

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Marshall, dear guests.

First of all, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Mayor of Szczecin and the city of Szczecin for arranging - once again - Scandinavian Days. I also wish to thank you for choosing Denmark as your strategic partner this year.

I have been Denmark's ambassador in Warsaw for almost three years, and even though Szczecin is almost as far from Warsaw as you can possibly travel, I have been here many times. It is by far the Polish city that I have visited most frequently.

I have been here many times on business, because Szczecin and Western Pomerania are home to many of the Danish companies in Poland. In total, there are about 500 Danish companies in Poland employing about 50.000 employees.

Many of the companies are located in this region. They are very happy being here. They all tell the same story of local and regional authorities, who are always very helpful and wish to facilitate doing business here. They see foreign investors as partners – not as adversaries.

There is also a lot of business going on between the local Polish business community and Denmark. Not least in the maritime industry. Most of the steel foundations for offshore wind turbines that are being installed by Danish companies globally are actually manufactured right here at the St3 company, just two kilometres from here.

There is another reason why Szczecin has a special place in Polish Danish relation. Szczecin is hosting NATO's Multinational Corps, North East where 50 Danish military officers are serving. It is a very concrete expression of Denmark's strong partnership with Poland when it comes to security. If you are not safe, we are not safe. We need to be safe together.

Just two months ago, on 11 March we were celebrating the 20 years anniversary of Poland's NATO-accession with the participation of president Duda right here in Szczecin at the Baltic Barracks. I could not think of a more appropriate venue to celebrate that happy anniversary.

Denmark's relation with Szczecin is however also about people to people contacts. Just two month ago, the new flight connection between Goleniow and Copenhagen airport was opened. It is a short convenient hop of about 35 minutes, and I hope that it will stimulate both people-to-people contacts and business contacts.

This year's Scandinavian Days is very special for me. This year we will be celebrating 100 years of Danish-Polish relations. Big things will happen on 25 November to celebrate that happy anniversary. I cant go into details at this point in time but tonight we will be served an irresistible appetizer.

We are going to listen to an extremely talented vocalist and musician, Mr. Czesław Śpiewa, who is known to most people in Poland. You have a special background: You grew up in in a tough Copenhagen suburb, you joined the church choir and you worked and studied hard and you graduated from the Royal Danish Conservatory of Music. Then you returned to your native Poland at the age of 28. Since then you have had a spectacular career in the world of music and entertainment in Poland.

I am proud that you will be on stage tonight with fellow Danish musicians as a strong symbol of people-to-people contacts between Denmark and Poland across the Baltic Sea. I could not think of a better start of this year's Scandinavian Days. Once again this city is living up to it's your proud motto: "Szczecin jest otwarty"- Szczecin is open. Let me conclude by thanking all volunteers and officials who have made this event possible. I look forward to be part of it.