

**Opening Address by H.E. Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Prime Minister of
Denmark, at United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen
December 7, 2009**

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Ladies and gentlemen, excellences, engaged people of the world.

Welcome to Denmark.

Welcome to Copenhagen.

Welcome to two weeks where we are to perform, what is most difficult in politics:

To make difficult – but necessary - decisions now, in order to address mounting problems of the future.

Global Warming knows no border. It does not discriminate. It affects us all. And we are here today, because we are all committed to take action.

That is our common point of departure. The magnitude of challenge before us is to translate this political will into a strong common approach: To forge an agreement that will provide for effective global solutions.

Climate change is higher on the agenda than ever. And so it should be: The grim projections from science grow more alarming each day. And already many face the dire consequences of global warming.

It is our mission to come to the aid of those, who already suffer and to deliver a long term solution to the mounting problem of global warming. This is our task. This is why we need a strong and ambitious climate change agreement here in Copenhagen.

The sheer magnitude of our task is matched only by our determination.

For more than a year, we have been conducting intensive consultations in preparation for this conference. In that context I have had the pleasure of engaging with leaders from around the world. Your leaders.

Without exception, they have been supporting an ambitious agreement to halt global warming. I am painfully aware, that you have different perspectives on the framing and precise content of such an agreement. And I am sure that no one in this hall underestimates the difficulty we are facing in finding a common approach in the coming two weeks.

But the political resolve to forge a global agreement is manifest. And differences can be overcome, if the political will is present. I believe it is.

As we move ahead over the next days, we will rely critically on you to help to develop an agreement that is both acceptable to all parties and at the same time strong and ambitious. An agreement that is just and equitable. An agreement that is effective and operational.

To achieve that, we shall need all the technical skills and diplomatic entrepreneurship you command. The world relies on you to successfully conclude the country-driven process that you launched in Bali. It relies on us to support you in achieving that success in an inclusive and transparent manner.

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As I speak to you this morning, 110 heads of state and government have announced that they will be coming to Copenhagen next week to participate in the concluding days of this Conference.

Their presence reflects an unprecedented mobilization of political determination to combat climate change. It represents a huge opportunity. An opportunity the world cannot afford to miss.

Your leaders do not come just to talk. They come to act. And they come - not to agree to just anything - but to agree to an effective deal based on our fundamental principles, on our common resolve and on the political, social and economic reality in our countries throughout the world.

The agreement, world leaders should adopt next Friday must be founded on the legal principles inscribed in the Framework Convention and it must respond to all aspects of the mandates agreed upon in Bali two years ago. It must seek to capture progress achieved within the negotiations, both under the

Convention and under the Kyoto Protocol, providing a powerful response. Importantly, it must launch immediate action.

The deal, that we invite leaders to sign up on, will be one that affects all aspects of society – just as the changing climate does.

Therefore, the involvement of civil society is of paramount importance. Just like negotiators cannot do this alone, nor can politicians. The ultimate responsibility rests with the citizens of the world, who will ultimately bear the fatal consequences, if we fail to act.

As decision makers, it is our obligation to provide the framework for change. And we must unlock the potential for low carbon prosperity. But in order to realize the full potential, our citizens must eventually make it happen.

Throughout 2009, some of the most important civil society stakeholders have gathered here in Copenhagen. At conferences, symposia, roundtables and manifestations most different branches of civil society have voiced their concern and made their recommendations.

Scientists have assessed the latest facts; business leaders the opportunities; NGO's, parliamentarians, local politicians, youths and many others the political aspects. We owe them our gratitude for their help in preparing the ground work for our effort and for having contributed to our negotiations.

We need to listen to their advice. We are their representatives.

The climate agenda has created global communities across all barriers. We need this global momentum. And we need to build on it. Let us not focus on what divides us, but let us keep focused on what brings us together.

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While you are here in Copenhagen in search of new ways to handle climate change, I hope you will also find inspiration around you.

We can change, and we have to change. Therefore, we have tried to make a new and different conference in Copenhagen. We have no bottled water, only pure, clean drinking water from the tap. Two thirds of all food here at the conference is organic. We have tried as hard as possible to limit the carbon footprint of the conference.

If you have time, please attain some inspiration outside the conference centre. In Copenhagen you will find a large variety of cultural and green tech events.

Looking in your conference kit, you were perhaps disappointed – or perhaps relieved – not to find a figurine of the little mermaid or other conference souvenirs. We have chosen to cut back on gifts and instead invest in eleven scholarships for students from around the world who are attending a fully financed two year MA programme in Denmark.

The eleven climate scholars will return to their home countries with knowledge and results that can provide a better future. So should we.

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Leaders, grass roots and citizens all over the world have sent a strong message of hope for our planet. 4 million people have spoken their mind on the YouTube COP15 channel. And without hope for a better world there is no basis for a sustainable agreement in Copenhagen. Hope is the starting point of all major efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world is depositing hope with you for a short while in the history of mankind. For the next two weeks Copenhagen will be Hopenhagen. By the end, we must be able to deliver back to the world, what was granted us here today: hope for a better future.

I call on all of you to make your contribution. To be constructive, flexible and realistic. To be vigilant in your efforts to reach agreement and to show regard to the constraints of other negotiating partners.

You must do all this and still be ambitious, courageous and visionary.

A deal is within our reach. Together we can accomplish what must be accomplished.

Thank you very much.