

## Gro Brundtland

First woman Prime Minister of Norway; a medical doctor who champions health as a human right; put sustainable development on the international agenda.

- Norway's first woman Prime Minister
- Director-General of the World Health Organisation 1998-2003
- UN Special Envoy on Climate Change

*"We are individuals who are speaking without any outside pressures. In that context we can create the potential for change."*

## Work with The Elders

Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland has been a member of The Elders its founding in 2007, bringing to the group her decades of experience as a global leader in public health and sustainable development.

Having been Norway's Prime Minister at the time of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, she joined The Elders' first delegation to Israel and the West Bank in August 2009 to support efforts to advance [Middle East peace](#) – paying particular attention to the impact of the conflict on ordinary Israelis and Palestinians.

In September 2009, Dr Brundtland travelled to Greece, Turkey and [Cyprus](#) to encourage support for the peace negotiations between leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. She returned to the island in February 2011 with Archbishop Tutu to launch The Elders' documentary about the search for missing persons in Cyprus.

Dr Brundtland also visited the [Korean Peninsula](#) and China in April 2011, where she urged North Korea to invest in sanitation and the provision of basic medicine, while echoing The Elders' call for the international community to increase food aid to the country.

In June 2011, she travelled to Ethiopia for the Elders-convened international meeting of experts and activists working to end [child marriage](#). During field visits Dr Brundtland met women who had been married as young as ten years old, and spoke passionately about the need to protect girls from the harmful effects of early marriage.

## **'Mother of the nation'**

Gro Brundtland was seven years old when she enrolled in the children's section of the Norwegian Labour Movement. She has been a member ever since, and has led the Labour Party to electoral victory three times.

After spending 10 years as a physician and scientist in the Norwegian public health system, Dr Brundtland was appointed Prime Minister for the first time 1981. Aged 41, she was both the youngest person and the first woman to hold the office in Norway.

She served for more than 10 years as Prime Minister over three terms until 1996, during which time women's representation in government significantly increased. A popular leader, Dr Brundtland is affectionately known by Norwegians as 'Landsmoderen' or 'mother of the nation.'

## **Public health and environmental champion**

Few people have had an impact on society as global as Dr Brundtland's. As Norway's Environment Minister from 1974 to 1979, she began to realise her vision of extending health beyond the confines of the medical world into environmental issues and human development. From 1983, as the Chair of the World Commission of Environment and Development (known as the Brundtland Commission) she put sustainable development on the international agenda with the Commission's landmark report [Our Common Future](#) in 1987.

A physician and Master of Public Health (Harvard) by training, Dr Brundtland served as Director-General of the [World Health Organisation](#) from 1998 to 2003, gaining recognition for successfully negotiating an agreement on tobacco control, increasing access to life-saving drugs, working towards polio eradication and promoting awareness of the links between poverty and disease.

Dr Brundtland is a member of the United Nations Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability, and serves on the Board of the United Nations Foundation. She was:

- Member of the Palme Commission on Security and Disarmament, 1980s
- Member of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, 2008-2010
- Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Climate Change, 2007-2010