

22 October 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the NGO Executive Committee meeting on “The UN at 70:
Working together to make a difference”**

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all.

This is the first of many events taking place over the next few days to celebrate this great Organization's 70th birthday.

The state of our world today, however – from senseless conflicts, a global refugee crisis and attacks on human rights to looming climate change, grinding poverty and destructive inequalities – should spur us all to use these commemorative events to learn from our past and to look to the future. These events should be used also to reflect on what each of us can do to make this Organisation more inclusive, more transparent, more innovative and ultimately, more effective.

Partnership between civil society, non-governmental organizations and the UN, across each of the three UN pillars, is a key aspect of this discussion. And past experiences demonstrate, whether at Headquarters or on the ground, that this relationship can greatly assist the UN in delivering on its mandate.

In these past 70 years, civil society and non-governmental organisations have helped bring the attention of the world to gross human rights violations; have infused UN processes with the voices of the marginalized and have convened key actors when negotiations are at an impasse. They have brought pressure to bear on political leaders, businesses and others. And they have partnered with the UN on ground-breaking development programmes.

In recent years, the role of civil society and NGOs in preparing the 2030 Agenda stands out as a tipping point in UN/civil society relations. You and many of your colleagues brought the voices of the world's most vulnerable to the UN negotiating tables. You helped make the Agenda universal, comprehensive and integrated. You encouraged member states to aim high – not to focus on the symptoms but to highlight the root causes. And you helped enshrine a commitment to reaching those further behind first and to accounting for the commitments made.

On the other hand, all of us who support inclusive processes must reflect on that experience and identify what else can be done to make this engagement more effective. Civil Society and NGOs, for example, must continuously ask themselves if their actions are actually influencing change and if the voices we hear in New York are as representative of the global civil society movement as they should be. And member states who determine the rules of engagement must decide whether we have the right infrastructure to ensure that the civil society contribution is as meaningful as possible.

As President of the General Assembly, I intend to work even more closely with civil society and other stakeholders this year, as we drive forward the theme “the United Nations at 70-a new commitment to action.” As you may know, starting in the spring, I intend to hold three high level events focused on coherent implement of climate, financing and 2030 Agenda commitments; on a comprehensive approach to Peace and Security matters and on how to advance UN efforts at strengthen human rights, governance and the rule of law. The engagement of stakeholders in the events themselves and in any preparatory process will be a key feature.

To conclude, let me thank DPI and the NGO Committee for organising this event and let me encourage all of you to use your influence and your skills to make this year and the next 70 years, years of real transformation in our world.

I wish you all successful deliberations.

Thank you.