

14 September 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Church of the Holy Family**

Archbishop Auza, Reverend Fathers, Mr Secretary General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to join you all in this hour of reflection over the perspective, wisdom and courage required for the year ahead.

Tomorrow, as the new President, I will be opening the 70th session of the UN General Assembly.

It is my sincere hope that – in close consultation with the membership and hand in hand with you, Mr. Secretary General – we can unite the global community around a new and stronger commitment to action.

But these days we are all split between fear and hope for the future.

We feel despair over humanitarian catastrophes caused by the endless and vicious circles of war and terror in the Middle East, Africa and parts of Europe. Millions have been fleeing from warzones. Neighboring countries are heavily overburdened by refugees. Pledges to funding appeals from the UN and other humanitarian actors to help those countries are not being honored. And in search for better protection, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are – desperately and under often horrific conditions – trying to reach the shores and borders of a divided and unprepared Europe.

We – the United Nations – have an urgent obligation to protect those that have been uprooted and displaced – but also, finally, to unite in decisive action to contain and end the wars and conflicts that are the root causes of this human suffering.

We nurture hope, because, just ten days from now, almost every Head of State and Government in the world will come together in the UN to adopt the visionary, ambitious and inspiring 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

And because, in December in Paris, those same world leaders must take crucial decisions to edge us closer to a more sustainable and prosperous world, and to walk us back from

unstoppable and catastrophic climate change, one with rising sea levels and melting glaciers, one that will destroy the habitats of hundreds of millions of human beings.

WE must decide between hope and despair.

We CAN pass on to future generations a world in a sustainable condition, a world with peace and security and a world where no-one is left behind and women and girls in particular are empowered.

But it takes strong and committed leaders.

His Holiness Pope Francis is one such outstanding leader with his moral message on climate, and his demand for more equality and compassion. Therefore I look forward greatly to welcoming him to the General Assembly on September 25th. I am sure His Holiness will be an important inspiration for other world leaders.

I thank you sincerely for this unique opportunity to share with you my thoughts on the year ahead. Let us all unite to ensure that it is hope and not despair that prevails.