

IENE-conference in Thessaloniki 21-22 May 2008

“2nd South East Europe Energy Dialogue”

Speech by the Ambassador of Denmark Tom Norring

“The road to the UN climate conference (COP15) in 2009 in Copenhagen”

Thank you very much. It is an honour and pleasure for me, the Danish Ambassador to Greece, to speak at this very important event here in Thessaloniki – and to meet some of the key persons within the area of energy.

Some of you may ask why the Danish ambassador is signed up as a speaker here. Basically, there is one single reason – and that is that in December 2009 Denmark is going to host the 15th UN Climate Summit, the so-called COP15. At this summit we are going to reach a global agreement to follow the Kyoto Protocol – as mentioned yesterday by the Secretary General of the World Energy Council, Mr. Doucet. As we all know, if the world is to deliver a serious response to the consequences of climate change, it will require change in our energy policies and in our choice of energy sources.

As we have heard a number of times during this conference, increasing energy security and tackling climate change are two of the world’s major concerns and challenges. Both are intrinsically linked to the way we produce and consume energy.

Stable and affordable energy supplies are a precondition for further economic growth and development. Yet, the growing energy consumption and the continued burning of fossil fuels is also a long-term threat to our prosperity and well being through their contribution to climate change and associated phenomena such as drought, flooding and ocean acidification.

The consequences of climate change are already visible. This was unfortunately all too visible here in Greece last summer with the disastrous forest fires. – And the future looks even more gloomy for our planet.

The task ahead of us in tackling climate change and energy security is all the more urgent as there is a rapidly increasing demand for energy around the globe, especially from China, India, and the developing countries. Understandably, they need the energy to allow their economies to grow.

Tough choices must be made in order to both ensure reliable, inexpensive energy and to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Both individuals and governments need to rethink what we are doing to our planet.

This is certainly what we have done in my country – Denmark – where the issue of environmental protection and use of cleaner energy is one – if not the – top issue. And has been for a number of years. In Denmark we have already taken serious steps to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses – through a wide use of renewable energy sources and through cleaner technologies.

But the efforts of one – or a few – countries are not enough. What we are facing with the climate changes demands a global response. But is a global response possible, is the question often asked. Wrong question! The real question should be: Is a truly global response necessary? And to that the answer is a very clear – Yes!

Some fear – and this has also been mentioned by many at this conference - that climate friendly policies will impact negatively on national industrial competitiveness and hamper economic growth. I often hear this concern voiced also here in Greece. And it is, indeed, a legitimate concern. I will, however, argue that there does not have to be a contradiction between climate friendly policies on the one side and competitiveness and the possibility for economic growth on the other. In fact we have a different experience in my country. Denmark has over the past years experienced sustained economic growth without increased energy consumption. Actually, we have managed to secure an economic growth of no less than 70 % over 30 years with a zero-growth in my country's energy consumption.

For sure a global response needs to focus on cost-effective solutions and instruments that make the achievement of national development goals and economic growth compatible with CO2 reductions. We will need to focus on development of eco-friendly technologies, renewable energy and energy efficient technology and to make sure that it can go hand in hand with increasing industrial competitiveness and economic growth. As I said before, in Denmark we have proven that this is indeed possible.

While necessary, reaching a global agreement will not be a simple task. This was all too evident at the UN Climate conference in December last year in Bali.

But let me start with the good news from Bali – and that is, that the international community did agree on a road map for the process towards a global agreement to be reached at the UN Climate conference that Denmark is proud to host in Copenhagen in December 2009. The roadmap has unanimous support, including the EU, USA, India,

China, and the developing countries. It clearly defines the building blocks and the framework for the creation of a future global agreement, and it avoids any premature closing of doors.

There is therefore every reason to be satisfied with the outcome of the conference in Indonesia.

But at the same time we should not over-interpret the results of the Bali meeting. Anyone who followed the negotiations will know that right until the last moment, it was by no means certain that a unified decision would result from the meeting. It took two and a half days of virtually non-stop negotiations, before the text was finalised.

So it is obvious that the road to Copenhagen is no freeway. It is a winding path strewn with stones, some of them very big. Bali showed that we have a tough political game ahead of us in the coming one and a half years.

But Bali also showed that results can be achieved if enough concerted political pressure is put on the foot-dragging countries. And much of the momentum and drive will have to come from the EU.

The EU countries can be proud of the efforts made during the Bali conference. They consistently maintained the pressure and took the lead in achieving as ambitious a text as possible out of the meeting.

If EU is to be the driving force in the process leading up to the Copenhagen summit – and we have to be – the EU has to agree internally. We will not have the necessary credibility in our arguments and in our pressure on countries like the US, Russia, China, India etc. if we can't show internal agreement.

And it will require hard and joint efforts to reach the ambitious goals in the EU package, as many European countries – including Greece and most other South East European countries – continue to be dependent on coal, oil or other fossil fuels as a primary energy source. No doubt the EU climate and energy package puts heavy burdens on all the EU member states to increase their use of renewable energy sources and reduce CO2 emissions. It is imperative that all EU member states accept their individual targets – even if they are extremely demanding.

It has been clear from the start that Denmark has taken on a major task in hosting the climate conference in 2009. But after the Bali conference the message is clear: we must prepare ourselves for a task that could be even greater than we expected. There is no guarantee of success. I can already predict that it will be a political thriller on an international scale, and that right until the very end it will not be known whether a future agreement can be reached. Perhaps the very last minutes will decide whether the world joins in a shared agreement or not.

So to sum up:

- Action to deal with the consequences of climate change is urgent and indispensable.
- A global agreement must be reached to replace Kyoto.
- Copenhagen – at the COP15 – is the place to reach this agreement.

- Furthermore, an important message that I would like to get across today, is that serious energy savings can go hand in hand with economic growth. As shown by Denmark this is not necessarily a contradiction.

Thank you for your attention.