

18 December 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the Member State Briefing on UNGASS**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, you are most welcome to this briefing on the ongoing preparations for the UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS).

I wish to extend a special welcome to Ambassador Shamaa, Chairperson of the Board which is tasked by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) with the preparations of the special event.

In a few moments, Ambassador Shamaa will update us on the latest preparations for UNGASS, including on the draft elements paper as well as the decision on the roundtable sessions at UNGASS, which was adopted at the meeting of the CND last week.

As I have expressed previously, as the only Special Session of the 70th session, UNGASS is a key event on the 2016 General Assembly calendar.

And as a transnational threat, the world drug problem presents common challenges and shared responsibilities for all member states.

In addition, as we enter 2016 we look to advance concrete actions to implement the 2030 Agenda. Given the linkages between the world drug problem and our goals on poverty, health, inequality, education and peaceful and just societies etc, the UNGASS can also help support action to drive implementation of the SDGs.

It is therefore important that its preparations are as inclusive and effective as possible.

Today's meeting serves to ensure that delegations in New York are consulted and remain fully informed of the process ahead.

Over the past few months, I have been working closely with the CND and the UNGASS board, to ensure the fulfilment of the mandates that you the Member States have given to us in the respective resolutions.

On December 1st, I visited Vienna and had a very constructive day at the Vienna based UN organizations.

As regards UNGASS, I am confident that the preparatory process is well on track.

In my meetings with Executive Director Fedotov, Ambassador Shamaa and in the discussion in the special session of the CND, it was clear that consultation has been undertaken in a manner that includes a broad range of stakeholders.

And we all agreed that it should continue to include both civil society and the different entities of the United Nations system.

In those meetings, I also stressed the importance of continued engagement with the member states that do not have any representation in Vienna.

In addition, I met with several other important actors, including the President of the International Narcotics Control Board and had a chance to interact with some Member States delegations in Vienna.

I welcome also the adoption by the General Assembly just yesterday of the relevant resolutions on this topic which includes specific roles both for Vienna and New York.

Looking ahead, on February 10 of 2016, my office will host a Stakeholder consultation at UN headquarters to support the preparatory process in partnership with the Civil Society Task force and other relevant stakeholders.

As you know, I am deeply committed to supporting the role of all stakeholders in this process and I encourage civil society, non-governmental organizations, the academic and scientific community, youth groups and the private sector, among others, to participate in this consultation in an open and inclusive manner.

These stakeholders have been key actors highlighting the importance of the international drug control conventions; and they have actively voiced their demands for a comprehensive and holistic public health approach to drug policies; for more effective development-oriented drug policies and for global access to essential medicines for those in need.

In addition, the annual United Nations Inter-Parliamentary Union hearing on the 8th and 9th of February will be entitled ‘The world drug problem: taking stock and strengthening the global response’.

The IPU Parliamentary Hearing proposes to review parliamentary follow-up to the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action.

It also aims to bring a parliamentary contribution to the preparatory process for UNGASS 2016 whose importance was also recognized in the resolutions adopted yesterday.

These meetings will enrich and help guide the negotiation process that is underway in Vienna.

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

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

Thank you.