

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Statement by Her Excellency Helle Thorning-Schmidt,
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Ms. President, Mr. Secretary-General, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1992, Rio de Janeiro earned itself a place in history. Not for the first time, as this beautiful city is so closely linked with the impressive historical and cultural heritage of Brazil. But in a way that pointed so clearly towards the future – towards a new paradigm for economic growth and development. Through the concept of sustainable development, we seek to integrate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development – and to charter a new course for our common future.

Today we once again benefit from the hospitality of our gracious Brazilian hosts. And once more we have – here in Rio, on Brazilian ground – the opportunity to agree on renewed political commitment to a sustainable and greener future for ourselves, for our children and for future generations.

The Rio+20 Conference is taking place at a time in history where the world is facing multiple crises and challenges. Green growth is one of the main themes of the Conference. And green growth, green jobs and green business solutions are indeed what we should focus on as the key tools to take us out of the crises and on a sustainable track to the future.

Green is the passport to rethinking and redesigning the way we create growth, putting the emphasis on resource efficiency and a healthy and productive natural environment.

As President of the Council of the European Union I can assure you that the EU has constantly and sincerely been pursuing an ambitious outcome of the Rio+20 Conference. We have been working for the adoption of operational targets and concrete actions within agreed time frames. We have emphasized the importance of key sectors such as sustainable energy, water and land management including food security. And we have strongly supported the strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development, including a transformation of UNEP into a specialized agency.

Overall, we believe that a green economy must be inclusive and put people at the forefront. The potential for creating green and decent jobs and lifting millions out of poverty should be fully utilized. The fulfillment of the rights of indigenous peoples is an important prerequisite for a people centered sustainable development and should be eagerly pursued. Gender equality should also be a key ambition on the road to a green future. The mobilization of civil society and the private sector as partners in the green transition is vital.

I am very pleased that a main outcome of the Rio+20 is the agreement on the need for a profound, inclusive transition towards a green economy. It is the only way out of the existential question facing us all: How we – all of us, working closely together – eradicate global poverty. How we conserve and sustainably manage our natural resources. How we combat climate change which is indeed also affecting Greenland and the Faroe Islands within the Kingdom of Denmark. The Rio+20 has set the direction, but we now have to formulate ways to turn words into action. And I am pleased we have agreed that gender equality and women's rights must be at the center of this transition, but I would have liked to see the importance of reproductive rights acknowledged in the outcome from Rio+20.

Official development assistance has an important catalytic role to play in the transition to green

economy. The EU and its member states have made considerable progress towards their ODA targets. The EU provides more than half of total global aid funding which is far more than its share on the global economy. For decades, my own country, Denmark has been among the world's leading per capita donors, and is one of only five countries that currently provide more than 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income in development assistance. Despite budget constraints we have increased our development assistance, which last year exceeded 0.8 per cent of GNI. Denmark has already this year set aside extra funds in order to strengthen the poverty focus of development cooperation and to finance Rio+20 follow up activities. I call on other donors, including emerging economies, to undertake similar commitments.

And I would call on all world leaders to meet the new challenges with renewed global cooperation. New measures must be considered, including a global Financial Transaction Tax (FTT).

Denmark has made considerable efforts towards achieving a green economy. We are managing our natural resources in a more sustainable manner. And recently we decided to pursue a course which will make Denmark independent of fossil fuels by 2050. An ambitious goal for a country that only a few decades ago was totally dependent on fossil fuels.

We are not there yet. But we are determined to succeed, and we are moving forward. In so doing, we have recognized that green policies also create green growth and green jobs. We have seen a number of Danish companies become global leaders in their fields by vigorously developing new green technologies.

In order to strengthen private-public cooperation, Denmark, Korea and Mexico have launched the Global Green Growth Forum. The aim is to create a long term global green growth through new public-private partnerships.

Before I conclude, let me say that as President of the Council of the European Union, I am proud that the green agenda has been a key priority in the European Union for a number of years. During the last months we have achieved a number of tangible results. Most importantly, we have agreed on new legislation which will bring the EU very close to meeting its target of improving energy efficiency by 20 per cent in 2020. This legislation will save the EU billions in expenses for import of fossil fuels, create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and increase EU GDP with billions of Euros. Also, we have managed to integrate green growth into discussions on broad policy reforms like reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, the Structural Funds, the transport policy and the internal market.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Rio Conference will soon be closing, but our work has just begun. Towards a global green economy. Denmark and the European Union are committed to turn that vision into reality.

Thank you.