

19 November 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
On World Toilet Day**

Your Majesty King of the Netherlands, Your Imperial Highness Crown Prince of Japan, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak today as we place emphasis on something that many of us take for granted: using a toilet, going to a restroom in privacy and washing our hands afterwards.

This is the third time that the UN and the world celebrates World Toilet Day and this year we have extra reason to do so. With the 2030 Agenda, world leaders have agreed to a supremely ambitious framework to end global poverty and achieve sustainable development. And at the heart of that framework is a dedicated goal on water and sanitation, SDG 6, which embraces the right of all people to adequate sanitation and hygiene.

Now, however, after three years of negotiations, we must move from discussion mode to action mode; from commitments to implementation.

To begin with, we must move quickly to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs and reaching those people that the MDGs left behind. And in relation to sanitation and hygiene, the numbers are staggering: 2.4 billion people around the globe still do not use basic toilets; 946 million people – or 1 in 7 people worldwide – practice open defecation and about 50 per cent of people living in rural areas lack improved sanitation facilities, compared to only 18 per cent of people in urban areas.

We must also depart from a silo-approach. The focus of this year's celebration: "Toilets and Health: better sanitation for better nutrition" is very appropriate in this regard. It brings to the fore the inter-dependency between access to sanitation and hygiene and achieving of Goals 2 and 3. According to the World Health Organization, roughly 50% of all malnutrition cases are

associated with repeated diarrhea or intestinal worm infections as a direct result of inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene and children remain the most vulnerable.

But access to sanitation and hygiene is not just related to those two goals. It is also directly related to environmental sustainability, sustainable infrastructure and reducing inequalities. It is closely connected also to reducing violence against women and girls and to empowering them with greater access to education and job opportunities.

Finally, implementation, including relating to sanitation and hygiene, means becoming better at collaboration and partnership. The transformation at the heart of the 2030 Agenda will not be possible if civil society is not enabled to support implementation. It will also not be possible if the private sector, investors and others are not encouraged to move from charitable advocates for a more sustainable world to active participants in achieving a sustainable world.

All of this leads me to the slogan of the 2015 World Toilet Day: #WeCan'tWait. When it comes to going to the toilet, we all know from experience that none of us can wait! And when it comes to achieving the SDGs by 2030, we also know that we simply can't wait to act. We cannot and we must not wait any longer to get implementation underway.

I wish you all a good discussion and a good World Toilet Day.

Thank you.