

United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

15 June 2015

Acceptance speech by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President-Elect of the 70th Session of the General Assembly

Your Excellency, Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly,
Your Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Since Denmark signed the Charter of the United Nations 70 years ago in San Francisco, we, the people of Denmark, have done our utmost to achieve the goals laid down in the Charter. We have had peacekeepers on active duty since the first United Nations mission in 1956, and we have for almost four decades delivered on the 0.7 commitment of official development assistance.

Allow me to thank the Assembly for having entrusted me and – for the first time – my country with presiding over its seventieth session. I will turn 70 myself during the seventieth session.

As a teenager 55 years ago, I walked into the offices of the United Nations Association in Copenhagen to collect information about the workings of the United Nations. Back then, I sincerely hoped that therein lay the framework in which rationality and humanity would prevail that would make disarmament agreements possible that could finally bring the major Powers to cooperate for a better future for the whole human race that could assist peoples in attaining self-government and independence and, without racial prejudice, could protect the rights of minorities, vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women, children, the displaced, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

Today, that hope and those objectives remain as relevant as ever. We will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations throughout the session. I aim to organize our work in a way that allows us to reflect on the successes, as well as the shortcomings, in these first 70 years, while also looking to the future. The theme of my term as President will therefore be “The United Nations at 70 – a new commitment to action”.

Since San Francisco, the Organization has gained in universal membership. In that timespan, the world’s population has almost tripled to more than 7 billion people. The struggle to catalyse peaceful, sustainable development and combat climate change for all 7 billion is both the challenge and the opportunity of our lifetime. Fundamentally, a girl or a

boy born today has the same right as 70 years ago to aspire to – in the words of the Charter – “social progress and a better standard of life in larger freedom” and to enjoy the equal rights of women and men in dignity. The key to success lies in identifying pathways for all countries to develop new ways and means to deliver on this aspiration, to produce and consume without undermining our common future for generations to come.

In order to succeed, we have to strive to build a more fair and stable world and we all have to play our part. The donor countries must deliver on their commitments to official development assistance. In a world where the 92 wealthiest billionaires own more than the poorest half of humankind, all nations must strengthen resource mobilization efforts to meet development needs.

Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for your guidance and vision and for focusing the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly on delivering a transformative post-2015 development agenda. Over the past 15 years, the Millennium Development Goals have been a successful guide and framework for our joint efforts to reduce poverty, end hunger, bring children to school, combat diseases and maternal mortality to mention but a few achievements. What is now facing Member States is the final stretch towards adopting a universal, people-centred, transformative development agenda that addresses the struggle of our lifetime. When implemented, it will enable us to eradicate extreme poverty while keeping climate change at bay, building resilience and creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Personally, I look forward to collaborating closely with you, Mr. President, as our two countries will jointly and symbolically co-chair the summit in September for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. A successful outcome will stand out as a historic achievement for the global sustainable development agenda and indeed beyond. I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his dedication to the United Nations and for his relentless focus on advancing the greater good of humankind.

My first priority will be to ensure that the summit is an occasion for world leaders to join hands to achieve the new goals in a new commitment to action, which is the theme that I have chosen for the seventieth session. That commitment – and the new global partnership that goes with it – will be at the core of driving the work of the United Nations until 2030. We will operationalize that theme by taking stock of the three pillars of the United Nations. Since the summit will focus on sustainable development, it would only be natural to dedicate this year’s general debate to commemorating the United Nations at 70 and focus on the road ahead for peace, security and human rights.

The financing for development conference in Addis Ababa should provide the necessary boost and trust to mobilize substantial commitments and resources needed for years to come. Decision-makers at all levels should feel obliged to meet their commitments and feel accountable for doing so. The global public, civil society and business should also continue

to engage and contribute beyond this conference. A successful and ambitious outcome from the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris will be the first real test of these commitments to development in an environmentally sustainable manner, the first transformation of the new goals into action on a wider scale. We must not fail this test. The youth of today would suffer the consequences of our generation's inability to find common ground. I therefore firmly support your focus on climate change, Mr. President, and, if needed, I am ready to build on your efforts to promote its success in Paris.

It is a sad but ineluctable assessment that the world today suffers from armed conflict, terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization, nuclear proliferation, as well as increasing risks of further tensions among major powers. In that context, the United Nations' effective and efficient contribution to international peace and security, which is the second of my overall priorities, of course, is more important than ever. It seems all too apparent that only a world that demonstrates respect for the most fundamental human rights will be sufficiently harmonious, as well as socially and economically sustainable. Therefore my third priority is to support further progress in the field of human rights. Issues such as governance, rule of law, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women should all be considered as integral parts of obtaining and safekeeping progress in other fields of intervention, either peace- and security-related or developmental in nature.

With an overall focus on the United Nations at 70 and the implementation of the new universal agenda and the new commitment, I will convene a limited number of high-level events in 2016. In addition, it is my intention to organize a commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Charter of the United Nations on Friday, 23 October. Cutting across the three priorities will be a firm emphasis on gender equality and youth, as well as creating and nurturing partnerships with civil society, the private sector and with other relevant stakeholders.

I also intend to organize high-level events in April, May and July respectively on the following themes: first, how to achieve the new sustainable development goals, targets and commitments secondly, strengthening the role and coherence of the United Nations in peace and security, including creating synergies between the follow-up to the reviews on peace operations, peacebuilding and on women and peace and security and thirdly, the implementation of human rights, governance, rule of law and gender aspects of the work of the United Nations. My goal is to seek pragmatic, action-oriented outcomes that provide guidance for all actors – the United Nations system, Member States, civil society and the private sector – on how to proceed with timely and effective implementation. Within this overall framework, and in support of these events, I will also convene a limited number of briefings, thematic debates and consultations with non-State actors.

In preparing for my election, my goal was to consult broadly with Member States. I have personally been enriched and moved by the discussions and the excellent advice I obtained. I look forward to continuing our close cooperation during my tenure. Many have underscored their interests in seeing progress in the United Nations reform agenda and the

revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Most interest seems to be centred on the reform of the Security Council and creating more transparency and openness when selecting the next Secretary-General. I will aim to continue this work based on the status in both tracks when the seventieth session begins. My intention is to conduct the presidency as transparently, inclusively and openly as possible.

At the same time, I will also aim to take a hands-on approach and be involved in coordinating the work of the General Assembly as it unfolds over the course of the seventieth session. This includes a 10-year review of progress made in the implementation of the out-comes of the World Summit on the Information Society in December, the United Nations budget and the two special sessions on world drug problems and HIV/AIDS in June next year. I intend to continue the tradition of coordinating closely with the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council to ensure a seamless flow of information between the main bodies. In my engagement with the United Nations system, I will seek to ensure that the General Assembly is regularly briefed on how subsidiary bodies, as well as funds, agencies and programmes, are moving forward in implementing the outcomes of the major conferences held in 2015 in their work.

Today's decision-makers must acknowledge that 2015 is a time to make a new commitment to action for the sake of generations to come. That is the signal we should communicate from the seventieth session of the world's most representative, deliberative multilateral body. The interconnectedness and universality of the new sustainable development goals and the global complexities they reflect create unprecedented challenges and opportunities. We will have to find ways to achieve sustainable growth in which the distance between rich and poor nations and peoples does not become larger but smaller in which we not only create development and eradicate extreme poverty, but also deliver a more equitable access to, and distribution of, global goods and in which global cooperation creates a more fair, sustainable and stable world, as envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations. Multilateralism and the work of the United Nations, the trust and hope in global solutions it inspires, is as needed today as it was when the United Nations was established, as it also was 55 years ago when, for the first time, I actually embraced the hopes and ideas of a stronger, more committed, more cooperative international community.