Lecture at the University of Copenhagen:

Prof. Dr, Hans-Gert Pöttering

President of the European Parliament

"Rising to the challenge - A European strategy for addressing climate change at a global level".

Ceremonial Hall, Copenhagen University, 1 April 2008

Madam Prorector, Dear Mrs. Lykke Friis,

Madam Executive Director of the European Environment Agency,
Dear Professor Jacqueline McGlade,

Dear students at the University of Copenhagen,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this very kind introduction,

It is a great pleasure to speak to you today and an honour to address such a distinguished audience. Although you are still at an early stage of your academic careers, you are all surely destined to play a crucial and valuable role in the future of Denmark.

The University of Copenhagen is one of the most prestigious and old universities in Europe. But it is without any doubt decisively turned towards the future, as this institution belongs to the ten leading research universities in the world.
In this you may have been inspired by the famous Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, who once said "Livet skal forstås baglaens, men leves forlaens", 'Life is to be understood backwards, but it is lived forwards'.

We all learn from the past and it is right that we should do so. But looking backwards and thus taking note of both our errors and our successes is not yet a solution for the future. In studying the past decades we can see that especially industrialised countries have hitherto been using **environmentally damaging production methods** without assuming responsibility.

Now it is high time to draw the consequences of our past actions: We have to look forward and take the necessary steps to limiting the damage already done by **mitigating climate change** and **adapting** to it.

Today, I would like to contribute to your series of lectures on climate change by outlining "the European strategy for addressing climate change at a global level". And indeed, there seems to be no better place than the University of Copenhagen to do so.
Firstly, this city will in **2009** be host of the **crucial United Nations Conference** in the process towards a **post-2012 agreement** for fighting global warming. Secondly, this issue is of core importance for young people, as climate change will affect your generation even more than it already affects mine.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In half a century of European integration, we have managed to create lasting peace between our countries. Now, the European Union has to tackle the huge task of **creating peace with the planet we live on.**

The Kyoto agreement was a landmark; but for tangible results on the mitigating climate change, further **consequent efforts** are required.

The European Union has promised to **lead the world towards a global post-Kyoto agreement with binding targets.** The eyes of the world will be on us throughout 2008 and 2009 until Copenhagen. We must fulfil these expectations!
I. Warding off the worst impact of global warming: a tight timeframe

The timeframe at our disposal is pretty narrow. We have no time to lose to implement change, to make our plans a reality.

The degree of urgency

Last week, Dr. Pachauri, the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), came to the European Parliament to address Parliament’s Temporary Committee on Climate Change. As you certainly know, this Panel, together with former US Vice-President Al Gore, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year for its efforts to raise awareness of climate change.

In a meeting with Dr. Pachauri he stressed the level of urgency: We have a maximum of 7 to 8 years, otherwise it will be too late to ward off the direst consequences of global warming.

Indeed, global warming is taking on alarming dimensions, it is man-made and accelerating. The fourth report issued by the IPCC published last November considers a further temperature rise by up to 5°C as a realistic possibility.
Global warming is not a problem of the future, but one that can already be felt today. Yet, the worst consequences are still ahead of us.

Ultimately, fighting climate change is not only a political challenge, it is a **moral imperative**. Failing to act now would create a problem for which **future generations** would have to pay an **enormous price**. It is our moral responsibility towards the younger people to urgently tackle this challenge.

Professor Jacqueline McGlade is far better qualified than I am to explain some of the impacts of climate change, but allow me to just underline one central point: **Climate change** is not simply an environmental issue; it is a **comprehensive** and **long-term** challenge with economic, technological and development implications. It **affects every aspect of our lives**: our ecosystem, our health, our habits, our production methods, and indeed also our security.

The High Representative for the European Common Foreign and Security Policy, **Javier Solana**, has submitted a report to the March 2008 European Council highlighting the wide **implications** of global warming on **European security and global governance**.
The core challenge is that a temperature rise of even up to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels threatens to overburden states and regions, which are already fragile and conflict prone.

Altogether, global warning, if unmitigated, may well wipe out years of development efforts and lead to unprecedented international security risks. This is a global problem calling for a global response!

**Consensus on the objective**

Concretely, if we want to have a realistic chance of averting the most dramatic impact of global warming, we have to avoid a temperature rise of more than 2°C and for that cut by halve the global emissions of CO2 and other greenhouse gases by 2050.

Otherwise our overall prosperity could be reduced by up to 20 percent. A consistent and comprehensive strategy against climate change could on the other hand be achieved with a considerably lower input of around one percentage point of our wealth.

The cost of failing to act would thus by far outweigh that of the measures now required. Hence, fighting global warming is also an imperative of economic rationality!
2050 may seem far away, but as I mentioned earlier, our real timeframe for taking action at the global level is very tight.

The European Union is therefore moving on two fronts: it is leading by example at home and also promoting a global strategy to combat climate change together with our partners worldwide.

II. The Europe Union is setting the tone and rising to the technical challenge

Ambitious targets for fighting climate change at European level

The European Union has clearly demonstrated its willingness to tackle climate change. At the European Council in March 2007 we achieved a first, significant breakthrough by agreeing on ambitious unilateral targets for fighting climate change.

In setting these targets, the European Union has set the course both in terms of mitigation of climate change by aiming at deep emission cuts and as regards adaptation by showing the way towards a low-carbon society.
Now, the European Union is starting to enact legislation to concretely implement the decisions that were taken last year. On 23 January 2008, the European Commission presented its “Climate and Energy package”, which contains a range of proposals for European legislation to meet the targets, including measures on emission cuts, renewable energy sources, carbon capture and a revision of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

The Heads of State and Governments have reiterated their commitment by politically confirming this ambitious package of measures at the 2008 Spring Summit and setting a timeframe for adoption.

Delivering on the objectives

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the ‘Energy Package’ the European Union now has a sound and credible policy framework for achieving the goals it has set itself.

Aimed at driving low-carbon energy, these proposals are based on the conviction that, with a two-track approach combining legislation with market-based mechanisms, like emissions trading, fundamental change is within our economic reach.
The European Union must show to its partners around the world that it is economically and technically feasible to overcome the hitherto damaging production methods without cutting back on economic growth, but even increasing it.

**Denmark** has certainly set a good example. By managing to maintain its energy consumption constant since 1972, whilst more than doubling the national growth, it has demonstrated that it is possible to break the link between growth and CO2 emissions. That makes Denmark the most energy efficient country in the European Union!

Putting the European Union on the path to a low-carbon future certainly demands a huge commitment, but it also brings real opportunities for growth and increased competitiveness – especially for those who jump onto the wagon early.

If the European Union manages to take the lead in environment-friendly technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, this would give it a decisive competitive edge on the global market.

For this, serious efforts in developing research and innovation are required.
The **contribution of universities**, such as the University of Copenhagen with its research efforts and network, will be crucial in developing these technologies and stepping up the drive towards enhanced energy efficiency.

An additional, but decisive factor is the promotion of a **balanced energy mix** in the European Union. With the **energy bill** currently in discussion **in the Folketing**, Denmark aims at achieving effective independence from fossil fuels.

Measures, such as **tax exemptions for hydrogen powered cars**, as proposed in the Danish Government bill, could constitute a benchmark and help accelerate the market breakthrough of these cars of the future.

Although the Danish model is not simply adaptable to other Member States, we will improve our chances in effectively tackling climate change if we **spread our investment** appropriately across all sectors.

Complementary to adaptation efforts, the use of **market-based instruments** as means for mitigating climate change will be essential to meet our goals.
The European Union is currently revising and extending the scope of the European Emission Trading Scheme (ETS). Experience has proven that a fundamental element for the effectiveness of such a carbon market is that it should be based in part on the auctioning of certificates.

The revised European ETS is to serve as a precursor for a global carbon market, which would cover all sectors of the global economy.

In the European Parliament, we feel the need to make choices for the long-term – and foremost choices that can bring results: It appears that no other system than a global ETS will be able to deliver, especially at the international level.

The role of the European Parliament

In relation to the ETS, as well as more generally in shaping the European Union’s approach towards an integrated climate change policy, the European Parliament has played an active role in driving forward action.
Through a wide range of initiatives, and in particular a Meeting with Members of Parliament from the 27 Member States dedicated to climate change, the European Parliament has contributed in increasing awareness of the challenge and building momentum for concrete measures to fight it.

This meeting was crucial considering that national parliaments are responsible for the adoption of concrete legislation and for the implementation of European and international commitments to fight global warming.

To fulfil its role as European co-legislator and be able to make well-informed choices, the European Parliament has established a Temporary Committee on Climate Change in April last year.

The Committee on climate change has organised hearings on various aspects of climate change policy, involving the European member states, third countries and international organisations, as well as representatives from the scientific community, business and civil society. The inclusion of their views is decisive in ensuring relevance of legislation and facilitating its acceptance and enforcement.
The Committee on climate change will certainly play a critical role in achieving a large **compromise on the energy package.** It can contribute in **building a bridge** and allowing the emergence of compromise between diverging concerns.

Allow me though to say: we are not there yet, neither in the European Parliament, nor in the Council. Recent discussions have shown that issues relating for instance to **burden sharing** at European level are not easy to solve. Yet, time has come to show **solidarity** towards countries that have not come that far yet!

Our goal is clear. As was the case for REACH and the services directive – we will do everything to enable a **balance agreement** to be found **in the European Parliament**: We want the European Parliament to be the place where the decisive compromise is struck. And this as soon as possible!

At my instigation, the European Parliament committed to **completing work** on the energy package **in its committees before the end of this year**, so as to enable time for discussion with the Council.
Together - and this objective has been endorsed by the Head of States and Government at the Spring 2008 European Council – we want to achieve a result before the European elections in June 2009, and thus in time for the United Nations conference taking place in Copenhagen the following December.

Adopting the “Energy package” as soon as possible is also a matter of credibility, as the European Union’s role as leader in the fight against climate change is not just about setting targets. If we want to be able to convince our partners worldwide to participate in a global and binding framework, we will have to deliver.

The climate and energy package represents a major step forward and a relevant means of demonstrating that the European Union has a leading role in the negotiations for a global agreement for the post 2012 period.

III. Action at global level: political leadership

Many countries are looking at the European Union to take a leading role in the run-up to the Copenhagen Conference. On the occasions of my visits abroad, lately in Japan and in New York, where I participated in a UN Conference, I strongly felt the worldwide expectations set on the European Union.
By demonstrating its willingness to do its part at home the European Union has gained credibility for leadership at the global level.

Yet, the European Union’s share in Carbon dioxide emissions lies by 14 percent. We can not reverse global warming by ourselves, nor can anyone expect us to carry the burden on behalf of other strong emitters.

The European Union has played a constructive role in the emergence of a deal at the Climate Change Conference in Bali last December - to which a number of strong emitters signed up – not least the United States of America.

The adoption of clear timetable towards the Conference in Copenhagen opens the way to proper negotiations on effective measures for climate protection and on binding goals for curbing emissions. This conference was a success from that point of view, but even more so, as it critically demonstrated the isolation of the United States.

Yet, the magnitude of the challenge for the upcoming negotiations is substantial. The European Union must take over a role as mediator between the main emitters of green house gases.
First and foremost, we will need to get the next American administration on board. If the US does not sign up to a new post-Kyoto agreement, then India and China -which last year became the world largest CO2 emitter - will not either. The forthcoming G8 meeting in Japan, as well as the UN Climate meeting in Poznan this year will be crucial follow up meetings after the Conference in Bali.

But we certainly can not afford to wait until the newly elected US administration is in place. In this context, your relations and networks with universities and think tanks in the US, the manifold contacts of the European Parliament and the Member States’ national parliaments within the US Congress, could turn out to be crucial in preparing the ground.

The meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009 is a window of opportunity that we can not miss. Allow me to repeat: A fair and effective climate regime must be comprehensive and binding!

A voluntary agreement is not enough, because it opens a large possibility to free-riders, who are likely to take the benefits of exchange of technologies and then conveniently restrain from complying with emission reduction goals.
The future climate agreement will need to be based on the principle of **shared but differentiated responsibilities**, thus reflecting varying circumstances and degrees of development. **Industrialised countries**, including those that have not yet ratified the Kyoto Protocol, will need to carry a **significant part of the global efforts** of reducing pollutant emission over the next **10 years**.

But fair contributions by other countries are needed. The early **involvement of industrialising and developing countries - backed by technology transfers** - is essential, since even before 2020 the emissions of these states will outstrip those of industrialised countries.

**Developing countries** will be the **most affected** by climate change. We must help these countries in their development; we must enable them to move **straight to cleaner CO2 low economic production** methods and avoid a transition polluting phase, which now industrialised nations went through in the past decades.

To that aim, climate change **mitigation and adaptation** will progressively become **part of the integrated regional strategies** which the European Union has developed with partners in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and South America.
As the impact of climate change on international security and global governance is becoming more apparent, global warming is turning to a key priority of European external policy.

The fight against global warming is vital for the safeguard of our planet. In the upcoming months, the European Union will do everything possible to promote effective commitments and to ensure that the deadline of December 2009 in Copenhagen for the conclusion of an international agreement be complied with.

Fighting this challenge to mankind is an economic imperative and a component of international security, but first and foremost a moral responsibility towards future generations.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the age of global challenges, the value added effect of united action at European level is more apparent than ever. In the European Union, we are working together in developing answers to the challenges of globalisation.
The Reform Treaty, signed on 13 December 2007 in Lisbon by all 27 Heads of State and Government, is a vital part of this agenda. Responding to the challenges of globalisation is both a main reason for reform and a core element of the Union’s political agenda.

In order for the necessary reforms to be implemented quickly, the new Reform Treaty should be ratified by all the Member States by 1 January 2009.

So far, six Member States, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, France Romania and Bulgaria, have already ratified the Reform Treaty. The European Parliament itself gave its approval on 20 February 2008.

I urge Denmark, and all the other Member States which have not yet ratified, to follow suit for us all to achieve this vital objective.

Thank you for your attention!