

24 September 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
on the launch of the GRESB Infrastructure Initiative**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

Allow me to start by thanking GRESB Real Estate and its team for inviting me to speak to you on the eve of one of the most important events in United Nations history.

There will no doubt be an abundance of rhetoric flying around over the next three days, but I do not exaggerate when I say that the 2030 Agenda is one of the most revolutionary developments which this Organization has produced in the past 70 years.

Like all great developments, it did not come about easily. But what is crucial, is that it came about democratically. It is the product of an intense, inclusive and very long process. It is owned by the member states who will adopt it tomorrow but it is also owned by all those other actors who participated in the preparatory process. And it is these features that make successful implementation of this Agenda a very real possibility.

As Heads of States gather, we must now shift our focus to identifying key actions to get implementation off to the best possible start. We must also communicate the Goals to the entire world and bring together the diverse range of actors needed to realize our collective ambitions.

I am therefore delighted to be here with GRESB, its institutional investors and all of you, to launch this initiative on an infrastructure sustainability benchmark.

As you know, climate-resilient infrastructure features prominently in the Goals themselves and in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Why? Because, the lack of climate-resilient infrastructure comes at enormous economic and social cost. According to the World Bank's Global Infrastructure Facility, almost 20 percent of the world's entire population still have no access to electricity. About 768 million people worldwide lack access to clean water; and 2.5 billion do not have adequate sanitation; 2.8 billion people still cook their food with solid fuels and one billion people live more than two kilometers from an all-weather road.

But also because the right kind of infrastructure is crucial to progress in so many areas. It is crucial to scaling-up productive capacity, job creation, poverty alleviation and wealth creation. It can help provide better basic services to households and lead to higher productive gains and market access for industry and agriculture. It can enable sustainable urban development, smart grids and low-carbon transportation systems. And it can allow countries and companies to reap the benefits of integration with regional and global value chains.

If our aim is leaving no one behind, then climate-resilient infrastructure can be a key enabler. And if we want to live in a climate-friendly and prosperous society, then we have to get our investment in infrastructure right.

That is why this benchmark is so crucial. By evaluating the sustainability performance of global infrastructure assets, taking into account comparable key environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics, this initiative can help us to scale up investment in the right areas. Comprised of more than 50 institutional investors and having assessed almost a thousand property companies and funds globally, GRESB can be a key implementation partner.

This initiative, however, must be accompanied by a scaling up of overall investment, including through enhanced financial and technical support, to bridge the infrastructure gap in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, small-island states and those that are land-locked.

In this regard, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda calls for the establishment of a global infrastructure forum that can mobilize the support and improve the alignment and coordination between Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and a series of other new and innovative infrastructure initiatives. And it must involve all stakeholders. It can identify and address infrastructure and capacity gaps in developing countries and highlight opportunities for investment and cooperation, while ensuring that investments are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable.

I hope to continue discussing this important topic during the Summit's high level interactive dialogues and will support early progress on this issue in whatever way I can during my Presidency.

I hope we governments will create a stable legal framework for the market that encourages the sustainable investment and makes it obvious that green investment is the best investment – not only for the common good in the long term perspective, but for capital investors here and now.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have an incredible opportunity over the next 12 months to lay the groundwork and set the tempo for the change that's needed over the next fifteen years.

To maintain momentum, I will convene a High Level Thematic Debate next April aimed at demonstrating where implementation is happening; how partners can and are working together; and how we can keep the pace with the progress needed. I look forward to your participation and encourage you to consider what progress you will be able to report next April.

To eradicate poverty, ensure peace and shared prosperity and protect our planet, we must work together and, above all, move from lofty goals to serious action.

I thank you.