

Mr. Speaker, dear friends

First of all, I wish to thank RPR-coalition for inviting me to address you tonight on the occasion of your 10 years' anniversary.

Civic society has a proud legacy in Ukraine. Civic society has been the driving force in bringing about change and reform in this country.

The RPR-coalition has played a crucial role in this. In 2014, after the Revolution of Dignity, activists, journalists, academics, and experts joined forces in this unique coalition in order to transform the protest energy into the power of reforms in order to make the real change in Ukraine irrevocable.

You have succeeded in that. The speed of reforms has varied over the years but there has always been a positive trend. Let me salute the entire civic society and the RPR-coalition for this amazing success.

Maintaining and sustaining reforms for a decade is not something you can take for granted. Looking at nations that have been undergoing profound changes in the last decades there are examples of backtracking and set-backs – also in this part of Europe.

A strong and vibrant civic society is definitely of the main reasons, why it has been possible to maintain a positive momentum in the reform process in Ukraine – even in wartime.

Looking at it as an outside observer it seems to me that civic society has almost overshadowed the role of the parliament as the guardian of reform and the driver of change.

Deputy Prime minister Olga Stefanishyna recently said that civic society is Ukraine's "secret weapon", ensuring continued progress in the reform process. I think this is a very appropriate description.

So civic society and the RPR-coalition can be proud of the impressive results that have been achieved in the last 10 years – driving Ukraine's reform process.

But there is no place for complacency. New challenges and task are waiting.

The most important one I see is to be active player in Ukraine's EU-accession process. Ukraine's candidate status and EU-accession is by far the most important political change that has occurred during my four-year tenure here in Kyiv.

It has made the reform process truly irrevocable because the EU-accession process consists of concrete and tangible milestones and entails a profound transformation of the entire society.

The accession process is a bit like riding a bicycle. You have to move forward all the time.

In this process civic society will have a crucial role to play in ensuring continued progress – of course in cooperation with the executive and the legislative state powers.

And the good thing is that the Copenhagen-criteria, that were adopted in 1993 are absolutely clear when it comes to fundamental rights and freedoms and when it comes to human rights and democracy.

Here there is a crucial role for civic society to play as a watchdog and a standard setter. I am convinced that Ukrainian civic society and the RPR-coalition will live up to this challenge with the same energy and fighting power as you have displayed during the first ten years of your life.

In human life the age of 10 is an interesting age. This is the time when you start to become more independent of your parents. I remember from my own children that this was the age when they were not so keen on holding your hand anymore.

I think that the same thing will happen for civic society and the RPR coalition. Your dependence on outside support will surely decrease and you will be able to generate your own resources. That is a sound and a natural development.

Let me conclude by extending my warmest congratulations to all members of Ukraine's vibrant civic society on the impressive results you have achieved in the last ten years. Denmark is proud to be your allies and supporters.

Because Ukraine's freedom is also our freedom and the continued success of Ukraine's reform process is also our success because we are all Europeans, sharing the same European values.