

3 February 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the UNU High level retreat on UNGASS preparations**

Excellencies, Mr Deputy Secretary General, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I want to thank the United Nations University and Dr. Cockayne for the invitation to this High-Level Retreat to prepare for UNGASS 2016 on the World Drug Problem.

Unfortunately, previous commitments have prevented me from being with you, however, I have asked a representative of my office to attend what I have no doubt will be two days of very timely and engaging discussions.

At the outset, I would like to recognize the efforts and commitment of all present here at this event: representatives of missions and national authorities, UN agencies, Civil Society, foundations, academia.

Your dedication has been and will continue to be crucial to ensuring that the Special Session will advance an open, inclusive and wide-ranging discussion ahead of 2019.

As you are only too aware, the world drug problem demands that we remain focussed on the people who 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 both common challenges and shared responsibilities for all member states – indeed for all of us, parliamentarians, civil society and citizens alike.

The preparations for the Special session are well underway, led by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and I have remained in close contact with CND, the UNGASS Board, as well as with the relevant agencies over the past five months.

In truth, real progress on this issue will require action from a multitude of actors and overall, the UN family has much to gain from the valuable inputs of parliamentarians, academia, civil society and the non-governmental community engaged in the UNGASS process.

I welcome the efforts made to date by the CND to receive civil society input and I will continue to stress the need for an inclusive approach over the coming months.

Next week, for instance, I will organize the IPU-UN parliamentary hearing on the world drug problem, as well as an Informal Interactive Stakeholder Consultation in support of the preparatory process.

For both events, I have benefited greatly from the support of parliamentarians and the Civil Society Task Force.

Excellencies, distinguished participants.

In 2015, the United Nations proved that the most inclusive and universal forum of the world, despite its limitations, can successfully and seriously address major global challenges.

It proved that when we listen to each other, when we hear from those most affected by the issues and when we maintain our focus on the ultimate objective; compromise and solutions can be found

UNGASS is an opportunities for the UN to do the same in 2016.

I therefore encourage you all to maintain your active engagement with this process.

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

I wish you a very fruitful and successful retreat.

Thank you.