

**Remarks by ambassador Ole Egberg Mikkelsen on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the High Anti-Corruption Court marked in Kyiv on 5 September 2024.**

Thank you to the organizers for inviting me to mark the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the High Anti-Corruption Court. The invitation to me as Denmark's ambassador to be part of the celebration is a recognition of Denmark's role as the implementing partner for the EUACI. We are proud to work with our Ukrainian partners and our EU-partners on this crucial task. The program has just been extended for the next years.

I remember when I arrived in Kyiv in 2020 that I was a bit puzzled about Denmark's role in the fight against corruption. After all corruption was eradicated in Denmark more than 200 years ago, so what can Denmark bring to the table? I was also wondering why we were supporting the establishment of separate anti-corruption institutions outside the normal structures? Why not use the ordinary police, the normal prosecution and the existing courts?

But I soon realized that it was necessary to establish separate and independent institutions outside the normal justice system, such as the HACC, to ensure integrity.

When I am briefing visiting Danish lawmakers and ministers I use the term "Islands of Integrity" to describe the system of anti-corruption institutions. Since you cannot necessarily trust the normal administration and the existing legal system, thus a separate system is necessary - at least for the time being.

But why is the fight against corruption part of Denmark's support for Ukraine? After all Ukraine is fighting for its survival as a free nation against brutal Russian aggression. Denmark is indeed supporting Ukraine's resilience and fighting power. When asked about what we are doing I normally say, Denmark is doing three things: weapons, weapons and weapons. That is of course an exaggeration, but more than ninety percent of our support is weapons and defense equipment. Without weapons Ukraine cannot prevail on the battlefield.

But the fight against corruption is a key component of our civilian support. Because the eradication of corruption is key to the transformation that the Ukrainian people demanded in 2014. It is no coincidence that the Ukrainians call the Maidan revolution the "Revolution of Dignity". Ukrainians found it utterly un-dignified and deeply humiliating to live in a European state with massive and systemic corruption, even at the highest level. They wanted dignity and European values.

This is why Denmark from the very beginning has been supporting the fight against corruption, because that is the key to the transformation that Ukrainians demanded in 2014.

This fight is just as crucial as the fight on the battlefield. Liberty, freedom, integrity and dignity are exactly the values that Ukraine is fighting on battlefield. This is why Denmark is supporting both the armed struggle against the aggressor and Ukraine's epic fight against corruption.

But there is another reason: Whenever we have visiting ministers or lawmakers the first question they ask when they arrive is: How can we assure our home constituencies that the generous Danish support for Ukraine will not be affected by corruption.

As you know Denmark has assumed the patronage for the rebuilding of the city and the oblast of Mykolaiv and since the Mykolaiv-partnership was launched in 2022 more than 150 million Euro has been invested by Denmark to support the recovery of Mykolaiv

Denmark has also launched the so-called Danish Model for armaments support, where Denmark is financing the direct acquisition of weapons and defense equipment from Ukrainian manufacturers. The program has already started. Denmark is financing Bohdana howitzers from a local manufacturer for the armed forces of Ukraine.

Both in the case of our support for Mykolaiv and in the weapons acquisition program there is a real risk of corruption and that is course our big worry: Because it would have devastating consequences for support of the Danish public for the support for Ukraine. So we have a common interest with our Ukrainian friends and partners to minimize the risk of corruption.

Then there is a final reason: Denmark is a strong supporter of Ukraine's European aspirations. With the historical EU-application, delivered just four days after the beginning of the full scale Russian aggression embarked on a breath-taking journey that resulted in Ukraine achieving candidate status for EU membership in June 2022.

To qualify for EU-membership you have to live up to the Copenhagen criteria that were defined in our capital in 1993. They are still the benchmark for countries wishing to join the European Union. And the criteria demand strong and stable institutions, including the absence of corruption.

So there are many good reasons to fight corruption and I am proud that Denmark is a close ally with our Ukrainian friends and the European Union in this battle.

It has been a long and protracted struggle, with ups and downs and bumps on the road. And there is still a long way to go. But during my four years in Ukraine, I have seen the political will and determination continue to grow despite the Russian aggression.

The battle is not over. But let me assure you that Denmark will be just as steadfast in our support for your fight against corruption as we are in our support for your armed struggle on the battlefields.

Both battles must be won to ensure Ukraine's freedom and European aspirations.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the High anti-corruption Court, the anti-corruption institutions, the integrity cities, civic society, politicians and the media for your hard and dedicated work fighting corruption. Denmark is proud to support.

The headline for our panel is "The Strategic Vision" so let me conclude by sharing my own personal vision: it is very simple:

My vision is that five years from now there will be no need for a separate Anti-Corruption Court. Five years from now the ordinary court system will be able to handle corruption cases like any other criminal cases. The same applies to the other anti-corruption institutions. There functions should be handled by the police and the state prosecution as part of a legal system with the highest level of integrity.

In others words: My vision is that instead of having islands of integrity Ukraine's administration and legal institutions will be a continent of integrity. I know it is a bold vision that require hard work. But I have confidence that Ukrainians will show the same determination and fighting power in the reform process as they are showing on the battlefield.