

# United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

23 October 2015

## **Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, At the informal session of the General Assembly commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations**

Mr Secretary General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

70 years ago tomorrow the United Nations was born.

And for all its flaws, the UN continues to embody the hopes of billions of people for a more peaceful, prosperous, fair and sustainable world.

It is itself a unique achievement that the UN after 70 years still exists, that it has increased the number of members from 51 to 193 – and now represents almost all of humanity.

But, as Maya Angelou says, ‘did we come to it’, during the past seventy years?

The answer is that, thanks to strong commitment and endless efforts of many good people, much has been achieved.

The UN system has played a vital role in preventing or containing many conflicts. 125,000 men and women are out there on peacekeeping missions around the globe and some have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The UN has contributed immensely to advance human development, feed the hungry, educate children, prevent epidemic diseases and improve health. Refugees have been supported and human rights promoted. And in the last fifteen years alone, the number of extremely poor people has been cut by half.

The UN has facilitated treaties to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and dangerous small arms. And it has supported and advanced decolonisation.

But the UN will never be stronger than the resources and power that the membership of the General Assembly and the Security Council gives it.

And all too often that was too little and too late:

During the past 70 years, millions have died from famine, genocide and war. Regimes built on discrimination and persecution survived or emerged – and were tolerated by the international community. For too long the negotiations on disarmament has been stalled, arms races restarted, terrorism and violent extremism and more armed conflicts have been ignited, causing immense human suffering. And global action against inequality, environmental catastrophes and climate change has been far too weak.

But these very weeks of celebration of the UN at 70 can turn out to be the defining hour for our organisation and the whole international community.

We have taken great and revolutionary decisions by approving the 17 goals for sustainable development. Never before has the UN been so much in the forefront – underlining the existential importance for our children and grandchildren, of ambitious global action now. Before it is too late.

The outcome of the climate summit in Paris in December will be the crucial test of a new United Nations commitment to action for sustainable development.

The outcome of UN efforts here and now to reach out to the sixty million displaced inside and outside the worlds many conflict zones – with Syria as the single worst example – is a crucial test of our ability to mobilize global solidarity.

The outcome of efforts to end the conflicts that are the root causes of these humanitarian catastrophes is the crucial test of the UN’s credibility in ensuring global peace and security.

As President of the UN General Assembly in this coming year I will do whatever I can to support rapid progress on these three areas.

In doing so, the UN can be a home for all actors to help us advance the vision of the UN Charter.

I am convinced that we can and must do it.