



**Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of
the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen
16 December 2009**

Speech by Mr. Thor Pedersen, President of the Danish Parliament

Mr. President, dear Members of Parliament, dear guests.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to Denmark, to Christiansborg Palace and to this Conference in the Danish Parliament.

Danish democracy dates back to 1849. It is built on the principles of civil rights. Especially the freedom of speech is fundamental in Danish democracy. We prefer an open and a free society, with equal rights for men and women and freedom of religion.

Therefore, I hope that this Conference will promote an open and free debate, with different points of views and interesting discussions leading to broad and fair solutions and conclusions.

I am quiet sure that all Members of Parliament, want to secure welfare and good health of all people and also want good living conditions for the coming generations.

More welfare to more people – all over the globe. Therefore, the challenges of tomorrow are enormous.

According to the United Nations Population Fund – the world population was about 1.6 billion in the year nineteen hundred (1900), today we are 6.8 billion and we will be 9.1 billion in two thousand and fifty (2050) – an increase from 1.6 billion to 9.1 billion in only a hundred and fifty (150) years.

That is indeed a challenge!

We all agree that human activity is a burden to our climate. An increase in the number of people on the globe are therefore part of the challenges of the future. This challenge is often excluded from the public debate.

It is wrong to ignore the question of family planning. It should be included in the discussions as part of a broad solution.

The fact that the biggest increase in population is among the poorest people makes the challenge even bigger.

In 2050 India with 1.6 billion people will become the country with most people. And the people living in Africa will double in size before 2050 despite facing challenges such as hunger, diseases and civil wars.

The increase in the world population will result in a higher pressure on resources. And we all want clean air, clean water and clean soil.

At the same time more and more people will demand food and energy. Clean and sustainable energy – but also energy without political ties.

But how can we reach our goals without destroying the environment?

We need to make use of the human intellect!

We should put our heads together and invest more time and money in research and development.

We need open and free research in what we don't know, and not more research in what we already know.

Another huge challenge is the felling of the rain forests around the world.

The UN has estimated that the yearly felling of forests releases more CO₂ into the atmosphere than all the cars, trucks, ships and air planes in the world. It accounts for 20 per cent of the total global CO₂ emissions every year.

The Amazon Rainforest - also known as “the lungs of the world” - has already been declared a preserved area and has been put on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

However, big parts of the Amazon Rainforest and other rainforests are subject to felling every year.

How can this go on?

As you see, we need to address great challenges and I wish you all good luck with that. I sincerely hope that this conference will be fruitful.

And I hope that your visit to Denmark and to Copenhagen will be pleasant and that you will all wish to return some day.

Thank you for your attention.