

18 November 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the Second UN Special Thematic session on Water and Disasters**

Mr Secretary General, Honorable Ministers, UN Special Envoy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Water, His Imperial Highness Crown Prince of Japan, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to address this thematic session today.

Coming from a country, where you are never more than 50km from the coast, I am extremely aware of both the value and the power of water. And, from basic human rights to climate change; from sustainable agriculture to energy; from conflict and regional cooperation to humanitarian situations, water and water-related disasters are now among the most political issues in our 21st century world.

Today, the number of people affected and the estimated damages from water-related disasters continues to increase. Weather-related disasters, such as floods and droughts affect developed and developing countries alike, but they have a much greater impact on both the most vulnerable countries and the most vulnerable people in society.

The risks of such disasters are worsened by a variety of factors, including climate change; unsustainable land use planning and management, ecosystem degradation as well as poverty. Climate change is furthermore anticipated to increase the frequency of heavy precipitation over many areas of the world, and to intensify droughts in other areas.

Such matters cannot be addressed by any one government alone and it was this recognition of our global interdependence that led governments to decide at the Rio+20 conference in 2012, to establish a universal framework for sustainable development.

Three years later, we now have that framework in place in the form of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In less than

three weeks-time in Paris, world leaders will be asked to finish the job and to make 2015 a truly game-changing year by adopting an ambitious and universal climate agreement.

Now, however, the real work must begin. Now, you, the experts and leaders in the area of water and disaster risk reduction, representatives from Government, the scientific community, the private sector, civil society and various parts of the United Nations – must come together and walk the talk.

We, who are privileged to be involved in these high-level discussions, must dedicate ourselves to fifteen years of targeted and transformative action. Governments need to respond to the SDG goals and targets, meet the commitments they made in Addis and take the necessary measures to mainstream disaster risk reduction into their planning and activities.

Other stakeholders – civil society, the private sector, particularly insurance companies – must also examine what changes they themselves must undertake and what changes they can help bring about.

This kind of multi-stakeholder action will be at the heart of a high-level thematic debate I will hold on 11-12 April. It will focus on sustainable consumption and production, on technology, infrastructure, gender equality, taxation and aligning private sector activities with sustainable development objectives. And it will facilitate and highlight new strategic actions and partnerships to support implementation in these areas.

Thereafter, the Humanitarian Summit in May can mark a major turning point for a world struggling to adapt to humanitarian situations. And in October 2016, the Habitat III conference can demonstrate how all of these frameworks are leading to action in the area of housing and sustainable urban development.

In short ladies and gentlemen, whatever our thematic focus, each and every one of us has a responsibility to take action over the next fifteen years. During this 70th session, in particular, we must demonstrate that the shift towards a more resilient, just, prosperous and sustainable world is not only feasible but already happening; and that sustainable development is not just a possibility but an inevitability.

Thank you.