

5 October 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the World Habitat Day 2015 — ‘Urban Public Spaces for All’**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to join you in celebration of World Habitat Day.

Thank you to UN Habitat, UN Women and the Permanent Mission of Grenada for organizing today's event.

The last two weeks have been incredibly intensive. Not only did we welcome the largest number of Heads and States and Government ever to the UN, but we witnessed the historic moment when our Heads of State and Governments adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The new Agenda has the capacity to usher in a new era of global cooperation to eradicate poverty, and create a world of shared prosperity, peace, sustainability and dignity for all.

As we mark World Habitat Day and look to implement the 2030 Agenda, we are keenly aware that today more than 3.5 billion people live in urban areas. We are aware also that by the time we reach the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals, that number will have risen to at least 5 billion people. And the majority of that growth will be in developing countries.

This of course brings both challenges and opportunities.

Cities are major contributors to global warming, emitting as much as 70% of global greenhouse gases. Many of them are also incredibly vulnerable to climate change. And with 800 million people worldwide living in slums; cities are where inequalities are at their most pervasive.

On the other hand, cities and urban areas are places of great opportunity, where we see over 70% of our wealth created. And, as evidenced by novels set in Beijing, Istanbul, New York and my own capital Copenhagen, cities are where, creativity, innovation and culture flourish.

To achieve sustainable development, therefore it is absolutely essential that we achieve SDG 11 on sustainable cities but perhaps more importantly, that we implement the SDGs in

an integrated manner. The goals tell us what we need to do including in relation to cities and to safe public spaces. Now, however, it is up to us to get the job done.

For that, we need awareness, energy, commitment and action. Above all, we need to get all stakeholders involved, – citizens, local authorities, the private sector, civil society, women's groups, professional networks, planners, architects, foundations and the international community.

Habitat III in Quito in November is an excellent opportunity to bring the SDGs and their transformative approach to an entire global community. This will be followed by COP21 in December where an ambitious universal climate agreement must be reached. The French hosts, the Secretary General's Special Envoy for cities and climate change, Mr Michael Bloomberg, and networks like C40 (cities climate leadership group), are demonstrating exactly how cities can help us to overcome climate change.

As the President of the General Assembly, I intend to keep the spotlight very much on the SDGs so that we maintain the momentum and make some early progress. In April, I will convene in a high level thematic debate on the implementation of these agreements on SDGs, Climate and related financing.

I look forward to your participation and support.

And I wish you all the best in the year ahead, as we move from commitments to action.

Thank you.