

18 February 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
to the Diplomatic Corps of the Kingdom of Morocco**

Minister Mezouar, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, good evening to you all. It is a pleasure to be here among the Moroccan diplomatic corps and the diplomatic community in Rabat. At the outset, I feel I should issue a disclaimer: I myself am not a diplomat.

In fact, I am the what some would see as the anti-diplomat: a politician!

But as President of 193 member UN General Assembly since September, I have learned quickly how to be both a diplomat and a politician – engaging with the Ambassadors on all sorts of delicate matters while, at the same time, being decisive and directive so that the UN General Assembly addresses the most crucial global issues of the day.

This year the UN celebrates its 70th Anniversary and it has much to look back on with pride. At the same time, the UN and the international community continues to face many challenges – challenges upon which geopolitical stability, global peace and shared prosperity depend.

And this evening, I would like to focus on just two of these:

The first is about **becoming more effective at preventing and ending the increasing levels of conflict and violence** we see in our world today.

The second is about **implementing the grand Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement**.

Let's take the issue of peace and security first.

From Syria to the Ukraine; from Burundi to South Sudan; from ISIS to Boko Haram; and from frozen conflicts to nuclear threats, clearly there are a wide range of threats to international peace and security today.

And in my view, regrettably, the current systems and tools put in place by the international community over the past 70 years to deal with these threats are failing us.

Take the Syria conflict for example.

There are clearly a number of individual countries who bear much of the responsibility for the suffering associated with that crisis.

But, overall, the international community's response failed to:

- prevent tensions from escalating into all out conflict;
- protect the lives of innocent civilians;
- secure access for basic humanitarian assistance;
- and, as of now, to facilitate a peaceful political settlement.

So what is that needs to change? How we improve our collective capacity to respond?

As we speak, member states are conducting a series of reviews which address this exact question; and how the UN and the international community more broadly can improve its performance in the area of peace and security.

Clearly, much of the current global strife has its roots in the past: E.g. in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman and the Soviet Empires, in Western colonialism and in recent interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya which have left a number of instabilities.

It is also about competing national interests, about exclusion brought about by human rights abuses, discrimination and corruption; as well as about religious intolerance and ideology.

We need to learn from this. It is high time, for example, that all countries realize our overwhelming global interdependency and demonstrate a genuine common interest in improving global peace and security.

No major power can pull this off alone, with or without military action, and ultimately, disputes have to be negotiated and compromise.

This means that through the UN, through regional organizations or through other partnerships, we have to institutionalise the primacy of politics – as for example we are seeing through the Libya talks which Morocco is hosting and supporting.

We also have to increase investment in prevention and we have to advance a more people centred approach to peace and security operations.

Changes in our approach, however, will not be enough. Clearly, there is a great need for reform of the UN Security Council – reform that provides us with a Council that is representative, transparent, effective and efficient; one that is capable of fully fulfilling its mandate in line with the spirit and letter of the UN Charter.

Moving now to the second major issue I'd like to address, namely how to secure rapid **implementation of the grand Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement, agreed in 2015.**

To begin with let's be clear about why this needs to happen:

First, because people everywhere have a moral and indeed human right to a decent standard of living, to freedom and to a fair shot at life.

Second, because world leaders have moral, political and legal obligations to live up to after their commitments last year.

And third, very simply, because if we do not want more geographical instability, more conflicts; a never ending migration crisis and more violent extremism; then we have act now.

The status quo in terms of poverty and inequality; the level of conflicts; and the way we are consuming the global natural capital, is simply not an option.

If we do not succeed here, climate change in particular will lead in a few decades to hundreds of millions of refugees and displaced people, and a much larger number of more dangerous conflicts than we are dealing with already today.

So what do individual countries and the international community in general have to do now?

For a start, we have to totally integrate the fights against poverty, exclusion and climate change. Thereafter, I see four really key steps.

First, the SDGs make a solemn promise to leave no-one behind. To fulfil this promise, we have dramatically improve our response to the humanitarian and refugee crises.

The loss of life over recent years as migrants and refugees sought better safer lives elsewhere, has been a great tragedy and should be a cause of shame for all of us.

Morocco is playing its part, by catering for a large number of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and by ensuring that people do not undertake treacherous and deadly journeys to Europe.

Right now, however, over 20 million people are refugees across borders, and around 40 million are internally displaced inside the war zones.

The UN needs an extra 15-20 billion dollars annually to support these people.

But we must also work to improve how we prepare for and respond to future humanitarian crisis.

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. Government donors have to stay with the UN on these issues for many years. In addition, civil society, philanthropy and the private sector are extremely important partners.

The World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May is an excellent opportunity for all of these actors to come together to agree a new way of doing business on humanitarian issues. And in July, I will hold a High Level Debate on Human Rights which will serve as a stepping stone to further decisions at a UN-Summit in New York in September on large flows of migrants and refugees.

The second major area for action to deliver on the SDGs is climate mitigation.

We simply have to stabilize the global temperature at a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius increase.

Here, we know precisely which political decisions and partnerships are needed.

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, much of which must come from the private sector and can build on divestment from the ‘black’ fossil-fuel-based economy.

Governments and international organizations will have to create the framework of regulation and taxation that makes it self-evident to the market that green investment is the best investment – not only for mankind, but for private investors here and now, for example, a high tax on fossil fuels.

The third area we need to focus on is the mobilization of adequate public investment to address all 17 SDGs and climate adaptation.

In particular, least developed countries and other vulnerable countries can only make it if rich countries live up to development assistance and climate finance commitments.

In addition, 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 to 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 many developing countries miss out on tax revenues from multinational companies and rich individuals many times the size of the development assistance they receive, because of international loop holes and because they don’t have strong and just tax systems.

Finally, when it comes to implementation, there is a major need to focus on inequality. Governments must realize that growth in GDP is only of general interest, unless combined with more equality and social justice **and** includes protection of the global common goods such as climate and environment.

Morocco has embraced this reality in recent years. It has achieved many successes but like any country, there is always more work to be done – to increase opportunities; reduce the divide between rich and poor; empower women and girls; and improve the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms.

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, after 70 years of immense change in our world, I think it is time for a new wave of multilateralism – that will help maintain peace and security; protect human rights and realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

Social harmony, a healthy environment and peace in our world depend on it.

I thank you all for your attention and look forward to our discussion.

Thank you.