

1 March 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the Executive Briefing for PRs in Geneva**

Excellencies, Under Secretary-General Moller, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour to speak to this distinguished group today.

Since taking office I have tried to run the General Assembly in as open , transparent and inclusive a manner as possible – engaging civil society and the private sector; placing significant amounts of information on my website; and engaging partners around the world.

My participation yesterday in the UN Human Rights Council was an excellent opportunity for me to further advance this commitment – by both bringing some of New York to Geneva and in return by bringing some of the knowledge, energy and ideas from around these halls back to New York with me.

I hope that this morning's briefing can fulfil a similar purpose.

During this 70th Anniversary of the UN, our world is facing incredible challenges. The UN General Assembly, I believe, is responding and addressing an enormous amount of issues across the three pillars this session.

And over the next few minutes, I will give you a flavour of these issues, many of which are directly relevant to the work being conducted here in Geneva.

And I very much look forward to hearing your views on these issues also.

Excellencies, since taking office last year, my number one priority has been to support the translation of our great Sustainable Development Goals into concrete action on the ground.

The 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement, are supremely ambitious.

Securing early progress and momentum is therefore absolutely critical.

Governments must take the lead – planning for action over the years ahead and, where relevant, meeting their development assistance commitments.

At the global level, we also have some very important work ahead of us.

Next week, the UN Statistical Commission is due to agree a global indicator framework which will greatly assist with measuring progress.

Over the coming months, we will see the newly agreed Technology Facilitation Mechanism; the Financing for Development Forum; and the Global Infrastructure Forum, take shape, I hope, in a way that will really support progress on the ground.

And through the ECOSOC Dialogue on the Longer Term Position of the UN Development System and the GA process that will follow, relevant UN entities have a chance to adapt to the core features of the new Agenda and to the needs of their core partners.

In addition, I sincerely hope that the global follow-up and review framework begins to fulfil its potential this year.

This framework, in my view, is central to keeping the SDGs at the top of national and global agendas for the next fifteen years.

In January, the Secretary-General officially released a Report which outlines how follow-up and review at the global level, across the many different global platforms, could work best.

And last week, I appointed facilitators to consult with member states with a view to taking the most important decision to get matters up and running.

Of course, the Human Rights Council, the World Health Assembly and other platforms around the world can also support and monitor implementation.

And I encourage you, the Permanent Representatives in Geneva, to consider how best these forums could be organized so as to form part of a coherent follow-up system.

In addition to these processes, there are a number of key events mandated by the General Assembly that will take place this Spring that are also relevant to SDG implementation.

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 and I have been working with our colleagues there to ensure that all member states are fully involved in this process.

Second, the conclusion of midterm review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, is scheduled for 27-29 May. This meeting can look at what we need to do to ensure that the needs of LDCs are a priority when it comes to SDG implementation.

Third a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS will be held on 8-10 June. At this time of transition, it is crucial that national governments and international partners maintain or increase their contributions to this matter.

And fourth, as President, I will hold three high level thematic debates this session focusing on each of the three pillars of the UN and on the challenges which the next Secretary General will face.

The first of these is focused on implementing the SDGs and will take place on 21 April immediately prior to the signing ceremony of the Climate Agreement.

Excellencies, alongside these meetings and processes, you here in Geneva are acutely aware of the on-going Global Humanitarian and Refugee crisis.

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, we must find ways to improve the current humanitarian response.

Humanity, solidarity and responsibility must be our watchwords.

The meeting on 30 March on resettlement of Syrian refugees is an important milestone.

And through the World Humanitarian Summit in May, we have an opportunity to give true meaning to the principle of leaving no one behind and to devise more credible, equitable and sustainable responses to global humanitarian crises including protracted displacement.

The Secretary General's report for the subject is an urgent plea to political and others leaders to summon the courage to reverse the current slide – a slide that is undermining everything this organization stands for.

It is a desperate plea to reassert the basic codes and norms that collectively, we agreed to abide by, to protect the world's most vulnerable people – international humanitarian law; international human rights law and international refugee law.

In this context, I urge all 193 member states to get behind the Secretary General's vision; to participate at the highest level at the Summit itself; and to deliver real commitments so that the current desperation and disorder is replaced by genuine hope and a plan that is commensurate with the humanitarian challenges we face today.

The high-level meeting of the General Assembly on large movements of migrants and refugees which will take place on 19 September will be an opportunity to built on the Istanbul Summit and sustainably address these related and complex issues.

Turning now to matters of **peace and security**.

As I speak, the international community is facing a series of threats in this area, from on-going conflicts to violent extremism and terrorism; and from the proliferation of all kinds of weapons to global pandemics.

And overall, the tools and systems that we, the international community, designed and developed over the past 70 years ago are struggling to cope.

The time has come, I believe, for the UN to engage in a serious reflection on our current performance in this area.

In this regard, I will convene a High Level Thematic Debate on 10-11 May entitled: 'A world at risk: Evolving threats to international peace and security facing the UN@70'.

Specifically, this event will provide a platform for members, key stakeholders both within and outside the UN system, to engage in a strategic reflection about new and emerging threats to international peace and security.

It will look at the means, tools and instruments available to tackle these challenges as well as responsibilities and institutions required for an effective collective security architecture.

It will build on 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.

In addition, two particularly important processes are taking place this session.

The Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform are by now well under way, building on the progress made during the 69th session.

Furthermore, the review of the Global Counter-terrorism strategy will begin in the coming months and will include consideration of the Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, a matter which will also be addressed at a UN conference here in Geneva in April.

In terms of the Human Rights pillar, as we discussed yesterday, this year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, as well as the 50th anniversary of the international human rights covenants.

The 2030 Agenda itself with its emphasis on realizing all human rights, on tackling discrimination; on participation and accountability; and on global solidarity and shared responsibility – is a testament to the influence of these crucial legal instruments.

In addition, an important process is also underway relating to the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant UN bodies on issues affecting them.

Furthermore, just last week an informal meeting of the UN General Assembly marked the 10th Anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect, while an event will be organized in March in New York, this time to mark the 10th anniversary of the Human Rights Council.

It is in this context that I will hold my third High Level Thematic Debate on 12-13 July, focussing explicitly on the human rights pillar.

It will be an occasion to look at issues which are both crucial for human rights and key to protecting peace and catalysing sustainable development – such as addressing discrimination; promoting good

governance, access to justice and the rule of law; and creating space for participation by all in society.

Excellencies, I would like to address one final issue before concluding.

Through 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 UN Secretary-General.

The list of the 6 candidates presented so far is available on my website with supporting documentation, and will continue to be updated.

The major innovation for this process, however, is the series of meetings or informal dialogues that I have been mandated to organize between the candidates and the General Assembly.

Late last week, I issued a letter to member states on how those meetings will be organised and I believe these meetings have the potential set a new standard for how we choose the person to lead our United Nations.

The first meetings with candidates presented at this point will begin on the week of 11 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.

Candidate are asked to prepare a mission statement and they will each engage with member states during a dedicated two hour session.

The meetings will be held in an open and transparent manner, with opportunities for 1-2 questions from civil society representatives, time permitting.

Further details are available on my website.

Excellencies, these are just some of the highlights of key activities and meetings taking place in the coming months.

It will clearly be an extremely busy period, but one that I hope can help the UN deliver better on this 70th anniversary, for people and for planet.

With that, I thank you for your attention and would be very happy to hear any questions or comments you might have.

Thank you.