

J. C. Lund's speech at the 118th IPU Assembly

President.

My fellow parliamentarians.

It is an honor to stand before you today, speaking on such an important matter as the fight against poverty.

As a representative from Denmark – a small country on the northern outskirts of Europe – I ask myself: “What can the international community possibly do against the overpowering inequality, poverty and despair that plague large parts of the world including this vast continent of Africa?”

The Danish answer is that we believe we can do a great deal. And this strong belief has characterized the Danish development assistance for decades. Denmark is and has been one of the international frontrunners on development aid for years and our determination to help hasn't weakened one bit.

It is only a few weeks ago that the OECD published its annual review of the development aid donors, and once again Denmark was one among meager five countries who meet the UN goal of spending 0,7 percent of the gross national income on development aid. Only five is not good enough.

The reason for our impressive record in this field is not that Danish parliamentarians are morally superior to our colleagues around the world.

The reason is that the will to help through development aid is deeply rooted in the Danish people.

Our civil society has been a major force in insuring that the issue never fades from the public agenda. Both the population of Denmark and the largest aid organizations play a large role in the Danish development assistance.

Many, many Danes have participated in volunteer work or contributed to collections arranged by NGO's in Denmark.

There is no doubt in my mind, that this fact has created a strong feeling of commitment in the Danish population towards the

development aid. This has resulted in a political climate where we often are discussing how to increase our development assistance budget and how to make Danish aid even more efficient – and very seldom considering cutting the budget in favor of domestic expenditures.

Poverty alleviation is an integral part of The Danish Development aid program. Furthermore, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is facilitating several different programs aimed to bring the Danish business community into the fight against poverty. Increased trade, exchanging of ideas and knowledge and more direct investments being the result. Hopefully these developments will continue even stronger in the future.

Overall it is the commitment of the Danish people to help those who are less favored by history and climate circumstances than ourselves that lead me to believe that we can play a role in the global fight against poverty.

Of course when you look at absolute figures the Danish assistance is small compared to the US or other large donors. But I believe that we live in a world of ideas and convictions, and those who dare fight for their convictions are often the ones who end up changing the world for the better. Let us join all forces in the whole world in the fight against poverty.

Thank you.