

8 February 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the IPU-UN Parliamentary Hearing on UNGASS**

Excellencies, distinguished parliamentarians, ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all.

It is a great pleasure to be with you today for the opening of this hearing.

At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Honorable Saber Chowdhury and his colleagues for their commitment and efforts in preparing this event.

And I welcome UNODC Executive Director, Mr Yury Fedotov, who has also assisted with preparations.

Ladies and gentlemen, this annual event brings the IPU and the United Nations together to discuss the most relevant issues on the international agenda.

It is an opportunity for parliamentarians to contribute their unique perspective to the work of the UN – perspectives that start from the ground up; that bring the views of constituents from all walks of life and all regions, to the world stage.

As a parliamentarian for more than 30 years now, I am particularly satisfied to see almost 200 representatives of legislative bodies with us today, covering every part of the political spectrum.

Your keen interest in discussing and debating the world drug problem and the global response to this transnational threat is commendable.

Relevant UN General Assembly resolutions have recognized the importance of your participation in the upcoming special session, so allow me to touch on three main contributions that I believe you are in a unique position to make.

First, as I mentioned, you bring the ambitions and concerns of your constituents to these discussions.

Over the coming days, you have an opportunity to make those voices heard by all.

And you can do it in a way that is familiar to us parliamentarians: through constructive dialogue; by recognizing the validity of other opinions while searching for a common goal and a way to achieve it.

Second, as lawmakers, you are responsible for debating and adopting the legal frameworks in your own countries relating to the world drug problem.

It is you who have to fight the consequences of this problem in our societies. And it your responsibility to strive to achieve “*the protection of the health and welfare*” of the people you represent and to help realize all human rights.

Thirdly, you are the custodians of that cornerstone of democracy – parliamentary accountability.

You help to oversee the implementation of international commitments; to demand answers when outcomes are not reached; and to call for action by our governments on all matters, including on this fundamental one.

This hearing is thus an example of democracy in action at the global level.

It provides us with a snapshot of where the world’s peoples sit on this issue.

And the presence of representatives from all regions of the world shows once more that during these discussions, we have to recognize, each in its own capacity, our shared responsibility on this matter. No society or country is unaffected.

I therefore wish you all a successful hearing which I am confident will provide an invaluable input to the preparatory process of UNGASS.

I commend the strong cooperation between IPU and the UN and I offer you, my fellow parliamentarians, a fruitful and rewarding discussion.

Thank you.