

Copenhagen Anniversary Conference, 10 – 11 June 2010
Opening Statement by H.E. Lene Espersen
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to Copenhagen for the Conference celebrating the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Copenhagen Document and to discuss the future development of the OSCE's human dimension.

I would like to thank the Kazakh Chairmanship for proposing to jointly organise this conference in Copenhagen and thank the ODIHR for their valuable assistance in organizing the conference.

Copenhagen was the birthplace of this core OSCE document and the conference will allow us to revisit history on the very same spot where the participating States met in June 1990 and agreed upon the Copenhagen commitments.

Much has changed since that time. 20 years ago, Kazakhstan did not take part in the CSCE process as an independent state. Today, Kazakhstan is chairing the

OSCE. This provides us with an excellent illustration of how far we have come. In part, I believe, it is thanks to the commitments agreed upon in Copenhagen that we have managed to come this far and have made this incredible journey over a 20-year period.

The summer of 1990 was in many ways a unique moment in history. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, democracy was at that time spreading to the majority of countries in the East. We had yet to see Iraq invade Kuwait or the tragic turmoil of Yugoslavia's disintegration. There was a special atmosphere of hope and purpose in a new Europe that was about to transcend the old divisions of Cold War Europe, which had kept millions of Europeans in a political, economic and cultural straitjacket for far too long. This new dawn in Europe 20 years ago paved the way for the *historic milestone* that the OSCE Copenhagen Document truly was.

The participating States - at that time 35 countries - adopted an instrument, which still remains at the centre of the OSCE's commitments in the human dimension. It confirmed that human rights constitute the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. Important principles on the rule of law and the right to

peaceful assembly were codified for the first time in a CSCE context. And commitments, procedures and practices were agreed upon to ensure free and fair elections throughout the OSCE area in order to help sound democratic processes take root in all of Europe. The Copenhagen Document also introduced far-reaching provisions regarding national minorities and reaffirmed the right of everyone to leave and return to one's home country. And as you can see from our agenda, these issues will also be discussed here during this Anniversary Conference.

Back then, however, agreement on such far-reaching commitments was only possible because of a strong political will among the participating States. It took four weeks of hard work including long night sessions to prepare the document. Don't worry – we will only keep you here for two days this time! In the end, consensus was reached even ahead of schedule, which seems like an historic event in itself within the CSCE framework. The efficiency was a clear testament to the positive spirit that characterized the negotiations that led to the agreement at the Copenhagen Conference 20 years ago.

But the Copenhagen Document in itself has a particular spirit. A spirit of putting the rights and opportunities of the individual at the centre of attention. In the document, participating States commit themselves to protect the rights of the individual through democratic institutions, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The document defines standards for building well-functioning, accountable, open and stable democratic systems. Standards that governments all over Europe must adhere to and more importantly implement on the ground, if they are to be considered a full-fledged member of the European family of nations. The beauty of these standards is that they allow for stable, but still vibrant European societies, where free and fair elections and a change of government do not pose a threat to society or to the individual, but where such events are a natural part of politics.

Respect and promotion of human rights is a basic purpose of government. In fact, protecting basic human dignity and enabling the individual to flourish and pursue his or her very own concept of a meaningful life within the confines that allow others to do the same, is the most important aim for any government regardless of the national context. With the adoption of the Copenhagen Document, participating States at the same time acknowledged the link between

soft and hard security. True security entails not only peaceful relations between states but opportunities and rights for individuals who inhabit the states. A secure nation defends human rights and allows its citizens to select their leaders. It allows citizens to express their views freely and participate fully in public debates.

This comprehensive concept of security remains more valid than ever. New threats such as terrorism, climate change or trafficking in human beings and drugs have forced their way to our daily lives. This further proves the need for an integrated approach to security, which takes account of both civilian and military aspects. This is also increasingly recognized by international actors. Defense, development, democracy and human rights must go hand in hand in our work for a safer and more prosperous world. Our intellect has a natural inclination of trying to compartmentalize everything and place everything in neat, little categories, because it helps us understand our situation and navigate in a complicated world. But this is usually a mistake, and it is certainly a mistake with regard to soft and hard security. They go together, and the Danish Government has tried to reflect that fact in a new and comprehensive approach to security, which was recently presented to the Danish Parliament.

In addition, it is important that we continue to strengthen the ability of the OSCE to defend and promote human security in the world. The commitments to human rights enshrined in the Copenhagen Document are among the major achievements that have been accomplished by the OSCE participating States. It is of outmost importance that we work to further strengthen these commitments and empower the OSCE to enhance its role in the world.

Much was achieved during and after the Copenhagen Conference in 1990, but this Anniversary Conference is no time for complacency. It is the world's richest man, Bill Gates, who once said that "Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose." He has a point. The lesson from our success in the past 20 years should not seduce us into believing that progress will continue automatically and that Europe will remain peaceful and prosperous without attentive care from our side. We still have a lot of work to do throughout the OSCE-region in strengthening the implementation of commitments reached 20 years ago. This is our common responsibility. We should take a hard look at our cooperation with the independent international human rights monitors from OSCE and other institutions.

Therefore, this Anniversary Conference should not be merely a commemoration ceremony of what happened 20 years ago, devoid of substance or perspective for the future. Implementation of the human dimension commitments is our common goal and interest and not exclusively an internal affair in each participating State. We need to take stock of compliance, define remaining challenges and take the measures needed to improve implementation. This is really crucial – implementation! Implementation is key, and I am extremely pleased to note that we have devoted an entire session to this particular issue. It is our hope that recommendations evolving from our discussions in this as from other sessions could feed constructively into the Corfu-process on strengthening the comprehensive security within the OSCE-region.

Finally, I am very pleased to note the participation of so many representatives of civil society. The comprehensive and active participation of civil society is a hallmark of the OSCE and particularly so in the human dimension. Civil society made valuable contributions to the Copenhagen Document and they are playing a very important and constructive role in supporting the implementation of the

commitments. I trust that the many participants at this conference will make similar efforts to contribute constructively to our discussions.

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere hope that we shall be able to revive the spirit which was present here in Copenhagen 20 years ago. The principles agreed then remain true, and – Ladies and Gentlemen - we must remain true to the principles.

I wish you a successful conference.