



World Chronicle

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GUEST: Børge Brende
Chairman
UN Commission on Sustainable Development

JOURNALISTS: Eva Bratholm
Dagbladet (Norway)

Jack Freeman
The Earth Times

MODERATOR: Mary Alice Williams

“Sustainable Development: Water, Shelter, Sanitation”

Access to clean water, proper sanitation, and decent living conditions for millions of people living in urban slums – these are the world’s top priorities in the area of environment and development and the United Nations’ Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is the international policy forum for debating how to take action. What is the role of the public sector in addressing these basic issues, and how can partnerships with the private sector be beneficial? Can solutions be imposed from the top down? Can Norway’s chairmanship restore focus to the environmental agenda, and help deliver on its expectations? In this edition of **World Chronicle**, these are some of the issues discussed with the help of Norway’s Minister for the Environment and CSD Chairman Børge Brende.

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Director: Livingston Hinckley
Production Assistant: Lebe L. Besa

ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an unedited interview programme on global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

WILLIAMS: Hello, I'm Mary Alice Williams and this is **World Chronicle**.

"When the well is dry we know the worth of water". Those are Benjamin Franklin's words and they still hold true for much of the world's population. Access to clean water, proper sanitation, and decent living conditions for millions of people living in slums, these are some of the top priorities for the United Nations and its Commission for Sustainable Development. This year the Commission is chaired by Norway whose Minister for the Environment, Mr. Børge Brende, is our guest in the studio today.

Mr. Brende, welcome to **World Chronicle**

BRENDE: Thank you very much.

WILLIAMS: These figures are staggering: a half of a billion people in the world lack fresh water; one in seven people in Europe lack clean water and sanitation; five million die every year from water borne diseases.

BRENDE: It's terrible and it's a huge task and the world leaders promised themselves, on behalf of all of us, that by 2015 they're going to halve the proportion of people not having access to clean water and adequate sanitation. And the figures are astonishing. If you look in sub-Sahara [Africa], 70 percent of those people that are in hospitals are there because of water-related diseases, and we know that if you can't deliver clean water it will hurt your economic growth and then there will be no poverty alleviation and poverty eradication. We know water is essential for agriculture and it's also essential for youngsters so they can go to school instead of just looking for clean water.

WILLIAMS: Joining us in the studio today are Eva Bratholm of Norway's *Dagbladet*, and Jack Freeman of *The Earth Times*. Jack?

FREEMAN: Mr. Brende, as a practical matter, there's nothing more local than water supply and sewerage, how can the UN make a difference when local governments can't or won't do the job?

BRENDE: I think there are a lot of governments that really want to do better in this field but it's a very complex issue. What we know is that it is doable to deliver water to 1.2 billion people lacking sound water. Look at what has happened in South Africa. In one decade they have delivered sound water for ten million people that lacked that during the apartheid regime, and also sanitation. But it's not only about fixing the pipes it's also about fixing the institutions that should deliver water and there the local municipalities and local authorities have a huge job to do. But, at the same time also, the developed countries have a huge

responsibility. The overseas assistance in the fields of water and sanitation went down during the 90's and the UN has now a huge task of not just talking about this but also delivering real action and reminding world leaders of what they have committed themselves to, which is to deliver more water and better sanitation for all those lacking it.

BRATHOLM: You have been travelling around and talking to world leaders and you could see that this is a topic that could be overfed with goodwill and be starved on real action and real financial supply. What is your impression of that?

BRENDE: I feel that the new time-borne targets that were decided in Johannesburg, and also in the Millennium Summit, say something about when we should reach them and who is going to do the job. That's something new. My job as leader of this commission is to be a watchdog on the targets, making a scoreboard -- are we on track or we're not on track? If we're not on track we have to tell. And we know that there would be no development without access to safe water and sanitation and those two issues are closely interlinked also. And I think there are some positive developments also. See, China and India are now on track to meet the targets on water.

BRATHOLM: But we are living in such a dramatic world. So much is happening every day and this is truly a kind of uncontroversial question that everybody agrees on. Could it be put on the back burner because of that?

BRENDE: During the 90's it definitely was the situation because the governments in the developing nations did less in the fields of water and also the developed nations reduced their assistance in this field. My impression now is that water is lifted up. We know that you're not going to reach the health target if you're not delivering on water. You're not going to meet the education target but it's not only about more money it's also by organizing in a better way. Like Jack mentioned also, if you go to Kenya and go to Nairobi, if you go to the slum dwellers in the informal settlements, they pay more for a glass of water like this than they pay for gasoline. But if you are a middle-income family or a rich family you're almost not paying anything for water and sanitation. So you have to look on how you allocate these resources that's already used.

WILLIAMS: You've said that among the challenges to fresh water and sustainable development in a broader way the institutional issues are paramount but what are some of the others? How do things like trade and poverty and even HIV/AIDS have an impact on sustainable development?

BRENDE: They, of course, have a huge impact. What we have decided in the commission this time, that we did not after the Rio Earth Summit, is to not choose all the issues on the á la carte menu, but stick to some targets and at the same time do a review, find out the

right policies and then go to other fields. And we have found out that water and sanitation and doing something for almost a billion slum dwellers in the world is a good way to start and if you reach these targets it can also have a very positive influence on other targets.

FREEMAN: Speaking of targets, what about the money target that was reaffirmed back in Rio of development assistance of donor countries -- 0.7% of a donor country's GDP? Ever since Rio that's been going down -- it's gone up a little bit lately but very little bit. I understand Norway is one of four countries that have actually met that target on a consistent basis, what's the prospect for moving ahead on this with the other 100 and whatever -- 200 countries in the UN?

BRENDE: I think you're touching a very central point when you're then going back to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. That was perceived as a big success but it was too much of an end of a process and not the start of the process. You ended the work when the summit was over but then the job should have started and that's what we did different in Johannesburg. We made the decision on time-borne targets but no -- for example the Commission on Sustainable Development that I am heading now has got a job to be a watchdog on the targets and in this commission say that some countries are on track on water but you're far off-track when it's up to sanitation. So this time we are doing assessments and reviews all the time but, of course, if with this time after the Monterrey meeting that was the follow-up on the development on the ODA's and overseas assistance we don't see a rise in the financial contributions to the developing nations, we're not going to meet the targets. I think it's essential that you have a combination of better governance in the developing nations, anti-corruption work has to be strengthened, but then you also have to go in and make contributions from the developed world. And if you are not doing this you're going to have in the future huge potential risks also connected to slums that are growing in an unparalleled way.

BRATHOLM: Do you see any connection between poverty, sustainable development, and terrorism and is that something you can use in promoting the targets of the commission?

BRENDE: Let me phrase it this way. I think in the future when you see that there is an extreme growth in the amount of kids that are born in these informal settlements -- they're today one billion...

BRATHOLM: Informal settlement? Is that a nice word for a slum?

BRENDE: Yes, slums. You know, when it's up to the slums it's almost one billion people living in slums today. Figures from the UN Habitat are showing that in a couple of decades there will be two billion of this. If this negative development is not stopped, if you don't come up with water, sanitation, schooling and a better life for these slum dwellers, I think there

will be conflicts in the future connected to this. Of course, people will not accept these huge kinds of differences. Too many are living on less than one dollar a day and that causes extreme poverty problems – drugs and other criminality – and we have to address this.

WILLIAMS: Next year for the first time ever I believe, more people will be living in urban areas than rural areas. As countries build up the infrastructure in urban areas to provide water and sanitation facilities and all the things that you're charged with overseeing, cities become more vulnerable to terrorism.

BRENDE: I would say generally that what has disappointed me most in this job is to see the total lack of willingness to bring the habitat and the slum dwellers issues high up on the agenda. And there is also a lack of planning for the urbanization that is going to take place. When people move into the cities they move often into the hardest areas when it's later you're going to connect them with water and sanitation. You have a total neglect of special planning. There is no willingness to give these people a secure tenure and without a secure tenure you're not willing to invest even in your small house or shelter. It's a vicious circle and it's much more expensive to connect these people with water and sanitation after they've moved into an area. Then, if you have been preparing for this in advance – and in this area also the South Africans have done a huge job. They have in one decade given 1.5 million families their own house. They're owning their own house, their ground, and these families send their kids to school. And this shows that it is possible and it is doable these targets -- also on helping 100 million slum dwellers to a better life – if there is a political will. And in the long-term it also will pay off because there is going to be less social problems that can result in drugs and other even worse results.

FREEMAN: You just mentioned what certainly is one of the key issues in all of this, which is political will versus political won't. If the governments don't want to do these things, don't want to contribute money to them or don't want to use the money for these purposes how do we, or how does the international community get them to do it?

BRENDE: First, I would just underline that the goals that are set out are doable. During the 80's, in the Water Decade, 300,000 people were connected to water every day for a decade. We have seen in cities that are dealing with slums in the right way that it is possible with secured tenure but it has to be a combination of then convincing donor nations to do their job but also the governments in the developing nation have to deliver. If you don't do special planning and know that two million people are going to move into your capital in the next decade, then you're really missing out on the possibilities. Because when people first live there to come up with the infrastructures and the pipes afterwards it's almost impossible. It's extremely expensive. So we have to reinforce the cooperation globally.

FREEMAN: How do you do that?

BRENDE: That's what we have tried now is to follow-up on the time-borne targets in another way than before. We are not satisfied with just a huge meeting with nice language but we're looking into the development. Is there anything positive happening? And then we have to be transparent about this and keep a debate.

WILLIAMS: This is **World Chronicle** and we're talking with Børge Brende, Norway's Minister for the Environment and the current chairman of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. Let's take a look at this report:

VIDEO ROLL-IN

NARRATOR: Water is essential to everyone on earth, but it can often bring problems in its wake – especially in the fast-growing cities of the developing world. Erratic supply and sometimes poor management, can cause serious difficulties.

Few cities are spreading as fast as Johannesburg, South Africa, where the metropolitan area has grown to embrace several overcrowded townships. Today, the city's population numbers over four million people – and all of them need fresh water. The city gets most of it from the nearby Vaal dam. With the goal of providing each Johannesburg household with an adequate water supply, it's a sophisticated system. But even here over half the water goes unaccounted for, much of it through leakage. A new utility has been created, combining water supply and sanitation – a linkage that is increasingly regarded as essential. One early improvement has been technical – pressure-reducing valves to limit water flow.

A newly-privatized city supplier, Rand Water, has retrofitted about 9,000 township homes, and 53 schools. Modern flushing mechanisms were fitted to toilets, and old leaking taps were repaired or replaced. But besides supply, work is needed on the removal of waste water, as here in Kliptown, south of the city. The project provides much needed local employment, especially in poor districts. And the drainage pipes being laid should greatly improve sanitation, says project engineer Donald Kgasi.

KGASI: “The project is solving what we call the silage water running down the street. As you can see for yourself the men are at work and they are putting in the pipes so that there is no more water in the streets.”

NARRATOR: Cities of the developing world have to recognize the need to tackle the water question in its totality – according to the Chairman of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, Sir Richard Jolly.

JOLLY: “There's a wonderful phrase in Africa: Water is life –sanitation is health. Perhaps that summarizes it. One of the troubles is that sanitation is seen as a dirty word. “

NARRATOR: The Brazilian slum or “favela” of Monte Azul in Sao Paulo. Water once had to be carried here – an arduous task on these slopes. Residents got the local authority to donate materials so they themselves were able to put in piped water. But a big problem remains – the open sewer running right through the community. Children playing are especially at risk, says local resident Graciela Ribero.

RIBERO: “There are dengue-carrying mosquitoes and rats here.”

NARRATOR: So the residents’ next plan is to cover up the sewer. In the meantime, the vital message of hygiene is spread – as here where a football that had fallen in the sewer is now carefully cleaned off. It’s all part of instructing the youngsters in how disease is spread.

VIDEO OUT

WILLIAMS: As you can see, the video demonstrates how critical sanitation is. Why is it so difficult to have governments understand that this is critical and ought to be a priority?

BRENDE: I think a lot of developing nations understand that but when 90% of the sewage is then not cleaned in any way and just going into the water you have a huge problem and a huge cost. So it needs a lot of investments in this field.

WILLIAMS: So it’s just a money issue?

BRENDE: It’s also a question of mindset when it’s up to sanitation because to introduce toilets and introduce washing hands and hygiene is a big issue. And there you have to empower people and it has to be a bottom-up approach. Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India, set up 900,000 toilets in India in the beginning of the ‘90s but they were not used because people hadn’t asked for them. Now, you see a different kind of attitude. You’re starting with what we also saw in this video, getting people more conscious of what their health risks are on not making sanitation a priority. And the South Africans, they have started a campaign. When they’re opening new toilets in the slums they paint them in the national colours and even play the national anthem when they have these new toilets. And people are proud of it and see the positive results.

BRATHOLM: Following up on the money question, you represented a conservative party in Norway and I would think with a special interest in private enterprise. Can you see any combination of public sector money and private enterprise in achieving the goals of the commission?

BRENDE: What came out of the Johannesburg Summit was that you also should give the private sector, through our partnerships, a role in this. But when it’s up to water and

sanitation I think this is a core business for the government, for regulation. And water, everyone needs.

BRATHOLM: So you see no role for the private sector?

BRENDE: I see a role for the private sector to come in and install the infrastructure but there should be no – you shouldn't create a situation where the governments abdicate from their responsibility on the regulatory side of water and sanitation.

FREEMAN: The video reminded us that in many poor places in the world water must be carried in and in most of those poor places that's women's work. At Rio, a big point was made that the way to improve sustainable development in these parts of the world was to empower women. Is that part of your agenda now?

BRENDE: It definitely is and you see especially young girls are the ones that really have the worst situation when you lack water and energy. For half of the day they're looking for water, the rest of the day they're going looking for wood so they can cook their food and there's no possibility for them to attend school. And without school – you want yourself out of this situation.

WILLIAMS: I want to refer back to Eva's question. In many of these situations there is some industry in the city, which is also adding to the pollution of the water. If it's difficult to get a public/private partnership clarified and operated what about the simple notion that the polluter pays?

BRENDE: The polluter pays principle is an extremely important one but this waste water is extremely complex. When 80-90 percent is sewage there's pollution coming from the industry and the industries that are settled in the developing nations, their governments are extremely cautious about this tax base they have got. And you also have the agricultural sector that is immensely important. But water, when it's up to water use, agriculture is consuming 80 percent of the water used in the developing nations.

WILLIAMS: And siphoning off fresh water in some cases?

BRENDE: Yes. And so when dealing with this issue it is essential what kind of crop you're growing also. We have seen that you start with cotton production in places where there is extreme scarcity of water and that's not a good thing. What I am saying is that you have to get more crops from each drip from the irrigation system and when 80 percent of the water goes to agriculture you have also to look at the structure of the agricultural sector when there's scarcity of water.

BRATHOLM: I want to know something about your role in the UN system. Do you feel a pressure to be kind of the poster boy of the UN? They definitely need some success stories. Do you feel that burden on you?

BRENDE: What I feel is an immense responsibility to be a watchdog on the targets on water and sanitation and slum dwellers. We're going to be totally honest in the commission about this because it's the next two years where it's decided if we're going to reach the target that we're going to halve the amount of people not having access to safe water, because if you're not starting the job now you're definitely not going to succeed. So it's a tough job but it's no poster job to put it that way. It's hard work.

FREEMAN: The CSD has been around for 12 years now, what would you say are its most significant achievements, looking back?

BRENDE: In Johannesburg we decided that the CSD was going to be reformed. Reformed in the way that it should do and be much more a sort of prototype of institution where ministers meet. And we're going to then also focus on the obstacles – are we on track – and keep up the political pressure and momentum on the targets. During the '90s the commission did a lot of important work but there was not enough focus and we were not reaching the targets set out in the Rio Earth Summit but we were even going in the wrong direction. There should be an outcry among a lot of actors and also from the commission. That, unfortunately, we didn't see. So I hope we're revitalizing the commission so it will function the way that Mrs. Brundtland really wanted it to function when she did "Our Common Future" in the late '80s.

WILLIAMS: Clearly you have a set of priorities. You will have an enormous meeting – the Commission on Sustainable Development will. Can any of these translate into concrete action?

BRENDE: It has to manifest itself into concrete action because that's what all this is about. When we are meeting in the commission we're looking at best practices, sharing of water. We know that 50 percent of the water that is consumed daily in the world is water that is shared by two or more countries so if we are not addressing these issues we are not going to succeed. And we're going issue by issue on the targets.

WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you very much for your time today, and thank you for joining us.

This has been **World Chronicle**. Our guest has been Børge Brende, Norway's Minister for the Environment and the Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

He was interviewed by Eva Bratholm of Norway's *Dagbladet*, and Jack Freeman of *The Earth Times*.

I'm Mary Alice Williams, thank you for being with us. We invite you to join us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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World Chronicle

United Nations, Room S-827

New York, N.Y., 10017.

Or by email at: besa@un.org

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