

Speech by HRH The Crown Prince

Your Majesties
Your Royal Highnesses
Prime Minister
Ladies and gentlemen

I felt a little sceptical as I walked up the stairs at Akershus Castle this evening.

One usually spends the day before one's wedding with close friends, and in such company one must be prepared for anything. After attending meetings of the Council of State at the Palace, I know that the tone around the table is not only solemn. Although I am not exactly expecting a bachelor party, there is no knowing what surprises the Government has in store for us tonight.

I am fully aware that the government ministers and other politically committed people have other things to think about at the moment, things that have nothing to do with weddings. I would therefore like to thank you for taking the time in the midst of a hectic election campaign to celebrate this occasion together with us. Thank you for arranging this splendid dinner here at Akershus Castle. Thank you for your generous gift to the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess's Humanitarian Fund. And thank you for all the support you have given Mette-Marit and me, and the whole Royal Family. I know that a great many people have put a considerable amount of time and effort into the preparations for the wedding. My grateful thanks for all those who have contributed.

Being young means making choices. This is not always easy. As our great poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson once said, "Some moments are moments of choice that decide your whole life." Although my own future seems predetermined, I can assure you that I have done a lot of thinking about it over the years. The same can also be said of other choices I have made. None of this has been a matter of course. And that includes Mette-Marit's entry into my life. But as we got to know each other better, it became clearer and clearer what we wanted to do: to spend our lives together.

I know that our choice has not been equally easy for everyone. And I respect this. But I want to assure you that we will both do our best to carry out our duties for the good of our country and the Norwegian people.

Mette-Marit and I want to build our lives and service to the country on a combination of tradition and progress. We want to be the bearers of tradition, preserving the best that previous generations have given us, but adapted to our own time and situation. We are all adventurers in our own lives, and each new generation has to experience things for itself.

Being my parents has not always been easy. Today I would like to thank you, Mother and Father, for giving me the time and the space I needed to find a standpoint for myself. Thank you for giving me freedom with responsibility. Thank you for always taking me seriously and for not talking down to me. Thank you for the love and care with which you have always surrounded me, and for letting me feel that not everything had been decided beforehand,

for letting me make my own choices. And, not least, thank you for welcoming Mette-Marit and Marius, for being there and for giving us support and encouragement.

There are a number of important milestones in every life. The present occasion is a significant milestone in Mette-Marit's and mine. We have already learned a number of things, and will learn a lot more. For me the best way of learning is from individuals, and I am very much looking forward to our tour of Norway and to meeting the people and getting to know local communities. We are also looking forward to serving Norway at the international level. My year in the Foreign Ministry, and the time we both have spent abroad, have hopefully given us a sound basis for such a task.

It is with deep humility and gratitude that we take up our mission. I feel that I am a stronger person now that I have Mette-Marit by my side.

We are looking forward to embarking on our new tasks.

We are looking forward to tomorrow.