

1 October 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Group of
Friends Annual Ministerial Meeting**

Honourable Ministers, High Representative Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to join you at this annual meeting of the Group of Friends of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

Since its inception, this Alliance has become a leading United Nations platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation.

Founded at a time of division and fear, the Alliance, including through its global forums, has consistently promoted tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and peoples.

Today, however, our humanity faces challenges on a par with, if not greater than those which the Alliance has faced to date. The intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia which we now witness towards different ethnic and religious communities, is deeply, deeply worrying.

In addition, violent extremism is a particularly serious concern. It pains me to witness the barbarity and the absolute disregard for human life, for the lives and dignity of innocent women and children, demonstrated by ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Shahab and others – groups that are fueled by hatred based on religious, sectarian and ethnic differences; terrorists that are seeking to undermine our shared humanity, our cultural heritage and the very values upon which this Organisation is based.

In this regard, the current global crisis we are facing relating to refugees, displaced persons and migrants is a crisis on a scale not seen since the Second World War. At times over the past few months, fear and prejudice have won out over our sense of solidarity and responsibility. As I stated at yesterday's meeting on this crisis, business as usual is not an option. Over the coming period, I intend to organise a General Assembly meeting dedicated to addressing some of the challenges in this area.

In the midst of these challenges, however, we have, through the new 2030 Agenda, an historic opportunity to advance change which will benefit all. Its interconnected goals

underline that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

Through its core initiatives – on youth, education, media and migration – the Alliance can make a significant contribution to realising the new Agenda. And during the year ahead, as the President of the General Assembly, I will do my utmost to support member states to move from commitments to action.

In this regard, we look forward to the Paris Climate Conference where an ambitious outcome is an absolute must. And in April 2016, I will convene a high level thematic debate which will focus on the implementation of commitments relating to the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and related financing. Your participation and that of civil society and all stakeholders will be crucial.

Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude, I encourage you, including through the forthcoming Forum in Azerbaijan, to continue your crucial work for a world of peace, tolerance and sustainable development.

Thank you.