

Queen Margrethe II's birthday

You're smart — you're resourceful — be ambitious

Franz-Michael S. Mellbin
AMBASSADOR OF DENMARK

Japan and Denmark enjoy excellent business and political relations. There is a fruitful flow of people between us and a lively cultural exchange. Our international cooperation is close and like-minded. Still, when we look at the opportunities of globalization the picture is different. Here many Japanese seem to be in doubt while the Danes are the most positive in the world. But Japan has everything it takes to be a potential winner: You're smart — you're resourceful — be ambitious!

Living in Japan it's difficult not to be amazed by how much this great nation has to offer the world. But being from Denmark it's also difficult not to be puzzled by the fact that so many Japanese seem to be uncertain if Japan really has what it takes to be a successful nation in the 21st century. And if you are like me, positive toward — even excited about — Japan, I am sure you often would like to see a more dynamic and active Japan when it comes to global issues such as security, trade and the environment.

To illustrate this I will focus on the most important global environmental issue for the time being, the upcoming COP15 meeting on global warming in Copenhagen, which will bring together ministers, and some 7,000 business people, researchers and NGO representatives from 170 countries this November and December. The goal: To agree on how to prevent man-made

climate change and shape the foundation of a future low-carbon society.

Japan and Denmark have stated that they want COP15 to end with an ambitious agreement that will inspire and provoke a fundamental change in how we spend the Earth's energy resources over the next decades. Both countries want the world to enjoy continued growth and prosperity but without risking the immense costs and risks of continued man-made global warming.

Because Japan and Denmark are the two most energy-efficient economies in the world there are a lot of lessons to be learned on what is possible and what we can expect from such a change. Not least when it comes to one of the most important questions we need to ask: "Are the investments we need to make today, worth the benefits we hope to get tomorrow?" I will present two possible answers.

First, if we do not do anything, the cost of climate change may eventually be horrendous. The classical example is the many small island states that may disappear. So their risk cost is "total." And while a select few still challenge the evidence of man-made global warming, the vast majority of researchers and institutions agree that we are an important part of the problem.

Second, when Japan and Denmark dramatically re-



Queen Margrethe II of Denmark STEEN EVALD

duced their energy consumption after the oil crises in the late '70s and early '80s, neither country suffered any economic setback. So it may just be possible to combine a change toward a low-carbon society with new business and growth opportunities, and reduced cost structures — offsetting what many fear may be a one-sided cost factor. At the very least there seems to be a lot of evidence that the private sector will react positively and aggressively toward the new opportunities if governments

can agree on the right framework for an agreement.

This is where we find maybe the most important fault line between Japan and Denmark with regard to adjusting to a low-carbon society. In Japan, several important industries and leading companies are worried about how they can stay competitive if there is an ambitious COP15 agreement. In Denmark, the most important industries and leading companies are confident that they can meet the expectations, and will emerge as win-

ners in a low-carbon world.

But why should Japan be any less confident? Japan has everything it takes to be a potential winner: You're smart — you're resourceful. Japanese industry and companies have no reason to be less ambitious than the politicians that will meet in Copenhagen in December. And the world needs the industrial strength, technology and ingenuity of Japan to meet the climate challenge in the most efficient way possible.

When it comes to the new agreement, the Japanese and Danish governments are focused on ensuring that the problems inherent in the first climate agreement — the Kyoto Protocol — are not repeated in Copenhagen. Much has happened in the world since the Kyoto Protocol was negotiated in 1997. China has replaced the United States as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. India and other developing countries are growing quickly. Following the recent skyrocketing oil prices, we are now acutely aware of the fact that oil and gas not only pollute; they are also a dwindling source of energy.

So what Japan and Denmark want to see in Copenhagen is a fair and truly global agreement that commits all major emitters to reduce their carbon dioxide gases toward 2050. Some faster than others, but eventually everyone must contribute. If you want to

know more about COP15, please visit us at www.cop15.dk

It is often too easy to put the burden and blame for our problems on "Big Business," "Government" or some other big bad wolf lurking in the woods. But global warming was not created by the car manufacturers. It only happened the day we all went out and turned the ignition key in our cars, and started driving. Likewise COP15 is something very remote and arcane for most people to understand.

Here I strongly believe that it is essential to make issues like global warming relevant for people in their daily life. People get tired of always being told about the environment. So the Embassy of Denmark together with the Japan Cycling Association is giving you a chance to do something for the environment, by getting on a bike and demonstrating your solidarity with the environment.

The "COP15 Cycling Tour" will highlight that each of us can be an agent for a better environment through our lifestyle choices and promote cycling as a healthy, environmentally friendly and relevant transportation alternative.

The cycle tour goes in nine stages through Japan in support of COP15. The first leg will be in Tokyo on May 23 and the final stage in Kyoto on May 31 before ending in Copen-

gen. We hope that more than 10,000 Japanese will join us on the tour. You can find more details about the tour and how to participate on our Web page: www.cop15.jp

It will be great fun — and I

will be participating in all the stages myself. See you on the road!

Finally, I would like to thank The Japan Times for giving me — on the occasion of the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark — the opportunity to tell you about the relations between Japan and Denmark.



Cycle-friendly: In Denmark, there are even traffic signals for cyclists. MIKAEL COLVILLE-ANDERSEN



Pedal power: Denmark's Ambassador to Japan Franz-Michael S. Mellbin with his bicycle

COP 15 Cycling Tour takes 'green' message on road

The COP 15 Cycling Tour May 23 to 31 carries a message of sustainability and responsibility for the environment.

Cycling is friendly to the environment, and participation in this tour highlights your personal efforts and support to combat climate change.

We wish to carry this message from Kyoto to Copenhagen; from the framework of the Kyoto Protocol to a new framework to be established at COP 15 — the United Nations Climate Change Conference — in Copenhagen.

The COP 15 Cycling Tour is

organized by the Embassy of Denmark in Tokyo and the Japan Cycling Association, and takes place at the following eight locations:

- Tokyo, May 23
- Anjo City, May 24
- Fukushima, May 25
- Sapporo, May 26
- Miyazaki, May 28
- Hiroshima, May 29
- Imabari/Shimanami, May 30
- Wakayama/Kyoto, May 31

At each location there will be events and exhibitions focusing on Danish cycling culture and the environment.

For more information, visit www.cop15.jp



On the move: About one-third of commuters in Copenhagen use bicycles. SOEREN HYTTEG

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H.M. Queen Margrethe II**

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