

HRH The Crown Princess speech at the Anniversary Conference University of Vilnius, 1 October 2021

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to open this Anniversary Conference – “From Neighbours to Allies” that celebrates 100 years of diplomatic relations between Denmark and Lithuania.

And delightful to do so at the University of Vilnius, which dates back to 1579. Can I just say, how inspirational I find the motto of the University “Per aspera ad astra” (“From here the way leads to the stars”) to be - it certainly challenges young bright minds to strive to be the best they can be, to live out one’s full potential.

Almost exactly 100 years ago, my husband, The Crown Prince of Denmark’s great grandfather King Christian X signed the Danish Government’s recommendation to establish formal links between the Kingdom of Denmark and the Republic of Lithuania. The decision was effectuated on 28 September 1921.

Today, we celebrate that decision being formalised 100 years ago and also the strong bonds that since then have evolved between Denmark and Lithuania.

At the same time, it is important to remember that during half of this period, it was not possible for the people of our two nations to interact.

Lithuania endured hard times during these 50 dark years: World War II’s tragic loss and the occupations of first Nazi Germany and then later the Soviet Union, both of which brought about great human suffering.

The Soviet occupation, which Denmark never accepted, made almost all contacts impossible. It was hard to comprehend and accept that the Iron Curtain could divide the Baltic Sea - our neighbours on the other side of the sea were made strangers.

The Danes had great empathy with your struggle during the long years of occupation. Equally, we shared the happy and liberating moments that unfolded at the beginning of the 1990s when Lithuania again found its rightful place among the free and sovereign nations of the world.

Over the years, the Crown Prince has taught me a lot about the Baltic countries that are so close to his heart. As part of his studies in Political Science he was fortunate to be present in the Baltic countries during the euphoric and peaceful

transition that shaped the future of the people of Lithuania. The Crown Prince has on many occasions told me about that moving moment in time and his experience of witnessing how the country embraced the newfound freedom.

Earlier this year, The Crown Prince and I had the privilege of hosting a dinner at our home at Amalienborg Palace celebrating the 100 years of diplomatic relations and 30 years of re-established diplomatic relations between Denmark and the Baltic countries. It was a memorable evening, and I enjoyed hearing my husband share his recollections and stories from the early nineties with the ministers and guests present.

The Crown Prince has asked me to send his warmest greetings.

Denmark was one of the first countries to re-establish diplomatic relation with Lithuania and the Baltic States on 24 August 1991 and is still today proud to have been able to support Lithuania, in a time of need.

Since then, Denmark and Lithuania have developed close corporations in many different international fora. As small states, we experience the value of being part of a strong, international community based on the rule of law. Today, Denmark and Lithuania are both members of international organisations such as EU, NATO, the UN and the Council of Europe.

We have joint responsibilities for the well-being and sustainability of our region, including the ecosystems of the Baltic Sea. The promotion of human rights and democracy remain just as important and meaningful today as it was 30 years ago. Also today, our common well-being is threatened by the common global challenges we must face together.

To mark this important anniversary, a book on the bilateral relations between Denmark and Lithuania has been published - it is a shared recollection of the past, which is an important foundation for sustaining long lasting ties between our nations.

The book brings together different perspectives (albeit the perspective being mainly Danish) from all spheres of life - cultural, commercial, military and political, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of our common history and the contributions made in creating that history. King Christian X made an important contribution, as did many others. These stories deserve to be told, and this anniversary book gives them new life.

I wish you a great conference with thought-provoking and action-orientated discussions – the stars are the limit.

Thank you.