

1 December 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs Special Event on UNGASS
preparations**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the kind invitation to speak to you today in the context of preparations for the UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem in April.

The world drug problem continues to pose a serious threat to the health, safety and well-being of all humanity, in particular our youth.

It demands that people are at the centre of all our efforts and that we identify practical solutions to support and empower those most affected.

And as a transnational threat, it presents common challenges and shared responsibilities for all member states.

Despite increased efforts, however, cooperation in addressing this problem must be strengthened and we must seek greater effectiveness and true comprehensiveness.

The Special Session is a unique opportunity to do just that to advance an open, inclusive and wide-ranging discussion ahead of 2019 – the target year for the implementation of the commitments and targets set out in the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on this subject.

It is also an unparalleled opportunity to renew global commitment and the common understandings that are essential for international cooperation in this area.

The preparations for the Special session are well underway, ably led by this Commission as the central policy making body on these matters within the United Nations system.

I have met with both Ambassador Srisamoot and, in early October in New York, with Ambassador Shamaa regarding the preparatory work undertaken thus far.

While the Commission has met in an open-ended format, as agreed by member States, it is a fact that many member States do not have a permanent mission here.

An information briefing was therefore organized in New York in October and I look forward to further briefings in Vienna and New York as needed.

Given that true progress on this issue requires action from a multitude of actors, close interaction among all stakeholders is also essential.

The UN family has much to gain from the valuable inputs of civil society and the non-governmental community engaged in the UNGASS process.

Bringing the experiences and voices of those affected by the world drug problem – young people, marginalized groups, indigenous peoples and others – to UN negotiating tables can help governments ensure that their collective and individual responses are people-centred and grounded in the realities of this issue.

I know that the voices of the many stakeholders interested in this special session are making their way to the CND for your consideration as you develop the outcome document for the Special Session.

And I welcome the efforts made to date by the CND to receive civil society input which has helped bring in a broad range of perspectives.

I therefore encourage you to continue to conduct this process in as inclusive and effective a manner as possible.

Excellencies, in September, when leaders from all member states adopted the 2030 Agenda, they demonstrated that the General Assembly can make far-reaching agreements when member states

listen to each other, hear from those most affected and maintain their focus on the ultimate objective.

In the preparations for the Special Session thus far, all of you have shown similar openness and determination in recognizing that no one country has all the solution to this problem and that no country can effectively address the transnational challenges we face in isolation.

The importance of addressing matters of international drug control is recognized in the 17 integrated and indivisible Sustainable Development Goals.

In Goal 3, for example, member states are called on to increase efforts to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse.

And in Goal 16, member states have committed to promoting the rule of law, to combating organized crime, to tackling illicit arms flows and to developing effective and inclusive institutions.

2016 must mark the end of the discussion on the ‘what’ of the goals and the beginning of the hard work on their implementation.

The UNGASS process is an excellent opportunity to move forward discussions on implementation as it relates to the world drug problem.

To succeed, we need, for example, to ensure that those in need have access to controlled medicines to relieve pain and suffering. While preventing diversion and abuse, we need also to find a way to help people suffering from substance use disorders and communicable diseases such as HIV.

It is also important to address the harmful consequences of the world drug problem on society as a whole and to make full use of all the tools of the UN conventions on drugs, corruption, transnational organized crime and terrorism to combat drug trafficking.

I urge you to continue an open debate on how the challenges posed by drug use, trafficking and production can best be addressed.

By doing so, you will do more than fight drugs and crime – as outlined in the UN Conventions on this matter you will address *the health and welfare of humankind*.

I look forward to continued collaboration with the Commission, the UNGASS Board and all stakeholders as we work together for a successful Special Session in April 2016.

Thank you.