

## **Ambassador's speech at the launching of international program Cities Changing Diabetes in Kyiv**

Madam Deputy Mayor, dear participants.

First of all, I wish to thank the organizers of today's conference for inviting me to speak at the launch of the cities changing diabetes program in Kyiv.

But what does the Ambassador of Denmark have to do with the fight against diabetes? That is something for health care professionals and scientists – not for diplomats, you might think.

Of course, much of what we do at the Embassy has to do with official relations and contacts at the highest level. Denmark and Ukraine are close political partners and Denmark is a strong supporter of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are also strong supporters of Ukraine's reform and transformation process.

Addressing common challenges is however also part of Danish-Ukrainian relations.

The fight against diabetes is one such challenge, just like the fight against the corona pandemic. Unlike the corona pandemic diabetes is more discrete and gradual, but just as serious.

The number of people living with diabetes continues to grow at an alarming rate, placing a substantial burden on individuals, families and communities and causing immense human suffering.

According to various estimates, the total number of people with diabetes in Ukraine is about 3.5 million, of which only 1.2 million - that is 35 percent - have been diagnosed. The prevalence of the disease in Ukraine is much higher than in other European countries.

At the same time, the number of diabetes cases worldwide has been steadily increasing over the past several decades, which makes the situation even more alarming.

The good news is that the tools are available to win the battle against diabetes. Just like the fight against the corona pandemic, it is an epic battle, but it can be won. Governments, local communities, patients, doctors and pharmaceutical companies must join forces to defeat the disease. They are on the frontlines of the battle and they can make a real difference.

Let me assure you that Denmark is ready to support Ukraine in this epic struggle, just as we are allies in the fight against the corona-pandemic.

This is why I am here today.

The “Cities Changing Diabetes” program is a public-private partnership between the city of Kyiv, the Embassy of Denmark and Novo Nordisk.

In 2014 the Steno Diabetes Centre Copenhagen, University College London, and Novo Nordisk launched Cities Changing Diabetes. Today, the programme has established local partnerships in more than 30 cities around the world, reaching more than 150 million individuals, to help prevent and control urban diabetes

The aim is to address social and cultural factors that can increase type 2 diabetes vulnerability among people living in cities and help to prevent and control urban diabetes. It is not about insulin. The focus is on prevention, a healthy lifestyle and early detection.

There is also a strong focus on communication. Soon there will be posters all over town and even a branded metro train. A mobile health station will work in Kyiv, where you can get your check blood sugar, blood pressure and BMI on the spot. The mobile health station will be available near metro stations, and shopping malls, making it very convenient to use.

This will have a major impact on public awareness about diabetes and how the disease can be prevented, and as we all know: prevention is better than cure.

By becoming part of the Cities Changing Diabetes program Kyiv is joining a proud league of global mega-cities on all continents, like Houston, Shanghai, Berlin, Copenhagen and Johannesburg.

They might be far way in geographical terms but they are on exactly the same page when it comes to preventing diabetes and thus improving the life and welfare of their citizens.

As a temporary citizen here, I am proud that Kyiv is now joining this league of pioneering global cities. Once again Ukraine’s capital city is setting an example for other cities and communities to follow.

Madam Deputy Mayor, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the municipality for joining the program. I also wish to thank Novo Nordisk for being a partner in the program.

You are definitely living up to your motto: "Driving change to defeat diabetes".  
The Embassy is proud to be your partner in this process.