

24 February 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the briefing for member states on the PGA's High Level Thematic  
Debates**

I call to order the informal meeting of the plenary to hold a briefing on the high-level thematic debates that I will convene during the resumed part of the current session.

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

I'm very glad that so many of you have joined us for this briefing.

I will also take this opportunity to share some impressions from my official engagements overseas in recent months, in line with my commitment to transparency and with GA Resolution 69/321. Specific Details on my travel is also available on my website.

As per my letter dated 4 November, I will convene debates in April, May and July focussing on each of the three pillars of the UN: peace and security; human rights and sustainable development.

A number of core themes will run through each debate.

First, in their own way, each seeks to maintain momentum and drive early implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Second, given that we are celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN, each event will address how the UN can better deliver on each pillar and examine what lies ahead for the next UN Secretary General.

Indeed, I will be inviting presented candidates to attend each of the debates. This is separate from the dedicated meetings that I will organize between candidates and the General Assembly, which I would like to address briefly at the end of this statement.

Third, in order to demonstrate the capacity of the UN General Assembly to serve as a catalyst for global action, each debate will be as open and engaging as possible; maximising interaction between political leaders, policy makers and external stakeholders especially civil society and the private sector.

Over the past few months, I have been working to foster political interest in these events; supporting a series of preparatory events and engaging with a range of different actors.

In relation to **the High Level Thematic Debate on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals**, which takes place on 21 April, I have met with many of your leaders both here in New York and on a number of bi-lateral visits.

I have also participated in the World Bank/IMF Annual meetings in the Autumn, in COP21 in December, and in the World Economic Forum and the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week in recent months.

Just last week, I met with leaders and policy makers in the European Union and with the hosts of COP22, Morocco.

Overall, it is clear from my outreach that there is enormous interest in getting SDG implementation off to the best possible start.

It is equally clear, however, that while the 2030 Agenda; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement successfully define “What” needs to be done, stakeholders have yet to fully get to grips with ‘how’ this will be done, including in terms of what exactly is expected from different actors.

Furthermore, there appears to be a need for clarity around how governments and other actors can respond coherently to both the 2030 Agenda and the deeply connected but procedurally distinct Climate Agreement.

Overall, therefore this debate will seek to catalyse ambitious and immediate plans of action by all stakeholders, at all levels.

In particular, it will consider how to strengthen action by governments on implementation and unlock private investment to finance poverty eradication and sustainable development, including on climate.

And as this event will coincide with the High-level Signature Ceremony of the Paris Agreement on 22 April 2016, this is also an opportunity to identify some practical steps on how to coherently address both Agreements.

The moving of the debate to 21 April will also help to maximise high level participation at both the FFD forum and the Special Session on the World Drug Problem which are also taking place that week.

My Chef de Cabinet, Ambassador Christensen, will in a moment provide more detail on the specifics of this event.

Turning now to the second **high level thematic debate on 10-11 May** entitled ‘A world at risk: Evolving threats to international peace and security facing the UN@70.’

During my trips to the Middle East, Brussels and Davos, governments and others expressed alarm at the incredible levels of human suffering being caused by conflict, violence, terrorism and rights abuses in our world today.

Clearly, our current approaches in this area are not delivering as they should be.

This event therefore is a chance for member states to consider the evolving nature of the multitude of challenges we face today; to reflect on the tools, instruments, institutions and innovative approaches we need to meet our responsibilities in this area.

Specifically, the May event will provide a platform from which to draw out synergies from the recent reviews relating to UN peace operations; the UN Peacebuilding architecture; and on women, peace and security, and galvanize efforts to translate these review processes into concrete conclusions.

A series of regional workshops and expert meetings are taking place in advance of the May event, in Brussels, Brasilia, Geneva, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Shanghai, Monrovia, Accra and lastly New York; organized and led by think tanks, civil society organisations, and individual experts among others.

Over the coming period, I will travel to Addis Ababa where I will participate in one of these workshops and where I will be seeking the views of leaders at the African Union on how they feel the global response to peace and security threats needs to change.

The conclusions from these workshops will be presented during the high-level thematic debate and inform the discussion.

To ensure equal attention is given to all three pillars of the UN during this 70<sup>th</sup> session, the **third debate on 12-13 July will focus on Human Rights** and, in particular, on the United Nations’ critical role in this field.

It takes place in the context of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the international human rights covenants; the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Human Rights Council.

And it will provide an opportunity to highlight how action globally to realize human rights can and is contributing to progress on peace and security and sustainable development.

It will therefore look at a number of critical human rights issues touching on both economic, social and cultural rights as well as on civil and political rights.

These include issues such as tackling discrimination and broader patterns of inequality including gender inequality; strengthening foundations for human rights in terms of good governance, the rule of law and access to justice; and addressing how best to support the active participation of citizens, human rights defenders and others in society.

The emphasis here is on demonstrating what actions can be taken to unlock the potential for significant improvements in these areas.

My Office will be consulting with stakeholders to support preparations for this event including through a small event over the coming weeks on the justice and rule of law element of the debate.

Furthermore, on Monday and Tuesday next week, I will attend the Human Rights Council where I will speak with government representatives and others on these issues.

Finally, while in Geneva, I will also discuss the ongoing global humanitarian and refugee crisis.

With nearly 100million people in need of humanitarian assistance today; after visiting the Zaatari refugee Camp in Jordan in January; and after witnessing the significant angst that this crisis is causing in Europe, I am committed to lending as much political leadership to this issue as possible.

I therefore hope to visit a refugee camp in Ethiopia in the coming period and will chair the opening and closing of the World Humanitarian Summit next May.

In addition, I am considering dedicating a segment of my July event to these issues given that it falls between the World Humanitarian Summit and the Summit on large movements of migrants and refugees, which is taking place on 19 September.

Overall, ladies and gentlemen, these debates seek to add real value for those most responsible for peace, sustainable development and human rights in our world.

I therefore encourage member states to be represented at these debates at the highest possible level.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, before concluding, allow me to take this opportunity also to update you briefly on arrangements for the process of **selecting and appointing the next UN Secretary General**.

As you know, in line with resolution 69/321, I have been given the responsibility, together with the President of the Security Council, to promote a transparent and inclusive process to select and appoint the next Secretary-General.

So far, I have received letters from Member States presenting six candidates. The list of candidates as well as supporting documentation is available on my website and will be continuously updated.

Within this week, I will issue a letter on the informal meetings that I will organize with candidates. Meetings with the candidates who have been presented so far will be in the week starting 11 April.

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

These meetings will be held in as open, inclusive and transparent a manner as possible, with the considerable interest from the media and civil society being duly kept in mind.

In this spirit, I intend to offer 1-2 representatives from civil society the floor during each meeting to ask questions, time permitting. The UN-NGLS (NGO Liaison Service) will facilitate the process for identifying these civil society organizations.

This will be done through an open, inclusive and participatory process. Civil society will submit questions to NGLS and an NGLS facilitated civil society selection committee, will thereafter submit a short-list of questions to me for review before the informal dialogues.

But of course, these events are primarily for member states and civil society will only be engaged at the end of the meeting.

If there are any questions on this or on the meetings with candidates more generally, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Office.

With that, I will hand over to my Chef de Cabinet who will provide greater details on the specific arrangements for the April event, after which there will be an opportunity for questions.

Thank you.