

Dear friends

Let me first of all express my warmest thanks for the prestigious medals that I have just been awarded. I am also deeply moved by the kind words by deputy foreign minister Perebyinis and the head of the military administration of Mykolaiv province, Mr. Vitalii Kim about my work as Denmark's envoy.

I am deeply honoured, but I am also humble. Because I know very well that it is not for me personally. It is a recognition of the strong partnership between Denmark and Ukraine that has developed since 2022.

Denmark is one of Ukraine's most committed supporters and we do three things: weapons, weapons and weapons. 90 percent of our support is military — including Caesar howitzers, Harpoon missiles, and F-16s. Today, we use the "Danish model" to fund defence equipment directly from Ukrainian producers. And Danish defence companies have started to invest in Ukraine and Ukrainian producers are setting up production in Denmark

But our support goes beyond the battlefield. At President Zelenskyy's request, Denmark assumed the patronage for the recovery of city and region of Mykolaiv at the darkest hour of the Russian aggression, when the Russians were at the gates of the city. Now we have an embassy office in Mykolaiv supporting the partnership. We are focussing on helping local businesses restart and strengthening civil infrastructure — even as the war continues.

This commitment is not only from the Danish government. It is also people-to- people. Thousands of ordinary Danes volunteers work hand in hand with Ukrainian volunteers. They collect money, they donate, and stand in solidarity because they know that Ukraine's freedom is also our freedom.

Even after three years of war, there is no "Ukraine fatigue" in Denmark. We have some of the Danish and Ukrainian volunteers present here tonight. I wish to thank you wholeheartedly for your work.

The Danish-Ukrainian partnership is also business-to-business. More than one hundred Danish companies are doing business here. They did not pull out after the full-scale Russian aggression. Some of them have even expanded their business because they believe in Ukraine's European future. The Carlsberg Group is a good example. And they are serving probably the world's best beer tonight. So please enjoy.

There are also many small and medium sized Danish companies operating in Western Ukraine.

Many of them are members of the Danish Business Association, whose dynamic president Lars Vestbjerg has travelled from Lviv to join us tonight.

The Danish companies are proud to support Ukraine's resilience and fighting power by keeping the economic wheels spinning, creating jobs and opportunities and supporting the local communities where they are operating.

Warm thanks to the Danish-Ukrainian business community for your support of Ukraine's resilience and fighting power.

So, the kind words and the medal are not for me personal: It is for the entire Danish nation, our government, parliament, volunteers and the business community who have been unwavering in their support for Ukraine.

The award and the kind words are also for the entire Danish-Ukrainian embassy team for their tireless work under wartime conditions – both in Kyiv and in Mykolaiv. The workload is extreme and you and your families are facing Russian air attacks on a daily basis.

One of our staff members, Juriy signed up voluntarily for military service just after the full-scale Russian aggression and has now been fighting in the line of fire for more than three years. Other colleagues have brothers, spouses or sons serving in the armed forces.

I also wish to thank all posted staff for your endurance and dedication. We are lucky to have not only MFA-diplomats but also representatives of the ministry of defence and diplomats from the Ministry of climate, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and not least the two Danish state investment funds, EIFO and Impact Fund Denmark. They have very deep pockets so internally at the embassy we call them Wall Street. They have made a tremendous effort to support the private sector in Ukraine.

I wish to convey my warmest thanks to the entire embassy and residence team for your hard work and endurance. I also wish to thank the concierge of the building, where I live, Ms. Dina, who is here tonight. Dina has brightened my day me with a big smile every morning during my time here, despite air alarms and attacks.

So, it has been a true privilege to serve here as Denmark's envoy. Because my work here was always a team effort, working closely with Danes and Ukrainians supporting Ukraine's resilience.

Now that my departure is imminent, I am often being asked about what has made the biggest impression on me during my time here: The answer is very simple: That is the fighting spirit of Ukrainians, the unbreakable will to fight for freedom and the will to restore normality that I meet here on daily basis.

I have seen that with my own eyes here in Kyiv. Whenever there has been an attack, rescue-workers and municipal workers do their utmost to save lives, clear rubble and to restore normality. I have been very proud to call myself a temporary citizens of this great city – the capital of freedom.

The suburb of Bucha is another good example of this spirit. During my tenure here, I have taken many of our incoming delegations to Bucha so they can hear the accounts of the Russian atrocities.

I have met frequently with the commander and the volunteers of the territorial defence of Bucha. 80 percent of the volunteers are female. Why is that?

Because many of the men are at the frontlines. The female volunteers operate during the night shooting down Russian drones as they approach Kyiv. They call themselves "the witches of Bucha". Let me thank the volunteers of Bucha and all members of the armed forces of Ukraine for your bravery and for defending our freedom. Denmark is proud to support you.

I have also met the mayor of Bucha and the Parish priest of Bucha, father Andriy many times. They are here tonight and they were both in Bucha throughout the Russian occupation. You did what you could to support your fellow citizens during the occupation. You were the faces of humanity and civilization in the darkest hour - symbolizing the civic spirit of Ukrainians in the midst of Russian atrocities and horror.

We also have member of Ukraine's civil protection service, SESU here tonight. I have come to the impact sites of Russian attacks many times during my tenure here. The courage and commitment of Ukrainian rescue workers to save lives is also one the strongest symbols of humanity that I will remember from my time here. I am proud that Denmark is supporting SESU with rescue equipment.

Thus, I will leave Ukraine with fond memories despite the Russian aggression.

Let me take this opportunity thank my diplomatic colleagues, the MFA-team, the Office of the President, the Cabinet of Minister, lawmakers and all those friends and interlocutors – not least from Ukraine's vibrant civil society - who have made my time here such a nice experience.

I am going to miss you all, but I hope that I will have frequent trips to Ukraine in my new capacity as Denmark's special representative for private sector cooperation with the Ukrainian defence industry.

I also wish my successor, ambassador Thomas Lund-Sørensen success in his new position. Thomas, who takes up his position on 1 October, is a good colleague of mine and the embassy will be in very safe hands with Thomas as ambassador.

Before I conclude I wish to mention that I have actually not been working all the time. In the winter I have enjoyed skiing and skating in Kyiv. In the summer I have enjoyed sailing in my sailboat on the Obolon Gulf. I wish to thank my Ukrainian sailing friends from the sailing base at the Obolon Gulf and the sailing club of the energy workers, who made sailing here possible for me, despite the wartime conditions. Special thanks to Olexandr, a very able helmsman and sail trimmer, who is here tonight.

Finally I wish to thank my wife Anne-Marie, who is a strong friend of Ukraine. You never questioned my choice to serve here in wartime conditions. And you have given me strong moral and emotional support on a daily basis during three years of Russian aggression. There has not been a single day where we have not been on Facetime and you have been here on visits, spending long nights in the shelter. Thank you for your support.