

**Address by H.E. Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Prime Minister of Denmark,
at the Opening Ceremony for The High Level Segment
at COP15 in Copenhagen,
December 15, 2009**

Check against delivery

Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,
First of all welcome to Copenhagen.

I am thrilled to welcome so many distinguished guests here today. Your presence reflects an unprecedented political determination to combat climate change. It shows great promise for the possibility of reaching an ambitious, fair and effective climate deal. And it represents a huge opportunity. An opportunity we must seize. An opportunity the world cannot afford for us to miss.

I realize that as the host, I ought not to rush things, but rather encourage you all to get comfortable, before we embark on the daunting task before us. Unfortunately, we do not have the time for such courtesy and protocol. The world is watching - literally holding its breath. We have until the end of this week.

It is not often we as leaders get a chance to chart out a new course for our planet. One of these rare moments is right here and right now. Whatever choices we make – whatever the outcome. Rest assured that future generations

will judge us on our ability to translate the current political momentum and commitment and make this conference a decisive moment of change. Not a stepping stone, but a real turning point.

There is perhaps a tendency for political leaders to embrace change that comes in installments. Change that is safe. Change that no-one questions and everyone agrees on. That will not suffice here. And it does not characterize the leaders who come to Copenhagen. They come prepared. Many have already put forth or passed legislation that is a testament to their commitment.

Climate change is higher on the agenda than ever before. 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. Global Warming knows no border. It does not discriminate. It affects us all. No-one in the world can duck and cover.

You all know, that we will ask the extraordinary of you. We ask that you lead your nations into territory that may seem overwhelming, but is actually the only way out.

The coming days will offer ample risks of being blind sighted by animosity, difficulty, complexity or downright fear. Please bear that in mind. Please dig deep in yourselves and find the power to reconcile, overcome, understand and dare.

Intensive and honest dialogue is required. Or, as Winston Churchill once said: “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”. We must do both this week.

We must do better and be better than ever before. I ask that you collect all your patience, find all of your compassion, remember all the happy compromises of your lives and muster all your courage and determination.

We invite all leaders of the world to adopt a deal that will affect all aspects of society – just as the changing climate does. A deal that includes decisions in both negotiation tracks. A deal that matters. A deal that changes the future and creates a better one. Generations to come are depending on us.

Please remember, that we have faced global threats and challenges before. We have dealt with them. We have overcome them.

The good news is: We know what the problem is and what to do about it.

We have to change – that is the clear message from science.

We can change – that is the clear message from technology.

We want to change – that is the clear message from the people on the streets outside.

I sincerely hope that you have come here with the clear message that we will change!

In the words of the African American writer Maya Angelou: “Nothing will work unless you do”. Excellencies, delegates, ladies and gentlemen: A warm and heartfelt welcome to Copenhagen – we are thrilled to have you here. Copenhagen is the place to be – and Copenhagen is the place to act.

Now let us roll up our sleeves and get to work on making the future bright and green!