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understands and serves both institutions - someone who has given her whole working life to serving parliamentary democracy.

Twenty-six years ago, you became the youngest ever Danish MP. The Folketing is one of the most dynamic of our parliaments, at once internally fiercely competitive and - in a democracy, it is not a paradox to say this - co-operative and consensual. You have been a minister. You understand that it is in the nature of parliaments that they do not always submit meekly to the demands of governments and often see quickly and clearly what governments have overlooked.

Our Assemblies are together engaged in the South Caucasus, in Belarus, in Croatia, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere. We have co-operated closely in many of the recent elections in central and eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. We are in permanent contact and often work together. Your secretary, Spencer Oliver, whom I see sitting beside you looking grave, is an old friend both of me and of our Clerk, Bruno Haller.

Now we face the huge challenge of Kosovo. Here the developed expertise of the Council of Europe in human rights, the building of democratic institutions, civil administration, education and the practice of the rule of law will be of irreplaceable value. I know that you will work with us to ensure that the Council of Europe is fully respected in the United Nations interim administration, alongside OSCE and other international organisations.

I look forward to addressing the OSCE Assembly next month in St Petersburg. For now, it is a great pleasure to invite you to speak to us. The only thing you have told me thus far which I found difficult to believe is your claim to be a grandmother! All visual evidence denies that. Helle, you have the floor.

Mrs DEGN (*President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE*).- Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, it is a great honour and pleasure to address this session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as the President of your sister organisation, the Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE. Representing a young parliamentary institution, I start by paying tribute to the oldest member of the family, which has already reached the respectable age of fifty years.

During my short speech here in September, I briefly characterised our two Assemblies and prospects of co-ordination and co-operation; I will not repeat all that. Today, I would like to take the opportunity briefly to introduce some of the present activities and objectives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

First, I will say a few words about OSCE as such. It is only fair to say that it plays a key role in the security architecture because of two important factors: its broad scope, comprising the whole Euro-Atlantic area from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as well as the new independent states from central Asia; and its comprehensive concept of security, which combines maintenance of peace with respect for human rights and economic and environmental co-operation. In recent years, OSCE's actions have, in particular, shown the value of its special capabilities in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.

At the same time, it must be realised that, given the complex nature of the challenges that face this part of the world as we approach the 21st century, many tasks must be shouldered by several international actors, working in close and confident co-operation, each

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\*Ministers of Education throughout the world have been urged to post the Universal Declaration publicly in every one of their schools as a fitting way to follow up on last year's 50th anniversary; both UNESCO and my Office have been active in translating the Declaration which is now available in over 250 languages;

\*Last month I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the European Masters Degree Programme on human rights and democratisation. The programme has started and has already made a valuable contribution by the conferring of Masters Degrees on 90 students;

\* An example of country-specific cooperation is El Salvador where UNESCO, UNICEF and my Office have been supporting the elaboration of a National Plan of Action for Human Rights Education, working closely with the Government, the academic community and Non-Governmental Organisations.

Other projects in the educational field are underway; for example, I recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Morocco which foresees the establishment of a National Centre for Human Rights Education and Training. And shortly I will visit Russia where I will be signing a major technical cooperation programme with the focus on education. So I see many possibilities for the cooperation between my Office and UNESCO to expand in the period ahead.

To achieve the goals I have outlined will require the full participation of all of the actors with a stake in human rights: Governments, NGOs, the United Nations family, international financial institutions, the business community, individuals prepared to stand up for what they believe in. We must improve institutional links with civil society, with women, with academics.

Real progress in attaining human rights has been gradual. If we settle for the gradualist approach in this age of radical and rapid change we could miss a unique opportunity to put human rights on its proper footing. Kosovo is a reminder of the urgency of establishing respect for human rights now and of the terrible consequences of failure to do so. I believe that change can happen, that the future of human rights is in our own hands. It is up to each of us to act.