Dear Ambassadors, Members of the diplomatic community, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Eigtveds Pakhus and welcome to this meeting, where Christian and I will tell you a little bit about who we are and what our political priorities will be. I am pleased to see that so many have been able to come here today. Although I am still feel fairly new in my job as Denmark’s Minister for European Affairs, it pleases me to
note that I have already had the chance to meet many of you. I am also glad that we will have a chance to talk informally during the reception afterwards. I believe that it is important for us to have an open and regular dialogue.

There is a famous expression “we live in interesting times”. In only a few words it says a lot. Unfortunately I am not sure that it precisely enough captures the challenges that we are currently facing in Europe. In today’s Europe we are not only facing “difficult times”. We are
currently living through a period that is critical for
the European construction as we have come to
know it. Therefore, we live in defining moments
for Europe. This is the reality that we face today –
and this is the reality that we will face as Denmark
is about to take over the Presidency of the
European Union. As Chancellor Merkel has said,
the EU finds itself in the deepest crisis since the
Second World War.
And I would therefore, before I run you through the overall priorities of our presidency, send two important messages to your capitals:

Firstly, Denmark might not have the Euro. But we are as concerned about the depth of the crisis in the Eurozone as the euro members and we will take it upon us as presidency of the EU to do all we can to help pave the way for a solution to the crisis.
And secondly, it is important to say that the EU is a union of 27 and not a union divided into two clubs. The EU is one family. At a time where the most skeptical voices are speculating on the downfall not only of the Euro but of the entire European construction, we will undertake to demonstrate that Europe at 27 is still willing and still able to provide the long term answers that enable Europe to remain a global economic force to be reckoned with in 10 and 20 years. We know our task will not be an easy one. But the Danish Presidency will be a determined, dedicated and
honest broker. Or as John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address – “I do not shrink from this responsibility – I welcome it”.

With regard to the priorities for Denmark’s EU Presidency, they center around four key objectives.

**Firstly**, to ensure an economically responsible Europe

**Secondly**, to help the EU return to growth.

**Thirdly**, to promote a green agenda in Europe,
And lastly, to ensure a secure Europe, both externally and internally.

Our philosophy behind these four objectives is that long-term debt reduction in Member States is only realistic, if our economies achieve higher growth rates. Europe cannot reduce its debt pile by slashing budgets and increasing taxes alone. We must stimulate growth while we simultaneously tighten our belt. To perform this delicate balancing act we must become better at obtaining more with less. We must become better at squeezing more
value out of every euro spent. And the EU has room for improvement here.

In addition, the EU needs to produce more tangible results by applying the community method. Because the approach of Jean Monnet - the logic of small steps based on lessons learned rather than grand, ideological projects – still works. It is by producing added value of real importance to the daily life of Europe’s people that the EU can move forward and ultimately gain the public trust that it needs. And let me be clear:
It is the ambition of the Danish Presidency to obtain concrete results for Europe.

Let me say a few words on how we intend to obtain concrete results in practice within the four objectives that I have mentioned. With regard to the first one - to help Europe become economically sustainable – the Danish Presidency will put a lot of effort into pushing the agenda of stronger economic governance, of better economic surveillance procedures and of promoting the
requirements of the euro-plus pact within the European Semester in general. Despite Denmark’s opt-out from the euro, the urgency of the current situation makes it incumbent upon any EU Presidency to put the issue of economic sustainability at the core of its program. In terms of the implementation of the European Semester, the Danish Presidency will focus on structural reforms in Member States, budget discipline and stronger regulation of the financial sector. Another major item on our Presidency agenda will be the EU’s multiannual budget, where the negotiations
will begin in earnest next year. The current seven-year EU-budget totals roughly 1 trillion euro, and it is of fundamental importance for Europe’s ability to confront the current economic challenges that a big chunk of the next seven-year EU-budget is channelled to the right policy areas that can boost growth, jobs and innovation. I will personally be chairing most of the ministerial discussions on the EU-budget. I have no illusions, but my ambition is that much more EU-funding should go into areas like research and development, education, energy efficiency and
green technologies. In short, an EU-budget for the future. Hopefully, we will be able to make sufficient head-way in the first six months of 2012 in order for Cyprus to clinch a budget agreement in the second half of the year. Europe urgently needs a budget for the future!

With regard to the second objective – to help stimulate growth and job creation – the Danish Presidency will make an all-out effort to push through as many as possible of the Commission’s 12 initiatives on modernizing the Single Market.
The Single Market has been a tremendous success for the past 20 years, but it needs a make-over now to become equally successful in the next 20 years. The make-over will include an adoption of the EU Patent as quickly as possible and no later than during the Danish Presidency. We need an efficient and user-friendly EU Patent System that allows European companies to avoid the hideous paperwork of sending patent applications to 27 national patent authorities.
It also includes getting the Commission’s proposed regulation on European standardization adopted in the Council and through the European Parliament during the Danish Presidency. A revision of the current system of standards will strengthen Europe’s ability to compete at a crucial moment in time, when our economies are feeling the competitive pressure from countries like China and India like never before. In the context of the Single Market, let me also stress that we look forward to inject more political urgency into the EU’s digital agenda, including stronger consumer
protection on the internet and cheaper fees for using the mobile phone abroad.

Turning to our third main objective – green growth – I am fully aware that some Member States tend to view this as a very exotic and narrowly Danish preoccupation which in real terms only will lead to more burdens being placed on industry at a time of crisis in Europe. I have heard complaints that it is “a bit rich” to focus on a long-term transformation to a green economy,
when Europe right now is caught in midst of a potentially devastating debt crisis.

But Ambassadors and Excellencies, in business as well as in sports, there can be times, when playing defense is not really an option, if you want to safeguard your position and achieve a positive outcome. Sometimes, you can be forced to play offensively, even though you have been dealt a weak hand and most people expect you to lie low. I firmly believe that Europe finds itself at such a moment in time today in relation to the green
agenda. If we want to preserve our prosperity and our high living standards in the longer term, we cannot afford to be constrained by short term thinking and forget about the bigger picture. If Europe is to thrive in a new world order characterized by the rise of non-European giants like China, India and Brazil as well as by international competition to get hold of scarce natural resources, Europe needs to upscale its investments in green technologies, renewable energy and energy efficiency. This is not just about achieving some favorable strategic goal 30
years from now, but just as much about creating new knowledge-based jobs in Europe in the short term. New jobs that will appear as spin-off and as short-term economic gains from embarking on a green growth path. In other words, pushing the green agenda is also about creating new opportunities for the 22 million unemployed people living in EU countries.

Therefore – Europe’s decision makers – should make it highly likely that tomorrow’s technological advances within solar power or
nanotechnology are fostered by Europeans. We should make it highly likely that the next generation of windmills is conceived by European engineers and that the fourth generation of biofuels is developed by European scientists. The Danish Presidency will work hard to promote the green agenda, but we will do it in a consensus-seeking and inclusive way. Needless to say, we will also put a lot of effort into the negotiations on the energy efficiency directive and on the follow-up to the EU’s climate road map.
And finally – Ladies and Gentlemen – as our fourth main objective – a more secure Europe. Secure internally and externally. You will probably remember that the Schengen system came under pressure earlier this year, when the Arab Spring began and caused refugees to head north. Tensions flared between EU Member States and it is obvious that the Schengen rules need to be revised. The good news is that we actually stand a chance during the Danish Presidency to make real progress in this area, including on a Schengen evaluation mechanism and we might
also be able to obtain agreement on a European search warrant, which would improve cross-border police co-operation. Denmark will be chairing the Justice and Home Affairs Council regardless of our opt-out and our special position. We are determined to demonstrate that we can be a genuine honest broker and we will do our utmost to advance co-operation as far as Member States want to go and at the pace they feel comfortable with. The same applies to the negotiations on the Common European Asylum System, where we will bring negotiations as far as possible.
To conclude, a word or two about the Danish opt-outs and what the Government intends to do about them. As the Danish Government has stated on several occasions, we will not organise a referendum before or during Denmark’s EU Presidency. Therefore, I will not tell you, when we will organise a referendum, but rather when we will not organise one. We have to channel all our energy into conducting a successful Presidency and that task is simply too important for us to also
be staging an EU referendum. After the Presidency, the Government plans to discuss the prospects for a referendum. Therefore, I cannot tell you when a referendum will take place, but only that it will take place at some point within the current 4 year-term of the Government. That much is certain.

So, before passing the floor to Christian, let me conclude by saying that: Yes, Europe finds itself in a very difficult spot today. Yes, it is our obligation– the responsible politicians in the 27
Member States – to act boldly, coherently and swiftly to confront the debt crisis. And Yes, the voices of critics and doomsday prophets are getting stronger in the media and the financial sector with regard to the ability of individual Member States and the EU to deliver the necessary structural reforms and budget cuts that situation requires. But now – Ladies and Gentlemen – more than ever before perhaps in the history of the European project has the time come for Member States - big or small, euro-member or non-euro member - to pull together and turn
Europe into something more than the sum of its parts. I can assure you that this will be my own guiding principle when Denmark assumes the EU Presidency a few weeks from now. Thank you.