

TORV opening speech

Kyiv, Saturday 5th

Dear Deputy Mayor, dear Danish and Ukrainian partners and friends,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the newly revitalized Kontraktova Square in Kyiv.

More than a thousand years ago, this historic square served as a bustling marketplace. One can easily imagine Viking longboats moored along the nearby Dnieper River — that majestic and storied waterway — with traders from what is now Denmark buying and selling goods acquired through trade or conquest as they journeyed between Scandinavia and the Byzantine Empire. This Torv — or Torg, as it is known in Old Slavonic — continues to serve as a powerful symbol of connection between our cultures to this day.

Ukraine is now courageously defending its freedom. Ukraine's fight is also an invaluable contribution to the protection of all of Europe against a common enemy. This is a fight for the values we all share: democracy, dignity, and the right of nations to choose their own path. In this light, it is only fair — indeed, necessary — that Ukraine receives strong and sustained support from its European partners.

Denmark has responded to this responsibility with conviction. Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, the Danish state has contributed nearly 10 billion euros in aid, with around 90% dedicated to defence.

But what makes this support especially meaningful is that it extends beyond government. Danish businesses, civil society and individual citizens have also stepped forward of their own initiative — and today, we see these efforts coming together, joining forces with Ukrainian partners to create something truly impactful.

I want to sincerely thank Mayor Klitschko, the Kyiv City Administration, the Podil District Administration, and all the departments involved, for their invaluable support in making this project possible. We are delighted that Kyiv has two sister cities in Denmark: Odense and Copenhagen. We are certain that this collaboration will continue to develop and strengthen the ties between our peoples.

I would be remiss if I didn't give a warm thanks to Mikael — a firebrand for this project and for Ukraine in general. For those of you that don't know him, Mikael Colville-Andersen is an acclaimed Danish urban designer and architect. He has made an extraordinary contribution to Ukraine: launching the beautiful Bikes4Ukraine initiative, bringing thousands of bicycles from across Europe to where they were needed most; developing a bicycle strategy for the city of Mykolaiv; creating the Nordic Therapy Garden in Kyiv.

In addition to his hands-on work, Mikael has also shared his vision and expertise through two books published in Ukraine: "Copenhagenize!", a guide to human-centered urban mobility inspired by his native city, and "45 Ideas for Ukrainian Cities", a practical, visionary collection of urban interventions tailored to local needs. His ideas are helping shape not just public spaces, but public conversations about the cities Ukrainians want to live in. Because that is at the heart of the urbanism Mikael champions: developing, innovating and changing our cities

for the better as a collective. Now, he has designed the pop-up urban space we are proudly opening today — a project made possible with generous support from the Danish company Novo Nordisk.

Novo Nordisk, Denmark's largest company by market capitalization, has spent nearly a century driving change in the fight against diabetes. Today, the company is making a major contribution to Ukrainian healthcare. It has signed memoranda of understanding with both Kyiv and Mykolaiv — Denmark's partner city — and together they are implementing the inspiring "Cities for Better Health" programme. This is a powerful statement of the importance of health and well-being, even — and especially — during times of war.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the Ukrainian NGOs DIY Ukraine and Active Ukraine and all the Ukrainian and international volunteers for their tireless energy, creativity, and dedication.

I wish you all an inspiring, enjoyable, and healthy day — and I look forward to many more moments where Denmark and Ukraine come together to share, learn, and build a better future.

Гарного дня!

Слава Україні!