



**Ms. Pia Kjærsgaard's speech to the diplomatic corps
Tuesday 9 January 2018**

(The spoken word applies)

Ref. 17-000809-12

Madam Dean, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to welcome you to the annual New Year's reception for the diplomatic corps.

The Danish Parliament values the dialogue we have with the diplomatic corps.

I have had the pleasure of meeting some of you during the past year, and I would like to thank you for some very interesting talks.

Personally, I find that our bilateral meetings provide a unique opportunity to follow events in your countries and to discuss the relationship between our countries.

I also greatly appreciate the good cooperation, which the Danish Parliament enjoys with national Parliaments around the world.

International cooperation is more needed than ever to handle global challenges like terrorism, inequality and violation of human rights.

The threat from global terrorism is still very serious.

In the last couple of years, we have seen cruel, primitive and barbaric attacks on innocent people in Europe and around the world.

Despite losses at the battlefield in Iraq and Syria, terror groups like the Islamic State will continue to be a threat - also in the New Year.

The aim of the terrorists is to undermine our free and democratic societies.

But we will safeguard our common values: Democracy,
freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

Denmark is chairing the Council of Europe from
November 2017 until May this year.

With 47 Member States the Council of Europe is the
largest human rights organization in Europe.

As Speaker of this House I am very pleased to see that
the Danish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly is
very active in showing the parliamentary dimension of the
European cooperation.

One of the priorities of the Danish chairmanship is
equality.

Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary will speak about this issue at the next parliamentary session later this month.

Members of the Parliamentary Assembly can also look forward to a beautiful musical performance by the Danish National Girls' Choir at the next session.

One of my highest priorities as Speaker of the Danish Parliament has always been to ensure a strong connection and a close dialogue between Parliament and the citizens of our country.

Because the voters elect Members of Parliament, national Parliaments have a special duty to engage with their citizens.

The Danish Parliament has taken up this challenge.

First, the Danish Parliament has adopted a proposal for a so-called 'citizens' initiative'.

When implemented in the near future, this model will enable Danish citizens to put an item of interest on the parliamentary agenda, if 50.000 people support it.

Furthermore, Parliament has initiated a so-called 'youth election'.

It takes place every second year.

Almost half of the school kids in 8th to 10th grade participate in the election, competing for policies which are important to them.

This is to show them that democracy is about participation, dialogue and compromise - and how hard that can be.

The Danish Parliament has also increased its presence on the social media.

We have a very popular facebook-site, on which we tell stories from behind the scenes of the political process and create a forum for citizens to engage directly with their Parliament.

Let me finally mention that this year marks the centenary of Denmark's and Iceland's agreeing to establish a new legal framework for our relationships.

On December 1st 1918, an agreement between the two countries recognized Iceland as a fully sovereign state in a personal union with Denmark.

It sends a message that sensitive questions on sovereignty can and should be solved by peaceful means.

Dear guests,

Thank you once more for joining us here today.

I am very much looking forward to continuing our good cooperation in the New Year.

I wish all of you a Happy New Year!

Thank you