

22 February 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the informal briefing to the General Assembly by Mr Paulo Sérgio
Pinheiro, Chair of the Independent International Commission of
Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

Ladies and gentlemen, the conflict in Syria is now approaching its fifth year.

It is a crisis, as you know, that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives; led to the displacement of millions; and caused tensions and turmoil throughout the broader region.

Regrettably, and in addition to the responsibility which individual actors must bear; it is a crisis that has demonstrated some glaring failures on the side of the international community – including the United Nations.

It demonstrates an inability to prevent tensions from escalating into all out conflict; an inability to protect civilians during conflict; an inability to conduct and sustain a massive humanitarian response; and thus far, an inability to facilitate peaceful political settlements when they are desperately needed.

Thousands of Syrian civilians are suffering under the latest escalations of bombings and violence; basic humanitarian assistance has been continuously denied to many; people are dying almost daily in search of a safer future in Europe and millions of refugees are being left without hope.

Excellencies, it is high time that we – the international community of nations – reassert the basic codes and norms that collectively, we agreed to abide by to protect the world's most vulnerable – international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.

And in all of this, the world needs a strong and united UN that recommits to the values and the very bond that have tied the international community together for 70 years.

In this regard, the General Assembly has a special responsibility to help pave the way to a political solution and to deliberate on these crucial and at times divisive issues

There must be no taboos including in relation to alleged atrocities and war crimes; to justice and reconciliation.

That is why I invited the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Mr de Mistura to brief the Assembly last November and it is why I have today invited Mr Pinheiro to brief the Membership about the recent report from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

Thank you.