

Speech by

H.E. Mrs Lene Espersen

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Honourable Ministers, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for allowing me to address this esteemed Council. It is an honour and a privilege.

For Denmark, relations and cooperation with Africa have been a very important part of our foreign policy agenda for decades. Bilateral relations with many of your countries are strong, just as our cooperation at continental level is significant and continues to evolve.

Our goal is to develop a stronger and more wide-ranging partnership between Europe and Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me start by addressing the theme of the Summit.

I am very encouraged by the fact that you have chosen to let this Summit focus on the issue of shared values. It is indeed very inspiring that you regard shared and universal values as a starting point for stronger integration. Across our continents we do share important values such as human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Declarations on Human Rights.

Yesterday, I was in Juba. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Sudanese government and people on the success of the referendum on the future status of South Sudan.

In Juba, I was very touched by meeting the people who had returned to the South, determined to be part of the historic process unfolding there. The people of South Sudan treasure their right to freely choose their own future and their political leaders as do the people of Cote d'Ivoire and the people of Denmark, who later this year will go to the ballots in parliamentary elections.

Given the overall impressive progress in the field of democratisation, it is unfortunate that recently we have seen a number of challenges to electoral processes and institutions, latest in Cote d'Ivoire.

While these incidents are disappointing, the continent's firm response has shown that Africa possess a well-developed framework of agreed democratic standards, and a set of institutions to deal with such challenges. It is encouraging, that we have seen Africa taking the lead in facing these issues.

The values that we share are a strong basis for building alliances between our countries and continents. Alliances, that can have tremendous effects on the global discussions on these issues. But we must not fool ourselves. These values are not shared by everybody. They frequently lead to heated debates in different quarters. But we can influence that debate. Together we have an important task in ensuring that our common goals for peace, democracy and human rights is defended and upheld. Denmark, the European Union and others have a strong interest in further advancing the dialogue with Africa on shared values.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now turn to one of our other common goals: The promotion of peace and security.

I would like to pay tribute to the significant African progress in peace and security made by the AU and African regional organisations. I am very pleased, that Denmark has been able to support this process throughout.

The African continent continues to be faced with several profound challenges to peace and security. It is encouraging to see how the African Union, in close cooperation with the regional organisations, take the lead on some of the really difficult challenges, like Somalia and Sudan.

One important aspect related to peace and security is how we can do more to include women in peace processes, and to ensure their protection in fragile situations in line with United Nations resolution 1325. It is horrifying that we still see rape used regularly as a politically motivated form of violence both in conflicts and in post conflict situations. It is also a rare case to see women being included at the negotiating table in peace processes despite the existence of undisputable evidence that it brings about more sustainable results, if women are

involved. I would like to encourage all of us to do more to live up to the principles of resolution 1325 in all matters of peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

Our partnership for peace and security encompasses both regional and global issues of mutual interest.

One of the threats we all face and which unfortunately has become more apparent over the last years is international terrorism. Strong cooperation between all of us is essential in order to counter this threat in an efficient way. We will not let ourselves be subdued and we will not relinquish our freedoms and thus allow the terrorists to achieve their aim. We stand ready to work more closely with you all in order to counter the threat from international terrorism.

In the same vein, piracy is putting free trade in jeopardy. Together we are trying to fight this menace but despite our efforts, the pirates still dictate the conditions, and therefore the costs of trade. We do agree that the long term solution to the problem lies on land and that is one of the reasons why Denmark, among others, have doubled our support to Somalia. But I would like to see us collectively do more to stop piracy. Only together can we achieve lasting results.

Finally, but very importantly: we should strengthen our partnership for promoting economic growth. In fact, our relationship is already changing fast and mainly for the happy reason that many African economies are growing at such an impressive pace. When I look at your strong growth rates, I cannot help but feel a little bit of envy as Europe and my own country Denmark are wrestling with low growth and mounting public deficits. Earlier this week I met in Nairobi with a group of Danish business executives and their message was clear: Africa is well on its way to become one of the next global centres for growth.

Economic growth will empower millions upon millions of poor people on the African continent, and I for one totally agree with the official song for last year's World Cup in South Africa. It is surely "Time for Africa".

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.