

IPU 118<sup>th</sup> Assembly  
Cape Town, South Africa, 13 – 18 April 2008

General debate:

**Pushing back the frontiers of poverty –  
Great hopes for the new Africa Commission**

**Speech by Mr. Kristian Pihl Lorentzen, MP,  
President of the Danish Group**

**Madam president, distinguished colleagues**

**Firstly, on behalf of the Danish delegation, I would like to thank the South African hosts for arranging and facilitating this important international event. We enjoy your great hospitality and look forward to familiarize ourselves further with your beautiful country.**

**Now, let me turn to the theme of this general debate.**

**The fight against poverty is indeed a major global challenge.**

**Therefore it is a highly relevant overall theme for this IPU assembly. I am grateful for this opportunity to express some visions, objectives and solutions seen from a Danish perspective.**

**The eight Millennium Development Goals represent the most ambitious development agenda in human history. They range from halting the spread of HIV/AIDS to providing universal primary education and, perhaps most importantly, halving extreme poverty worldwide – all by 2015.**

**On a global scale it seems likely that most of the Millennium Development Goals will be reached by 2015. However, it is a depressing fact that sub-Saharan Africa is left far behind in the global race to reach the goals. Therefore it is urgent, that the international community scale up our focus and effort on the African continent. We cannot leave significant parts of Africa behind in the struggle against poverty.**

**Fortunately, Africa has seen a number of positive developments and experienced progress in several areas in the last decade. Primarily thanks to Africa's own efforts and reforms. However, development must be accelerated further. We all have to do better. We must put economical growth and employment in Africa at the top of the international agenda.**

**On this background, I am very pleased to inform you about the establishment of an Africa Commission. This initiative has been taken by the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who is also the chairman of the Africa Commission. The Commission consists of a number of highly distinguished international members drawn from Heads of States, politicians, experts, business people, and representatives from international and regional organizations.**

**Past and costly experience has shown us, that it is of no use solving the challenges of Africa from governmental offices located far away from the problems and realities. I believe we all agree, that African ownership is absolutely essential in the efforts to find sustainable and effective solutions to the many poverty related problems.**

**Therefore I welcome, that the majority of the commission members are from Africa. Among the many excellent personalities in the Africa Commission I would to mention President Jakaya Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Ms. Luisa Diogo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique, Mr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank, and Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, deputy Secretary-General of the UN.**

**The first meeting of the Africa Commission will take place this week in Copenhagen. The main goal for the commission is to present new and creative strategies to revitalize and strengthen international development cooperation with Africa. The overall focus of the commission will be “Youth and Employment”. The rapid population growth and high share of youth in Africa represent a particular opportunity and challenge when we try to ensure a prosperous and meaningful future for all. The commission will also consider ways of promoting women in both society and economy.**

**Let me expand a little more on some of the challenges for the Africa Commission.**

**As mentioned, one of the major challenges is the rapidly increasing number of young Africans. Today almost half of the population is below 25 years old. Africa has to make an effort to assure the future of young Africans through education and employment opportunities. Without prospects of a meaningful future, youth might fuel violent local or regional conflicts, radicalization and illegal migration.**

**Another major challenge is to improve the opportunities for women in Africa. Lack of equality between men and women is a universal challenge which has to be met. Particularly in Africa, it is of paramount importance that women get better opportunities to take active part in all aspects of society, including access to basic and higher education. I am convinced, that the potential of growth in Africa will increase significantly, if Africa manages to make the best possible use of female resources.**

**A third pressing issue for the commission is climate change, which is affecting Africa disproportionately. It is crucial to enable Africa to exploit the opportunities of modern and climate friendly energy technologies, including sustainable energy sources. This would also decrease African dependency on expensive conventional energy**

**sources such as oil and gas. Access to energy is essential for economic growth and poverty reduction. On this background, I believe that increased aid to Africa should be part of the agreement at the world summit on climate - COP 15 - which will take place in Copenhagen in December 2009.**

**Madam President, ladies and gentlemen**

**It is my clear opinion, that we need to find more effective ways to push back the frontiers of poverty. Consequently, there are many good reasons to welcome the establishment of the Africa Commission. We should have high expectations and hopes linked to this commission, which will start its important work later this week. It is my hope that all nations will be able to benefit from the results of the commission. In particular, I hope that the people living in extreme poverty today will benefit from the initiative.**

**In conclusion, I would like to share a dream with you. I have a dream that many years from now, when all of us in this room have become very old people, we can look back and say: We won the fight against poverty! And we did it by staying committed and joining our efforts.**

**Thank you very much for your attention.**