

20 November 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the Closing Ceremony of UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board  
on Water and Sanitation**

Ms. Uschi Eid, His Imperial Highness Crown Prince of Japan, His Majesty King of the Netherlands, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to join you all today at this closing ceremony of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation.

Over the past fifteen years, galvanized by the MDGs and the International Decade of Action on "Water for Life", some of the world's poorest and most marginalized people have gained access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation. UNSGAB has made a very significant contribution to this progress, providing leadership and guidance throughout the last 11 years and I salute you for your efforts.

And yet somehow, in 2015, while 92 individuals hold more wealth than over half of humanity, almost 800 million people remain without access to an improved water source and an incredible 2.4 billion people do not use basic toilets. This is an insult to the dignity of these people, a breach of their human rights and a major obstacle to achieving better outcomes in terms of nutrition, health, education, environment and economic development etc.

That is not to say that these are simple issues. A global water crisis is estimated to see 1.8 billion people living in countries facing water scarcity by 2025. Rapid population growth, urbanization and unsustainable management and use of water in different sectors, is also affecting the quality and availability of water resources; while the negative impacts of climate change including more frequent and intense water-related disasters are already being felt.

As we move forward with the new 2030 agenda, which has placed matters of water and sanitation at its core, we must learn from our failures and be guided by the testimony of UNSCAB and others. Water and sanitation is a perfect illustration of the need for an integrated approach to implementation – we need to identify trade-offs; keep the marginalized and poorest to the fore;

carry out our work in an inclusive manner and think both in terms of the short term and long-term.

Governments need to include issues related to water, sanitation as well as water-related disasters in development planning and budgeting and continue to mainstream a gender perspective. As with the other goals, we will also need greater engagement with other stakeholders and more effective international cooperation – securing additional financial resources including for sustainable infrastructure development; strengthening technology transfer and capacity building; and dealing effectively with transboundary issues.

Above all, we need political commitment – from national governments, international partners and the United Nations system. Each of us can help build on the momentum from the last few years and secure some early successes. In April, I will organize an multi-stakeholder high-level thematic debate so as to highlight where change is already happening and facilitate the emergence of strategic partnerships, such as on infrastructure, technology, taxation, gender equality and sustainable consumption and production.

Each of these issues are directly related to matters of water and sanitation and I encourage you all, not just to come to that meeting, but to come with a clear illustration of what you are either already doing, or going to do, to further propel or kick-start implementation.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you successful deliberations here today.