**Conference organized by IUC Europe: Model European Parliament Baltic Sea Region. Opening speech by MP, Sofie Carsten Nielsen, Danish Social-Liberal Party**

* Europe is said to be in dire straits. Greece is still on the brink of bankruptcy. Consumer confidence is minimal. And the unemployment rates are soaring – especially for young people like yourself.
* But in fact, there is a way out of the crisis. If we follow the road to a green, energy efficient and carbon neutral economy, we will get to the future. If we continue founding our growth on the black energy sources of yesterday, we will not get a durable and stable solution to the crisis.
* By making our economies green and carbon neutral, we can in fact create millions of jobs almost instantly. The energy efficiency directive alone is estimated to create 2 million jobs! Jobs that are desperately needed in major parts of Europe at this very moment.
* This leads to my next point: to harvest the economic benefits that await in a low carbon economy, we need to transform our energy sector across the continent. We must enhance the number wind mills, solar cell plants etc. and we must build an intelligent, pan-European energy grid. The technological developments resulting from this effort will put European industry in a lead position globally. As a side bonus, which many of you will consider an unimaginable leap forward in national security, this will also make us independent of Russian gas and Saudi oil.
* Climate change results in dried up lands, floods, heavy rain, droughts. Thereby, climate change may undermine food safety on today’s highly integrated world market. We thus face a pressing task to come up with new ideas on how to make both European and global agriculture more sustainable, more resistant to changing circumstances, and more effective.
* We can’t solve the climate issue without the engagement of every citizen. But engagement requires awareness and knowledge, which again requires education. Therefore, we must teach children how to live in a way that doesn’t destroy their own future and the welfare of our co-citizens across the globe.
* Growth is present in many parts of Africa. In fact, millions have been lifted out of poverty in the last decade. But the progress is fragile. Climate change will undermine the possibility to farm huge portions of the continent, which may very likely result in de-development as well as vast amounts of climate refugees. Refugees heading north, thus threatening to undermine economic and social stability in Southern Europe!
* As I’m sure, you have noticed by now, these five arguments are focused on each of the committees that you will be working in the next couple of days. It is therefore my hope that you will consider the economic and climate challenges, which I have just mentioned, as each others’ determinants but also as each others’ solutions!
* China is booming, India is upcoming, Russia is regaining strength, Brazil is unfolding its potential, and the US is already on its way out of the crisis. Many view Europe’s future as a museum continent of retirees.
* But when I see such a group of active, creative, ambitious, young people as you here today, I know that this future need not come true. By embracing and pursuing a vision of a green and highly efficient economy, Europe can emerge from the crisis stronger as ever. But it requires an active and determined effort from all of us, in all sectors and right now!
* I wish you all a pleasant and inspiring conference.