



Ulla Tørnæs' tale ved Copenhagen NGO Conference

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København

Dear friends and participants, Welcome to Copenhagen and thanks for the invitation to speak at this conference on the topic of the Millennium +5 Summit in New York in September.

This is my first chance to meet a broad range of international NGOs in my capacity of Danish Minister for Development Cooperation. I am thrilled to see this gathering of committed persons from all over the world. I would like to take this occasion to thank the Danish UN Association for organising this conference. My intervention will focus on two main themes:

- A short overview of the 2005 Summit and its main issues, as seen by the Danish government;

- The role of the NGO community in enhancing peace, human rights and prosperity – not least in relation to the 2005 Summit.

The upcoming UN summit in New York this September on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration will be a decisive moment.

To be blunt: We fully appreciate that the 2005 Summit will be a “make or break” event.

It will provide us with an opportunity to strengthen the United Nations and improve our collective response to the great challenges that lie ahead.

We need to achieve concrete and tangible results – results that can be measured and will be felt globally - on development, peace and security, human rights, and on UN reform.

Denmark fully agrees with the Secretary-General: there can be no development without security, and there can be no security without development – and human rights are necessary to ensure both. The nexus between security and development is a cornerstone in Danish development assistance. We fully recognise that poverty and denial of human rights greatly increase the risk of instability and violence.

Likewise, war and atrocities are far from the only reasons that countries are trapped in poverty.

But undoubtedly, they do set back economic and social development.

Therefore, we need a multi-faceted approach.

As a staunch supporter of multilateralism and a founding member of the UN, we are eager to ensure an efficient United Nations embracing the entire agenda.

From classical development aid through the various development programs, over defending human rights to hard security issues resolved in the Security Council.

The current Danish membership of the Security Council serves to underline this point. The first challenge in building a more secure world is to ensure adequate and predictable development finance for the poorest countries.

It is important to build a momentum towards the 2005 Summit and mobilise broad support for the Secretary-General's call for substantial increases in Official Development Assistance (ODA), not least through firm commitments from all countries to finally reach the 0.7 %-target by 2015.

The Danish government is committed to maintaining our ODA-level at - at least - 0.8 % in the years to come. Thereby, Denmark is a member of the very exclusive 0.7% club. Only five countries in the world are currently in that club.

But I would be delighted to see a rapid expansion of the membership circle.

Therefore, I have taken an active interest in pushing the European Union towards new accomplishments in the development area. And I am happy to report that in Brussels last week, we managed to reach agreement on a new and ambitious ODA-target for the European Union of 0.56% in 2010 as a step towards meeting the 0,7 target by 2015.

The EU certainly has set the scene for countries in other regions to follow suit. Now it is my hope that the Monterrey High-level Dialogue meeting in New

York later this month – and the G8 meeting in Gleneagles in July - will prepare the ground for new decisions on more ODA. But increased ODA will not suffice.

Economic growth generated by the private sector and powered by international trade is a precondition for sustainable economic and social development.

It is crucial for peace, prosperity and freedom. The challenge is, therefore, to empower the poorest countries in the world to take advantage of the trade liberalisations that have taken place since the end of World War II.

Therefore we support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Doha Round should be completed no later than 2006.

Sustainable, economic growth requires time and cohesive policies at local, regional and international levels. The business environment must be improved in order to create incentives for entrepreneurship in Africa – not least for small and medium sized companies.

Policy coherence will be key. We need to be consistent and ensure coherence between for example our agriculture, development and trade policies.

In connection with the Financing for Development meeting in New York later this month, I will launch a new Danish strategy for trade and development.

Development aid, trade related technical assistance, and market access must work together closely. The goal is to ensure that the poor countries stand to gain from free trade.

Development should be sustainable. Environmental degradation often hits the poorest hardest, as this group is to a large extent directly dependent on what Nature can provide. Protecting the environment and mitigating climate change are among the Danish priority issues at the 2005 Summit.

It is therefore with great satisfaction, that I note that the UN Secretary-General in his report advocates for ensuring concerted global action to mitigate climate change.

If we are to reach the MDGs, it is essential that we achieve massive progress for women's rights in general, and sexual and reproductive health and rights in particular.

The Cairo agenda should be implemented, and Denmark will actively work to reflect this in the declaration at the Summit. The EU has made a strong stand in this regard, but we foresee difficult negotiations at the Summit on this very issue.

We see a rather peculiar alliance between some conservative forces in the US, a group of Muslim countries and the Vatican, trying to stop progress in this important field.

This means that we have to gather all forces to reach results. Therefore, I appeal to you today: Keep up the pressure to make progress!

Also, we need to look at the debt burden of the poorest countries.

The Danish government is pleased to see that the Secretary-General's report devotes good attention to this issue. It is our belief that this burden should be brought to a sustainable level.

Debt relief should be up to 100%, for the poorest countries, on a case-by-case basis.

At the same time, we need to ensure that this instrument is used in an equilibrated way, allocating the scarce resources in the most effective and just way between countries.

Reaching the MDGs takes resources. Increased development aid, trade initiatives and debt relief are key in this regard. Also, we welcome the probing into the creation of innovative sources of finance.

A rather long list of ideas has been tabled: Tax on air travel and fuel, selling out of or reevaluating IMF's gold stock, an international financing facility, a global lottery, better use of remittances, just to name a few. Many of these suggestions have some merit.

But it leads me to repeat that there is no easy fix to reach the MDGs. It takes hard work, and it takes increased ODA.

Alternative sources of financing could at best be additional to, not a substitute, for ODA.

Overall, the Danish position is clear. We need to engage the international community in a strengthened partnership in order to meet the broad range of challenges, not least in Africa.

It will be crucial to reach concrete results at the 2005 Summit in order to pave the way for such a strengthened partnership – a partnership characterised by a comprehensive strategy encompassing development, security and human rights issues alike.

You can rest assured that Denmark stands ready to shoulder its part of the deal.

_Let me now turn to the NGOs and their role – your role – in furthering peace, security, development and human rights in the world today. One thing is clear: Reaching the MDGs, providing peace and security for all and spreading human

rights to all parts of the world is a task that no group of governments, however powerful, can lift on their own.

It takes the participation of all parts of society. In a world where internal conflict and xenophobia still play a grim role, civil society is necessary to foster mutual trust, friendship and development. A strong, independent NGO community is in the interest of all parties.

This is exactly what the Cardoso report underlines again and again. The United Nations system and the civil society should reinvent their ways to interact in order to introduce a new form of strengthened multilateralism.

As for the NGO involvement in the 2005 Summit itself, let me be clear on one thing: I would have liked to see stronger, direct involvement of NGOs in the Summit.

It is vital, that the civil society and private sector are “in the loop” when important decisions are made. Civil society and the private sector are both essential for reaching the MDGs.

Even though the NGOs will only in a very limited way be represented at the 2005 Summit itself, you have both the power and the capability to make yourselves heard in the long process leading up to the Summit. A voice that is necessary in order to reach the best possible result at the Summit.

Therefore, my message to you today is: Speak up!

It is in the interest of all of us that you make your viewpoints known to world leaders.

In my view, an active and critical civil society is a positive force in society. This is exactly why the Danish government has chosen to sponsor this important conference we are attending today. I am pleased that such a diverse group has gathered here in Copenhagen, comprising NGOs from all continents.

Your diverseness makes the message you send from this conference all the stronger, as it reflects a balanced approach endorsed by NGOs from all regions. I am therefore very pleased that you have indeed chosen a broad agenda for this conference. Of course, the UN Secretary-General’s report “In larger freedom” remains a central point of departure.

But the Secretary-General’s report is flanked by other important contributions, namely the High-level panel report, the Millennium Project report and the Cardoso report.

These works contain vast information and recommendations that you can draw

on in your work the coming days.

I look forward to see what you come up with by the end of the week, and I encourage you to be bold and visionary in your endeavors.

The interactive NGO hearings in New York on 23-24 June will further provide input to the Summit itself, and I once again underline the need to make your voice heard.

To sum up, let me once again return to the two main issues of my intervention:

. The 2005 Summit and its main issues, as seen by the Danish government;

. The role of the NGO community in enhancing peace, human rights and prosperity.

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As is clear from my intervention, the 2005 Summit has a very broad agenda. Denmark attaches special importance to increased financing for development.

Also, we put much emphasis on enhancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, which are necessary for reaching the MDGs.

Civil society involvement is necessary if we want to reach the MDGs.

This is one reason why Denmark wants to support a strong, independent NGO community, and this is why we have chosen to finance this conference.

Looking at the 2005 Summit and further ahead, our task at hand can seem insurmountable.

But after all, in this 200th anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen, let us echo his words that “Our time is the time of fairytales”.

Maybe we can indeed make the 2005 Summit a real turning point in our common search for peace, development and human rights.

On that note, I wish you all an interesting and stimulating conference with a lively and fruitful debate.

Thank you.

Tags

Politisk tale, Venstre

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