

4 November 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the General Assembly Debate on the Follow-up to the
commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of
transatlantic slave trade**

Secretary-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all.

Today's debate is an excellent opportunity to reflect on history, lessons-learned and progress made since the abolition of slavery and slave trade. Without any doubt, slavery remains one of the darkest chapters in our past and on this 70th anniversary year, it is timely that we recommit ourselves to raising public awareness about its legacy of unprecedented horror.

As we meet today, we should continue to honour the enslaved Africans and their descendants and recognise their respective contributions to our world and societies.

The latest report of the Secretary-General highlights educational outreach and public awareness efforts undertaken to commemorate and honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In this regard, I commend the Department of Public Information for selecting the topic "Women and slavery" as the theme for 2015.

As one historian tells us, to be a slave and female was a triple-edged sword. A slave woman was black in a white society, a slave in a free society, and a woman in a society ruled by men. Despite the hardships, enslaved African women were largely responsible for preserving and passing on the culture and traditions that form such an integral part of the African Diaspora of the Americas and the Caribbean that we know today.

This year's theme, therefore, is timely and relevant, and we should pay tribute to those women who contributed immensely to the abolition of slavery and the creation of our societies.

Excellencies, I would like to commend the sustained commitment and actions of Member States to ensure that this issue remains a priority of the General Assembly. In particular, I wish to recognise the dedication of the Member States of the Caribbean Community and the African Group for their efforts over the years.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the Permanent Memorial Committee for its tireless efforts that resulted in the construction and unveiling earlier this year, of the Permanent Memorial to honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We are thankful also to those Member States, organizations and individuals who contributed to the creation of the Memorial and eagerly anticipate the conclusion of the final steps in the project.

I look forward also to the collaboration between the Secretariat and Member States of the General Assembly aimed at promoting annual observance of the International Day of the Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.

Ladies and Gentlemen, while significant progress has been achieved since the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, the struggles of millions of descendants of enslaved Africans did not end with the closure of that dark chapter. The challenge facing all of us today is to take concerted actions to fight all forms of discrimination, including institutional racism and gender discrimination, and to eradicate contemporary forms and manifestations of slavery, including sexual slavery of which women and girls are the primary victims. Many of these matters are at the core of the 2030 Agenda whose implementation must be a priority for all governments.

It is crucial also that we maintain our political commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human rights standards relevant to this cause.

I thank you.