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I'm deeply honoured to be here in this grand palace and address this distinguished audience from across Belgium, all representing diverse interests in the development debate, but coming here as one in working towards a better world for our children and their children. I'm very proud to be invited and to present my views as an active member of the civil society movement from the developing world. I could consider myself as a child of the Brundtland report: I was in my last year at university when the report was published in 1987, and sustainable development first entered in the language of student activism. Environment became part of the political, social, and economical agenda. Albeit the difficulties in developing countries like the Philippines, economic growth is founded on natural resources. The developing debate has since then acquired a new dimension: that it has to meet the need of the present, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs.

I entered the NGO world at a time where world leaders were feverishly negotiating the Declaration and Agenda 21, and later on the Convention on Biodiversity, the Kyoto and the Montreal Protocol and other multilateral environmental conventions.

To say that sustainable development has influenced the thinking and acting of my generation of NGO development workers concerning development issues is a great understatement. We learned and lived the language of sustainable development, touching "Our Common Future" as our bible, like many other development activists in the South. The Brundtland Report opened the doors of civil society organizations at the local, national and global levels, bringing our vast collective experience in working with communities, and understand development issues as they unfold in our development work.

My country too is an early follower of the Brundtland Report. The Philippines is one of the first development countries in the world to have officially adopted the concept of sustainable development and put it into action. In 1992 fresh from Rio, government created the Philippines Council for Sustainable Development or PCSD, a multi stakeholder platform for policy formulation and review, based on the principles of sustainable development. It was the first of its kind in the developing world and remains to this day as a monument of the political influence of the Philippine civil society movement. It was an example of the Brundtland Report in action with the NGO's, trade unions, women, youth, individuals, government agencies and business working together in translating sustainable development into reality.

I will always be proud to have been part of those fruitful years of multi stakeholder engagement and collaboration in the Philippines, having co-chaired the subcommittee on biodiversity, the only remnant of the PCSD to remain in function to this day. The PCSD and its most productive multi stakeholder engagements in the Philippines unfortunately

lasted only until the next president was elected 6 years later. As political will in my country highly depends on personalities, like in many other countries and not just in the South, the commitment to sustainable development varies according to the appreciation of the concept by whoever is in power. Sustainable Development has since then been drowned by endless political squabbles and subjugated to the dominantly liberal economic push that has outrageously equated sustainable development to sustained economic growth. PCSD has since then been downgraded to a little talk shop that disperses purely environmental concerns. The national sustainable development strategy and the localization efforts that went with it, is now gathering dust in governmental archives. Very sad and unfortunate.

Civil society has lost faith in the mechanism as a result of subsequent frustrations on decision making processes and government decisions that were widely perceived to have compromised the environment for the sake of economic growth, such as in the case of the mining sector. As this case has clearly showed, leadership, vision and political will cannot only be an issue of the government only but also of the different stakeholders as well. This is a crucial long term challenge to sustainable development.

The ability to translate development and environment into one single issue, captured in coherent policies and to implement them with active participation of different stakeholders from the bottom up is the ultimate test of the commitment of government to sustainable development.

Political will also translates to the capacity of the different stakeholders to overcome their several interests on different issues and work together towards insuring that development will meet the needs of present and future generations. Openness to work together as partners and to learn from each other towards sustainable development as a common goal is the only way to overcome distrust between stakeholders and that does not happen overnight. Trust and respect have to be earned in the process of working together. That is the importance of concrete multi stakeholder mechanisms from the bottom up based on clear rules of engagement and a common vision. In the case of the Philippines, the mechanisms have been put in place but the lack of institutions and political will failed the process of trust building.

Twenty years after the publication of the Brundtland Report, the world environment and the state of development are no better than they were in 1987. If at all, our environment is in a far worse state, the economic gap between the rich and the poor among and within countries remain wide and the world has more people than ever. These sorry states cannot be separated from each other.

As the Brundtland Report stated, the many crises facing our planet are interlocking crises that are elements of a single crisis in a whole. Thus concerted global action is required. As the Rio Summit has affirmed, the rich and the poor countries have common but differentiated responsibilities. The continuously increasing interconnectedness that we experience today as a result of the flux of information and communication technologies and international trade stresses the importance of this principle even more. It is not just the business of developed countries to ensure that their environment is preserved and

labour laws are respected, to make sure that their companies and development agencies observe the same principles and actions when they operate in developing countries. The responsibility of conserving biodiversity in the forest, marine and coastal areas in developing countries is not just the responsibility of the governments and peoples in those countries but must equally be shared by the developed countries through a genuine and responsible development assistance and fair multilateral trade rules among others.

Among the many crises that we face today, climate change may be considered as both a great challenge and opportunity to sustainable development in the long term. Without any doubt, urgent and concerted action is needed from governments, civil society and other stakeholders. Without sustainable development as a paradigm, solutions to climate change may be narrowed down to the technological fixes such as gene engineering and carbon capture and storage, both high risk and untested solutions to climate change. Even the agro-fuels do not really address the energy problem. More and more studies show that the promotion of agro-fuels within the dominant neo liberal economic paradigm that rely on exploiting natural resources in the South and trade in raw materials, will nearly aggravate income disparity, threaten food security and worsen environmental degradation.

Reducing the climate crisis to an issue of greenhouse gas emission than can be addressed by market based instruments may further limit the development space available for developing countries to really address the roots of inequity and mal development. Global action in climate change requires concerted human, financial, economic and political investments on climate adaptation, mitigation and reconstruction responses. At the bottom line, the only way to go in reversing the crisis is to change the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production that most of the world population is living in or striving for.

Energy efficient issues, a sheer low carbon economy and renewable energy should go hand in hand with the efforts of civil society and governments in the South in providing clean energy sources for the poor in the South, with an emphasis on renewable energy technologies that can be managed and sustained by local communities themselves. NGO's have led the way in the South in this area and many have been working with governments in developing countries on this.

A change in the paradigm would also involve radically changing the top down government process to bottom up participatory governance that involve the very people who suffer the most from the impacts of climate change. A long term signal on climate change should challenge the social, economic and political structures, globally and nationally to address and bring forward equity, justice and fairness.

As a child of the Brundtland Report, I have witnessed the waves of optimism and pessimism in the sustainable debate during the last two decades. More than ever, the optimism that came with the Report when it was first published, is needed at this time when pessimism is abound on this planets' common future, especially in the face of the climate crisis. We cannot afford not to be optimistic with the future of our children at stake. At the same time, whatever development path that the world decides today, we

must not sacrifice the needs and the development space that our children and their children deserve. Their future is in our hands and we cannot afford to go on as usual. The time to act together is now. Thank you very much.