

15 October 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
to the First Committee on Disarmament and International Security**

Thank you, Mr Chair, for your introduction and for this opportunity to address the First Committee today.

To begin, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of Netherlands, on your election and I commend you for the leadership, efficiency as well as admirable time management that you have demonstrated thus far. I wish you, your bureau, and indeed all of the members of this Committee every success during the coming session.

As you all know, this year we celebrate the 70th anniversary of this organisation. Anniversaries provide us with the opportunity to take stock of our achievements and where possible to address some of our shortcomings.

Since the very beginning, the UN has placed great emphasis on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, as key elements for the maintenance of international peace and security. And during the last 70 years we, the international community, have made many strides forward in this area.

We have agreed treaties banning biological and chemical weapons and saw progress in the area of banning nuclear testing and in the elimination of nuclear weapons on bilateral, regional and global levels.

We have also made tremendous progress in the area of conventional weapons – banning certain weapons with indiscriminate effects; curbing use of cluster munition and mines; taking action on proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and setting global rules governing the trade in conventional weapons through the recent Arms Trade Treaty.

All of these achievements demonstrate that the work of disarmament – the work of this committee – is not only necessary but that it can and does deliver results. The endless meetings, discussions and negotiations can and do result in new treaties and the strengthening of existing ones which in their totality contribute to greater peace in our world.

Sadly, ladies and gentlemen, a quick look around our world today, also demonstrates very clearly that there remain simply far too many weapons in circulation – weapons that are fuelling deadly conflicts and incredible instability.

Furthermore, instead of eliminating conventional or nuclear arsenals, modernisation is taking place and more lethal weapons are being invented and being put into operation.

We are confronted also with an increased threat from non-state actors including their ability to acquire heavy conventional weapons and materials related to weapons of mass destruction.

We must also keep track of the developments brought about by technological advancements relating to, for example, artificial intelligence, lethal autonomous weapons systems or new discoveries in life sciences. We must respond to these advancements and continue to address evolving threats.

Ladies and gentlemen, thanks to the existing multilateral disarmament machinery, we have unique treaties as well as consensus principles, guidelines and recommendations on a number of subjects. But like many of you, I too am concerned about the lack of substantial progress being made by the Conference on Disarmament and the UN Disarmament Commission in recent years.

In a similar vein, meeting with one of the survivors of atomic bombing during my recent visit to Hiroshima deeply affected me and reminded me of the devastating humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons – whether by intent or by accident – and the need to proceed urgently with nuclear disarmament.

It is obvious, however, that achieving agreement on sensitive issues across the entire spectrum of disarmament is exceptionally difficult and requires complex negotiations. But, as the recent Iranian nuclear agreement demonstrates, concerted diplomatic efforts combined with renewed political will can overcome major differences.

I therefore appeal to you, the experts from Geneva, New York and capitals to work together and think about how you can make the system that proved effective in the past, even during the cold war era, effective again today. There is, in my view, a significant need to build confidence, establish trust and generate a spirit of understanding and compromise. Only by doing so, can we realistically expect to make progress in this area once again.

Ladies and gentlemen, I came here today, not just out of courtesy to the Chair and to all of you engaged in this exceptionally challenging area. I came here because of my deep personal interest in disarmament and to convey my support and encouragement to you. Rest assured that, during this session, I will be following your deliberations closely and together with my team, stand ready to support you in achieving progress and consensus. I thank you.