

15 September 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the opening of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Mr Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my great honour to open this, the 70th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

A session which I hope will be truly historic.

A session, not just of ground-breaking decisions, but one of much needed concerted action for people and planet.

Let me begin by once again thanking you, the member states, for entrusting me to lead the world's most representative multilateral body. Your endorsement of me is also an endorsement of the role which Denmark has played at the UN over the past 70 years.

I will do my utmost to represent each of your countries in a fair and open manner.

As I do so, I will build on the solid foundations laid by my predecessor, H.E. Sam Kutesa. I congratulate him, in particular, on shepherding the Post-2015 negotiations to a successful conclusion, well in advance of the Summit. And I thank him and his Office for their close cooperation and support in recent months.

Let me also take this opportunity to recognise the crucial role played by you, Mr Secretary General, in your tenure thus far, not least in supporting the emergence of a truly ambitious 2030 Agenda. Over the coming year, I very much look forward to working closely and collaboratively with you.

Excellencies, in less than 10 days time, our leaders will gather in this hall to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A seminal, in fact, revolutionary universal agreement befitting this anniversary year. And a welcome gift to a world beset by war and humanitarian crises, sectarianism and violent extremism, by poverty and inequalities, by climate change and environmental degradation.

In signing up to the 2030 Agenda, governments will voluntarily commit to take action for the dignity, security, prosperity and human rights of our shared humanity, for gender

equality and the empowerment of women and girls for the sound management and fair distribution of the earth's finite resources, and for the health and vitality of our planet.

It raises high hopes of the United Nations being fit for purpose and committed to action.

The challenge now, and a major priority for my Presidency, is to ensure that all actors move swiftly to deliver on the promises being made.

The Summit, of course, marks only the beginning. There is an urgent need for action right across the three pillars of the UN and ample opportunities to do so during this session.

Not long after the Summit and General Debate, our leaders will come together in Paris for the COP 21. An ambitious and universal climate agreement is an absolute must and the first real test of the world community's ability to deliver the necessary policy tools for Sustainable Development.

But there will be no sustainable development without peace and security and respect for human rights. The UN and its member states have a strong obligation to work together to end the catastrophic wars and conflicts – in and around Syria, the broader Middle East, Africa and even Europe. And we will have to act here and now to address the huge and explosive refugee crises resulting from ongoing conflicts – and to protect the human rights of all refugees.

With the conclusion of the Review of the UN Peace-building Architecture, the release of the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security, the forthcoming Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism strategy, and the recently published Report from the Secretary General on Peace Operations, there is significant scope to demonstrate our commitment to action across the broad area of Peace and Security during this session.

Among other important issues, I will also preside over the high level meeting in December on the World Summit on the Information Society. I will hold a special session of the General Assembly in the spring of 2016 on the World Drug Problem as well as a High Level Meeting on HIV&AIDS. And, in May, the Secretary General will convene a World Humanitarian Summit – an incredibly timely and crucial initiative.

In addition, ladies and gentlemen, we must continue our efforts to revitalise the work of this Assembly.

Responding to the continued interest among many member states in both the reform of the Security Council and in creating more transparency and openness when selecting the next Secretary-General, I will continue the work mandated by you on both of these issues.

We must also ensure constructive negotiations relating to the UN budget and I will consult widely in the coming months to ensure their timely conclusion.

Finally, during this session, there will be events to commemorate the 70th anniversary including, on October 1st and 2nd, a High Level event on Peace and Security on October 23rd, an event on the entry into force of the Charter and on January 11th 2016, an event to mark the 70th anniversary of the first session of the General Assembly.

Excellencies, with such a busy schedule ahead of us, I am keenly aware of the pressures which all missions to the United Nations will face. The three high-level thematic debates which I will hold in my capacity as President, therefore, will aim to complement on-going activities, and to take stock of each of the three pillars of the UN.

The Summit and the General Debate will be the starting points for these discussions, with their focus respectively on sustainable development and the road ahead for peace and security, and for human rights.

The first high-level thematic debate will be dedicated to the implementation of commitments relating to sustainable development, climate change, and financing. This will take place in April. In this way I will endeavor to mobilize and catalyze individual, collective, multilateral and multi-stakeholder action to support early progress on realizing our global goals.

The second high-level thematic debate will take place in May. It will focus on strengthening the UN's role and performance in the area of peace and security. It will serve as a platform for an open and frank exchange of views and could span the full spectrum of threats to global security. One of the key deliverables from this debate will be to draw out synergies from the three major peace and security related reviews now at various stages of advancement – the peace operations review, the review of peace-building, and the global study on women, peace and security.

The third high-level thematic debate will be organized next July and will revolve around human rights. Here, the focus will be on the UN's role in the field of human rights including in relation to governance, the rule of law, gender equality and institution building. Taking into account the unprecedented scale of global humanitarian challenges, particular focus will be placed on addressing the needs of the hundreds of millions of men, women and children affected by conflicts and disasters.

It is my hope that these events can help us to identify pragmatic and action-oriented outcomes in each area. To that end, I will consider holding support meetings to explore particular issues or elements that warrant additional focus or preparation.

I will conduct all activities in as transparent, inclusive and open a manner as possible.

Where it is relevant I will also engage with and involve civil society representatives and others, such that a multi-stakeholder approach becomes a hallmark of my presidency.

I will also work closely with committee chairs and continue the tradition of coordinating with the Secretary General, as well as the Presidents of ECOSOC and the Security Council to ensure smooth and timely conduct of business.

With your cooperation, I am confident that we can make substantial and meaningful progress across this broad agenda.

Excellencies, it is, in some respects, hard to believe that this great organisation has already been in existence for seventy years.

For, despite its significant evolution and achievements since 1945, the UN has more to learn, much more to give and much much more to do to fulfill its mandate under the Charter and to bring about the world envisaged by the 2030 Agenda.

Let this be a year, where we, the Assembly of the world's nations help each other and this Organisation to move towards that vision, through a spirit of global solidarity and with a renewed Commitment to Action.

I thank you for your attention.