

15 February 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
on geopolitical instability and the migration crisis, a new commitment  
to Action, at Post Davos Nordic Summit in Stockholm**

United Nations have two major priorities in 2016:

- to contribute much more effectively to end the growing number of armed conflicts, and the associated humanitarian catastrophes
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- to implement the grand Sustainable Development Goals and the climate agreement -including fighting the grave inequality between countries and within countries

These two priorities are about, both now and in the decades to come, avoiding increased geopolitical instability and even much stronger uncontrolled waves of refugees and migrants.

Of course, the present geopolitical disorder – civil wars, international terrorism, interventions from outside is about conflicting national interests as well as religion and ideology. Much has roots in the past: E.g. aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman and the Soviet Empires, Western colonialism and interventions in the recent past in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya left a number of instabilities.

It is high time we all realize the overwhelming global inter-dependency and genuine common interest in improving global peace and security.

No great power can pull it off alone with or without military action. We have to negotiate and compromise to remove the root cause of humanitarian suffering by making peace.

But humanitarian aid in an unprecedented scale is needed here and now. We in Europe understood all too late that when we did not come to the rescue of the suffering people in conflict zones and the overburdened neighbouring countries, the refugees would come to us in great numbers, costing much more money, but – even worse – giving rise to xenophobia and nationalism, and undermining

of the European project. At least we should have understood the risk, when in September last year the UN was forced to cut food rations to refugees in Jordan to half.

We in the UN are now trying to raise awareness and awaken conscience. 20 million people are refugees across borders, and 40 million are internally displaced inside the war zones. And a further 65 million are for other reasons at least temporarily in need for support to survive – millions because of climate-related famine. The UN needs extra 15-20 billion dollars annually to support these people. Is it much money? Yes – but it is less than 1 out of every 4000 dollars in national income worldwide.

At the conference in London last week a big amount of support was raised for Syria and around.

A conference in Geneva next month seeks to get pledges to resettle some of the most vulnerable refugees. Europe will hardly be in shape to do much more, but hopefully other parts of the world will.

The Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May ,and the High Level Debate on Human Right Rights an good governance which I will organize in July, will serve as stepping stones to further decisions at the UN-Summit in New York in September towards a much stronger and unified humanitarian relief – not only in the regions that produce refugees to Europe, but to the dangerously underfunded humanitarian catastrophes in Yemen and many parts of Africa.

We have to understand, that many refugee-crises last for decades – on average 17 years, but in the case of Palestine up till now 67 years. Short term relief is not sufficient. We have to avoid lost generations of uneducated children, and adults without meaningful opportunity for employment. It is a development project, where government donors have to stay with the UN for many years. In addition, civil society, philanthropy and the private sector are extremely important partners – there share of humanitarian aid increased over the last eight year from 16 til 24 pct.

Integration and employment of the new refugees and migrants in Western countries is extremely important as well.

Here, business leaders can make very important contributions by speaking out against racism and apathy as well as reminding people of recent history, legal and moral responsibilities. Private

companies can help migrants and refugees to gain experience, build language skills and get access to education, technical and other job-training to prepare for quality employment.

More geographical instability to come, if we do not address inequality, environment and climate. Geopolitical instability will rise exponentially if we do not address climate change and environmental catastrophes. Status quo in the level of conflicts or in the way we are rapidly consuming the global natural capital, is simply not an option:

This recognition brought world leaders to sign on to the 17 SDGs and the specific climate agreement – to enable eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and provide schools and health services for all mankind with the next 15 years.

All governments recognized that these great goals can only be met with better local and global governance, where we succeed in ending wars and man-made catastrophes, provide much more equality within countries and between countries – and totally integrate the fights against poverty, climate change and degradation of the environment.

The most urgent challenge is climate change. Temperature must be stabilized at maximum plus 2 degrees Celsius. If we do not succeed here, , in a few decades hundreds of millions of refugees and displaced people, and a much larger number of more dangerous conflicts than we are dealing with already today. This means extreme geopolitical instability, human suffering, and big economic costs. Forced and uncontrolled migration five or ten times the size we are not able to manage today will swallow up all the resources we were supposed to use to eradicate poverty.

We know, as Unilever CEO Poul Polman said in Davos, that there is no contradiction between growth and sustainable development. On the contrary. Future growth is only possible, if it is sustainable.

We know precisely which political decisions and partnerships between governments, civil society and private business and finance are needed to take the sustainable path.

We have very rapid innovation, where renewable energy and other green technologies are becoming both better and cheaper by the hour.

We know it will take trillions of dollars of sustainable investment globally in the next fifteen years, and that this money can be mobilized with the framework and incentives that will at the same time speed up disinvestment in the ‘black’ fossil-fuel-based economy.

We know that there are three basic preconditions for this mobilization of investment:

First: The least developed countries can only make it with considerable development assistance. That is what the rich countries committed to in the SDGs and the climate agreement. But there are dangerous tendencies to stray from these commitments to cover expenditure or tax reductions back home and limit international assistance to the most desperately needed short term relief effort alone.

Second: All countries need more resources in central and local governments for investment in sustainable development. This is not the time to reduce tax revenues. It is time reform tax systems to support patterns of sustainable production and consumption and to strengthen international cooperation against tax havens, tax evasion and fraud while building stronger capacity and competence in national tax administrations. Right now developing countries alone miss out on tax revenues from rich companies and individuals many times the size of the development assistance they receive, because they don’t have decent and just tax systems.

Third: Most of the sustainable investment will have to come from the private sector. This will take a lot of new thinking in the national and international financial institutions including regional development banks and the World Bank Group.

It is the obligation of governments to create the framework of regulation and taxation that makes it self-evident on the market that green investment is the best investment – not only for mankind, but for private investors here and now. That will e.g. take a high taxation on fossil fuels.

On 21<sup>st</sup> April – back to back with the signing ceremony for the climate agreement – I am organizing a major event at the UN Headquarters focussing on rapid implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. I am bringing together heads of state and governments, private business leaders, financial institutions and civil society to continue discussions and kick-start decisions in all these important areas.

In the further implementation I hope governments will realize that growth in GDP is only of general interest, if combined with more equality and social justice and includes protection of the global common goods such as climate and environment. A socially harmonious future is impossible with ever increasing inequality – as we have seen in the US, where the one percent with the highest incomes has grabbed the entire real increase in national income since 1980

I also hope that governments will realize the enormity of the investment necessary in renewable energy, energy conservation, sustainable cities and transportation systems etc ; it will take a coordinated multinational decision to kick-start the economies. This will benefit both growth and employment – not least in Europe which has still not reached the level of real income prior to the financial crises in 2008. And neither in the private sector, nor in the public sector, is borrowing for investment irresponsible, if the investment is profitable both for investor and the greater good. Not to mention the benefits of getting people out of unemployment here and now. And I actually learned at University and practiced as Minister of Finance that creating productive employment is the most efficient and constructive way out of budget deficits.