



Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

Pils laukums 3, Rīga-50, LV-1900, tālr. 7092122, fakss 7320404,
prese@president.lv, www.president.lv

Address by the President of Latvia, H. E. Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, at a luncheon hosted by Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Copenhagen, 29 March 2001

Mr. Prime Minister,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to be visiting Denmark, a country that is without question one of Latvia's most important friends and allies. I am also delighted at the opportunity to meet again with you, Mr. Prime Minister, and thank you for your unflagging commitment to the creation of a prosperous, stable, and secure Baltic Sea region.

The warm and friendly reception that I have received throughout my stay attests not only to the traditional hospitality of the Danes, but to the excellent relations that exist between our two countries. We in Latvia remain grateful for the support and encouragement that Denmark provided during our struggle to regain our independence from the Soviet Union.

And we can be thankful for Denmark's continued assistance during the decade of remarkable economic and social transformations that has followed the recovery of Latvia's statehood.

This assistance from Denmark has greatly facilitated Latvia's efforts to consolidate a democratic and civil society, to grow and to rebuild. Denmark is Latvia's largest foreign investor and the second largest provider of bilateral aid. It is also one of Latvia's top ten trading partners.

Denmark, and Prime Minister Rasmussen in particular, has been one of the most active proponents of early Baltic accession to both the European Union and NATO. Latvia hopes to complete its accession negotiations with the EU by the end of the year 2002, during the Danish presidency of that organization. We are pleased that Denmark is also firmly committed to this goal.

Latvia is looking forward to receiving an official invitation to join the NATO Alliance during the Prague Summit of 2002, together with Lithuania and Estonia. We believe that the simultaneous accession of all three Baltic countries will serve to consolidate the security and stability of the Baltic Sea region.

The affinity that Latvia and Denmark feel for each other is facilitated by common interests, shared values, and our similar situation as two small Baltic Sea nations. Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to thank you again for your personal contribution and commitment to make the Baltic Sea region an area of stability, security, and prosperity.

I wish you continued success in your endeavours and raise my glass to the well-being of the Danish people. May the excellent relations that exist between our two countries continue to intensify in a spirit of true friendship and mutual respect.
