

15 October 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At a high-level roundtable discussion co-organized by the Executive Office
of the Secretary-General and the International Peace Institute – UN
Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER): Lessons Learned**

Ambassador Maureen Quinn, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

While there are many different health-focused reviews underway reflecting on the Ebola crisis, this is the only such exercise that is focused on the operational modality adopted to scale up the response to the crisis. Let me therefore commend the International Peace Institute and the Executive Office of the Secretary General's for organizing this important and timely event.

The establishment of United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), the first-ever health emergency mission, reflected an urgency and a commitment from many around this table to respond effectively and comprehensively to the Ebola crisis. And while we may no longer be in crisis mode, we must not wait for the next crisis before ensuring that we translate lessons learned into even better system-wide response mechanisms.

To get things started, I would like to share three reflections.

First, the success of UNMEER demonstrates what can be done when the UN General Assembly's responds quickly to an emerging crisis in a open and collaborative manner. One crucial aspect of this was the General Assembly's decision to allow UNMEER to be both designed and deployed in parallel. This required trust from the membership in the Secretariat, together with a new willingness to try creative and untested approaches to this unprecedented crisis.

Second, the UNMEER response reflected a strong, collaborative partnership between the UN Secretariat, the UN System and the UN membership under the stewardship of my predecessor Mr Sam Kutesa, the Secretary General and the team. This demonstrates the crucial importance of leadership and the benefits that accrue when the comparative strengths and collective capacities of the UN and its membership are combined and leveraged towards specific outcomes.

A third perhaps obvious lesson is that no global response will succeed without the ownership of those most affected by the crisis. Were it not for the leadership of the governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and the courage and professionalism of the people and communities who worked on the entire response, the spread of this disease would not have been halted and countless lives would not have been saved.

Ladies and gentlemen, all of you present here today were critical partners in the success of UNMEER: from hosting it, to providing financial and political support, to contributing through the deployment of your own operational capabilities and expertise. I commend you for your contributions and look forward to hearing your experience of UNMEER.

Of course, we must not lose focus at this crucial moment. I will convene two briefings for the General Assembly over the coming months. The first will take place during the week of 14 December and will focus on “Progress of the Ebola Outbreak Response and the Road towards Recovery”. The second, in early next year, will follow-up on the High Level Panel on the global response to health crisis Report. It is also important the affected countries receive continued support to implement the SDGs, particularly given their emphasis on integration and systems strengthening.

In a related matter, I will hold a meeting of the General Assembly on 20th November to discuss the global refugee crisis. And I am interested in hearing your views on what we might learn from our collective Ebola response to improve our response to that, albeit quite different, but unprecedented global crisis.

To conclude, it is fair to say that the UN is not always associated with dynamism but, when establishing UNMEER, the UN General Assembly and the UN system was especially dynamic and decisive. Internal and external politics were put to one side and ultimately an extremely effective response was delivered. This is something we should be both proud of and we should take forward when addressing future crisis.

I thank you.