

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Statement by His Excellency Rasmus Helveg Petersen, Minister for Climate, Energy and Building,
Government of Denmark

to the Opening Session of the 40th Session of the IPCC

Copenhagen, 27 October 2014

I'm glad you have chosen such a central location for this meeting – within reach of my bicycle. It's amazing: To deal with this problem we must draw on all accumulated knowledge – and then some. We both need to go back to basics – back to the 200 year old bicycle - and forward to new technical territory – yet undreamed-of.

A wise merchant once told me this: “It doesn't matter how good an offer you make if no one knows about it.” So let's make sure people out there know what we're up to. So they'll remember to listen on Sunday when we have something important to say.

Please allow me to tweet.

[Tweet]

That should do it!

You don't have to be an expert, sit and wait for years with a drill and a tape measure to notice the melting of the Greenland icecap.

It happens slowly but surely. Like a sun set. Sinking. Like the big hand of a clock. Turning. You only have to look away for a minute to notice the difference.

You can also hear it. The meltwater carves into the ice in sprawling patterns. A beautiful sound of a rushing river, had it not been under such ugly circumstances.

Five reports are about to pile up on the desks of world leaders. It ought to be a heavy load: the weight on their shoulders, the strain on their conscience.

- We already know that our climate is changing rapidly
- It is being tipped off-balance by manmade emissions of greenhouse gasses
- And this poses a threat to life as we know it

In the future, as heavy rain falls in the north and harvest yields drop in the south, so does the value of our real estate and our credibility as *humane* beings.

Today we can measure the rising temperatures, and the rising seas, and our rising insurance bills. Tomorrow we have to measure our rising debt to future generations.

As fossil fuel is burning so is the platform underneath us. We can stop the fire or jump in the sea. The first solution *does* cost money. The second seems to be free.

But it isn't. The truth is: If we do not pay a small energy-bill now, we are going to get a much bigger climate-bill later.

Let's instead be responsible. And make a binding international agreement. At the latest in Paris next year.

It's not easy to transform a complex society. It's not easy to find a way in the wilderness.

Denmark, however, has been among the first countries to enter. And I think we have found a path.

- With 25 percent renewable energy consumption
- With 30 percent of our electricity supply coming from wind
- With a 28 percent drop in greenhouse gasses since 1990

We are well underway to our final goal: to become fossil free by 2050.

By leading the way, we can now leave the traces for others to follow.

Luckily there are lots of trails to find in the forest – leading to the fruit hanging there. The Danish Energy Agency has shown that Denmark can arrive at the fossil free destination by many means, from many directions.

And we can do it without jeopardizing the economy. We have cut greenhouse gasses by 28 percent since 1990 and at the same time grown our economy by 38 percent. Danish exports of clean energy technology have almost tripled since 2000: to reach 7 billion Dollars or 6 percent of our total exports.

We *can* afford this green transition. Even more so when we add to the equation the related benefits to people's health and to the environment.

We are most happy to share our experience with others. We are currently assisting China, South Africa, Vietnam and Mexico on ambitious climate and energy policies and regulations.

Hopefully every country will find its own way of going forward - leaving the fossils behind. The Green Climate Fund may invite some to come along. Denmark has announced a contribution to the fund of 70 million Dollars.

The Danish transformation has been driven by stable conditions. Denmark has enjoyed political consensus on this matter. And this has reduced the risk of investing in clean energy.

This year our new Climate Act passed. The law commits us to:

- Listen to what the experts are saying
- Set goals to combat climate change
- And report to parliament every year on how it's going

Every country should have its own climate act to stay on the climate course no matter who's leading the way.

The distance in *miles* and the differences of *mind* are vast - between Greenland and Manhattan. But at both places you can observe the climate change – full scale.

When I visited Greenland this summer, little *streams* had turned into rivers. When I visited New York shortly after - for the UN Climate Summit - *streets* had turned into rivers ... of protesters. This merged river: of meltwater and mass movement is forcing us to act. We have to slide into it. And change with it.

When I watch the protesters and their signs saying: “We are air breathers”. When I see how busy people have become riding bicycles, recycling stuff, growing their own vegetables. I think things can change pretty fast.

The new mindset is becoming more and more institutionalized: Caring about the climate is something people demand more and more often from their retailers and pension funds. And it increasingly becomes a part of corporate social responsibility and employer branding.

I hope some of this change will be driven – not only by necessity – but also by self-criticism.

It's instinctively wrong to throw garbage on other peoples premises. It should be equally wrong to pollute the air through tailpipes and chimneys.

It ought to be socially unacceptable to set a bigger footprint on Earth than your ‘one in seven billion’ set of feet can justify. And I think we will soon be arriving at that.

Climate change is just too dangerous to ignore.

[Outro]

So let's take responsibility right now: Governments, local communities and companies. Eventually: You and I.

To take action, we need to know what we should be doing and why. I'm glad you are here to answer these questions.

This country is proud to be hosting the Panel on Climate Change.

While you will be working - we will be waiting. In the meantime I'm going to ride my bike – and maybe tweet some more.

On Sunday when you draw your final conclusion we will all stop - whatever we are doing - and listen.

Thank you very much.