

23 February 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the Group of 77 + China Chairmanship Ambassadorial Meeting**

Your Excellency Mr. Virachai Plasai, Permanent Representative of Thailand and Chair of the Group of 77 and China; Mr. Mourad Ahmia, Executive Secretary, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you today to exchange views on the work ahead of the General Assembly during the remainder of this session.

Let me begin by congratulating you Ambassador Plasai and the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand for assuming the chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China for 2016.

I regret that I was unable to join you during the hand-over ceremony, but acting President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Abdrakhmanov of Kazakhstan, ably represented me on that occasion.

Allow me to extend also my belated congratulations to Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo and the delegation of South Africa, for their successful leadership at the helm of the Group in 2015.

This is the third time that I am meeting your Group this session. On both previous occasions, I benefitted greatly from your advice and proposals.

Today, I wish to highlight some of the key activities and priorities ahead of us and would like to hear your views on these and any other relevant issues.

Excellencies, as I have said on many occasions, for me, 2016 is all about kick-starting implementation of the major agreements reached last year and translating our great goals into concrete action on the ground.

In this regard, we have some important work before us.

Later this week, I will appoint co-facilitators to address the Secretary-General's Report on Critical Milestones on Follow-up and Review.

As I mentioned at the Informal Meeting of the GA on this issue, I feel there is a need for decisions on a number of key issues which can help clarify the way ahead, while at the same time allowing space for us to learn by doing.

As many of you know, I have also asked that work be undertaken through the General Committee on ensuring coherence and non-duplication in the work of the GA Committees and ECOSOC in light of the 2030 Agenda.

This follows concerns from some member states, including in this Group, about the need to look at these issues comprehensively. The work should therefore build on the efforts being undertaken by the second and third committees. It will be conducted through the General Committee with a view to involving the whole membership at an appropriate time.

Let me now draw your attention to a few events mandated by the General Assembly which will take place this Spring.

First, the Special Session on the World Drug problem will take place on 19-21 April.

Preparations are being led by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the CND, in Vienna under the leadership of the Egyptian ambassador who chairs the UNGASS board.

And I have been working with them to ensure that all member states are fully involved in this process.

Second, the conclusion of the comprehensive midterm review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, is scheduled for 27-29 May.

This is a very important meeting, both in terms of reviewing progress made and looking ahead so that we ensure the needs of LDCs are a priority when it comes to SDG implementation. This work is ably led by the Ambassadors of Benin and Belgium.

Third is the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS on 8-10 June, which I have asked the ambassadors of Zambia and Switzerland to lead on.

In addition to these meetings and processes, the current Global Humanitarian and Refugee crisis requires our undivided attention and real action. Humanity, solidarity and responsibility must be our watchwords.

Clearly, there is an urgent need to bring an end to the horrific conflicts that lie behind much of the current crisis.

But in addition, the World Humanitarian Summit in May, together with the high-level meeting on large movements of migrants and refugees on 19 September just prior to the General Debate, are important opportunities to sustainably address these complex issues and to give real meaning to the commitment to leave no one behind.

I have just returned from official travel to Brussels where I strongly encouraged our European colleagues to live up to their international obligations and to our universal values.

I have recently appointed the ambassadors of Jordan and Ireland to co-facilitate the preparations for the September meeting – both in terms of the organizational arrangements and a possible outcome.

In order to inform this work, the Secretary General has appointed Karen Abuzayad as Special Advisor to prepare a report, to be issued in May.

In relation to matters of **peace and security**, we face multifaceted challenges from on-going conflicts to violent extremism.

And I believe it is time that we really take a fresh look at our collective efforts and systems in this area.

The all-important Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform led by the Ambassador of Luxembourg, are well under way.

And following last week's GA resolution, preventing violent extremism will be addressed in the context of the forthcoming review of the Global Counter-terrorism strategy.

It is also worth noting that a Forum on Religions for Peace will be held on 6 May while a high level thematic discussion on Children, Youth and Violent extremism will also be held in the coming months.

Lastly, the work of the Ad hoc working group on revitalization of the General Assembly is being led by the Ambassadors of Croatia and Namibia.

Since becoming President, I have taken steps to strengthen the transparency and integrity of the Office of the PGA, and will further engage with the Ad Hoc working group on this issue.

Should your delegations require additional information on these processes, please consult my website where the full list of processes and facilitators is available.

Turning now to the three **High Level Thematic Debates** that I will convene during this session. To mark this 70th anniversary, they will focus on each of the pillars of the UN. The first of these on implementation of the SDGs will be held on 21 April ahead of the signature ceremony of the climate agreement.

Both the Secretary General and I have invited all Heads of State and Government to attend these meetings and my team is ready to work with each mission in preparing the SDG-meeting.

The second on Peace and Security will be held on 10-11 May and the third thematic debate will take place on 12-13 July focussing on Human Rights.

Tomorrow I will brief member states on preparations for these three debates.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of **forthcoming elections and appointments**.

The election of the next President of the General Assembly will take place on 13 June followed by the election of the next President of ECOSOC on 14 June, and the election of non-permanent members of the UN Security Council on 28 June.

Lastly, this year, the General Assembly will appoint the next UN Secretary General.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/321, I have been given the responsibility, with the President of the Security Council, to promote a transparent and inclusive process to select and appoint the next Secretary-General.

The list of presented candidates is available on my website with supporting documentation, and will continue to be updated.

So far, I have received letters from Member States presenting six candidates.

In the coming days, I will issue a letter on the informal meetings that I will organize with candidates.

Meetings with the candidates who have presented themselves so far will be held on 11–13 April.

These meetings will provide candidates with the opportunity to present their candidatures and for Member States to engage with them and to ask questions.

They will be held in as open and transparent a manner as possible.

Mr. Chair, these are some of the highlights of key activities and meetings taking place under the General Assembly in the coming months.

I very much look forward to working with you, as Chair, and with the entire Group of 77 and China throughout the rest of the 70th session.

On my part, let me reaffirm my commitment to work with all Member States in a transparent and inclusive manner so that we generate during this anniversary session a new commitment to action for global peace, human rights and sustainable development.

Thank you.