

## Introductory Speech – Marianne Andresen's House

2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the opening of UWC Red Cross Nordic and provides us with the opportunity to celebrate the history of the College and its commitment to peace and a sustainable future. We have held two Jubilee events so far this year: a reception in June at the Norwegian Ambassador's Residence in London; and a two day programme on campus in September focused on our 20th anniversary and the 150th anniversary of the Norwegian Red Cross.

We, at UWC Red Cross Nordic, are hugely fortunate to receive royal patronage - Her Majesty Queen Sonja has served as our patron since the founding of the College twenty years ago and attended our Jubilee event on campus on UWC Day on 21st September. Her Majesty Queen Sonja has remained committed to and an advocate of our UWC mission and values – and a champion of education in a changing landscape in Norway - and we remain deeply appreciative of Her Majesty's work as our patron: raising public awareness of Red Cross Nordic and for the supportive engagement, warmth and generosity of spirit that Her Majesty continues to bring into our world.

This evening's drinks reception here in Bygdøy is our third and final Jubilee Event – and provides us with the opportunity to connect with our Oslo-based supporters.

There are many threads connecting the peninsula of Bygdøy with RCN as I discovered on a beautiful autumnal walk yesterday – from the museums of culture and exploration (which our students visit each December) to Thor Heyerdahl's role as International Patron of UWC, from the Royal Summer Residence to the kind and generous welcome here at Smedbraaten offered to Rektor and students alike.

Two or three times a year, Marianne (our host this evening) invites me here and I so enjoy our stimulating, refreshing and productive conversations in the library next door. Marianne also usually conjures some time for me with only the winter fox above the inside of the library door as company – I have discovered it is one of those rare rooms where, for me, time stands still.

Marianne has been one of the College's staunchest supporters since the beginning and this evening's Jubilee event was her idea. Generation after generation of RCN students have benefited from her thoughtful contributions and gentle suggestions to the development of the College. Marianne, you are a wonderful supporter of our Mission to 'make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future' and, at the same time, you understand the complexity involved in bringing 200 students of 95 nationalities together to study alongside each other and in providing a challenging education for a deliberately diverse community - expressed in terms of geopolitical, cultural, gender and socio-economic diversity.

In tandem with the Norwegian Red Cross and as part of an educational cooperation between all Nordic countries and governments, from westerly Greenland to easterly Finland, our College has produced just under 2000 graduates in twenty years – forged in the Nordic region and heading out from the fjords as ambassadors for the United World College movement, for Nordic values, and for the Red Cross.

We are proud of our short history and this evening gives us the opportunity to reconnect with supporters of our College and UWC as a whole and to introduce new friends to our work - and to celebrate twenty exciting years of our College, our partnership with the Rehabilitation Centre (with which we share a campus) and Nordic cooperation and, we hope, many more to come.

Many of our guests in this room have contributed in their own way to the success of this College – individual and unique thumb prints in the creation and development of UWC Red Cross Nordic and we thank you for your many meaningful contributions to our past.

Our hosting team of students, staff and Board members are so looking forward to meeting you all this evening – from committed supporters to Oslo-based ambassadors, from representatives of the Storting to fellow educators, from members of UWC Norge and the wider UWC community to our partners in the Norwegian Red Cross.

The Red Cross definitely remains an important part of our identity – with shared values and philosophy at the heart of our work – and it is, I believe, an essential part of what makes us distinct from other United World Colleges. Tomorrow is the official day set aside in Norway for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Norwegian Red Cross – students on campus have designed a special programme as part of our College's contribution to the nationwide activities.

It is with great pride that our students and staff have observed the Norwegian Red Cross taking a leading role in supporting those refugees arriving here in Norway. The desperate and haunting images of the migrant and refugee crisis in Europe remind us on a daily basis of the need for international and intercultural understanding and education for peace – and I would like to remind everyone gathered here this evening that our College has the ability and experience to serve and support those in need.

Tomorrow, some of us - as part of an RCN delegation - will fly to Shanghai to be present at the opening of UWC Changshu China – our sister College and the 15<sup>th</sup> United World College - on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November. This represents an exciting development and opportunity in terms of a Sino-Norwegian educational partnership.

We are pleased to report that our College is in good heart at the moment – and, thank you, Marianne, for hosting a reception here at your home this evening for UWC Red Cross Nordic and to your team for kindly coordinating the logistics behind the event. It is a privilege to be here.

We sincerely hope that, for the years to come, you will all continue to contribute to the architecture and future of RCN.

Richard D A Lamont

Rektor  
UWC Red Cross Nordic

