkan wars more than a hundred years ago when he said that region wasn't worth the bones of a single Pomeranian bombardair. A few years later the Balkan conflict ingnited the First World War.

It can often be a hard sell to explain to people that it is in fact the whole system of peaceful relations - yes even world peace - which is at stake, if we fail to grasp the challenges from this new category of inter-state

conflict. CNN and its sisters and brothers in the media world are amazingly clever to bring out the most spectacular coverage of conflict - from Erbil in Northern Irak - from Grozny or from Tuzla. But we cannot allow state action to be run on the TV channels ability to arouse an emotional national support base. We cannot relegate international principles to an up-stage position.

I belong to those who believe that world leadership is a sometimes inflated notion. Some people who use it fail to recognize that there are limitations of power in every office. Most well known constitutions work that way. They have as their main objective to set limits to power.

And leadership wasn't meant to be easy. Leaders have been noted for generating support for a cause which was right even if it took hard work and uphill battles to generate it. So there is hope and opportunity. We live in a time of competition for attention. It will be a constant up-hill battle to rally attention around an emerging crisis situation.

But there is no other way to go unless we are ready to accept scores of deadly conflicts around the world. Of course we cannot accept that. It would run against everything that human values, democracy and open society stand for. In the long run, if we allow such crises to develop unnoticed, if generations grow up with a daily massacre on a screen in their living rooms - then we risk developing our societies without the necessary human care.

There are of course limits to the external suffering that public opinions can absorb. We cannot reverse the tide of multi-channel public opinion making which comes close to what Umberto Eco calls a "travel in hyper-reality". But we should be aware of the consequences.

A man was once asked what he feared most for society - apathy or ignorance. His answer was short: I don't know and I don't care. Generations pervaded with apathy and ignorance will - gradually - apply that attitude to the situation in their own countries. And in other countries. It will be a colder world. Cold and fragile peace.

It is a huge educational task to prepare us for a world order where we effectively suffocate the first flickering flames of conflict. But it is not a task without rewards and I believe we can win that battle. We must make all we can out of the successful stories - such as the South Africans who managed their peaceful transitions in a way nobody would have believed ten years ago. Now they worry about the future. But regardless of the challenges ahead - little can be compared with what the South Africans have already achieved. And let us also remember when the Soviet Union broke up - not with a bang but a whimper.

And while the educational task is for all countries to embark upon together - here at the UN we must develop the institutional, legal and managerial capacity - as a model also for regional action.

The UN is still the focal point of multilateralism. We need a continuous focus on the deeper roots of conflict; poverty, population growth, environmental degradation and lack of economic opportunity. Reading the Human Development Report can tell more about the need for preventive action than counting the weapons on every potential battlefield.

Sharpening our response mechanisms to be physically present in time is important. But in a broader sense we need to keep the survival issues on the multilateral agenda. There are certain issues that cannot be renationalized.

We must keep a focus on population growth that threatens to disrupt beyond recovery the equilibrium between people, resources and the carrying capacity of the planet.

We must keep a focus on the depletion of natural resources on which people depend for food and livelihood.

We must keep a focus on the sustainability of the world economy.

And we must keep a focus on the promotion of democracy and human rights.

Far too often the UN comes under pressure to act only when the root causes have had their effect. The less visible tragedies of political oppression, famine, environmental degradation and underdevelopment are left without sufficient attention. And these are the sources of conflict which we should have dealt with before they escalate and before the costs become enormous.

So let us keep the vital issues on the agenda while we welcome and encourage more innovative thinking on peacemaking and peacekeeping. We are getting aware of the needs. Now we need to rethink procedures and techniques - paving the way for peace-keeping into the legal framework of the UN.

UN capabilities must be sharpened - for the sake of effectiveness and credibility. There must be a clearer relation between the three M's - mandate, means and mission.

We need stronger involvement by regional organizations, acting on behalf of the UN.

We need a stronger involvement of non-governmental organizations - the world wide web of the international civil society.

And finally - we need more seminars like this - more dedicated organizations like the International Peace Academy to challenge conventional wisdom. And we need more dedicated people like Olara Otunnu - who continues to rise awareness - ask the right questions - and have the courage to put forward solutions.