

9 December 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
at the International Day for the Commemoration and Dignity of the
Victims of the Crime of Genocide and for the Prevention of This
Crime**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, today is an important day.

For the first time, we mark the International Day for the Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and for the Prevention of This Crime.

In doing so, we commemorate those people who suffered the most egregious of human rights violations.

We remember also our past failings and are reminded of our obligations as an international community to prevent future Crimes of Genocide.

In choosing 9 December to commemorate victims of this “crime of crimes”, the General Assembly has chosen also to honour those who worked tirelessly for the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted on this day exactly 67 years ago.

This includes a Polish-Jewish lawyer, Mr Raphael Lemkin, who in his own life time, not only fled the Holocaust, but did so much to support the creation of an international regime to prevent and punish similarly horrific genocidal crimes.

Of course the best way to honour victims of genocide is to learn from the past and prevent future atrocities.

We have learnt that genocide is not a single event. It is a process that takes time, planning and resources. We know that there are many signposts along the road to genocide, and thus there are many entry points for us to stop the process and save lives.

We, Member States, must therefore focus on and invest in early prevention and in building inclusive and cohesive societies.

We must establish national and regional measures and mechanisms for the prevention of genocide and other atrocity crimes.

This includes an objective assessment by each member state of their own vulnerability.

It includes education, legislation, strong national judicial and human rights institutions, good governance and the rule of law.

And it includes the building of inclusive and non-discriminatory societies in all countries so as to minimize tensions between communities, whether based on religion, ethnicity, competition over resources or power, or a combination of reasons.

Excellencies, the unanimous adoption last September by the General Assembly of Resolution 69/323 delivered a strong collective message: those people who have been failed by many, including the international community, must never be forgotten.

And to honour their memory and their dignity, we must do all we can to deliver on our promise of “Never Again”.

I now ask that you join me in observing a minute of silence in honour of all those people around the world who have perished through the crime of genocide.

Thank you.