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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the High-level Forum on Adolescent Girls and Agenda 2030 for
Sustainable Development**

Your Royal Highness, Honorable Ministers, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, Under Secretary-General Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On Tuesday, in this very room, many of us gathered to celebrate International Women's Day.

On that occasion we were inspired by many excellent speakers, but I was particularly moved by the courage of one young woman in particular :

Ms. Monica Singh, who was attacked with acid at the age of 18 after refusing to accept a marriage proposal.

She had suffered burns all over her body, losing 95 percentage of her skin, but despite the immense pain, the risk to her life and the change in her appearance, she did not give in.

She decided to fight for her survival because, as she said, “..I believe my life has a purpose”!

Her story made it crystal clear to me why we must be relentless in the fight for gender equality and why we are gathered here today.

If a young woman is capable of overcoming such an attack on her life, her freedom and her future, just think how much more she could achieve if society was actually on her side – supporting her, empowering her.

But for many girls and especially for those living in poverty, adolescence marks a time of heightened vulnerability when that support is non-existent – a time of greater risk of marginalization, discrimination and horrific human rights violations.

It is up to all of us to reduce those risks and empower these girls.

And with the 2030 Agenda, we have a real opportunity to do so.

Since its adoption in September, I have often said that this Agenda is truly revolutionary.

I say this because of the vision it presents of a better world. And because of its potential to mobilize real action to make that vision a reality.

That potential derives from the fact that its message of hope was enthusiastically endorsed by Heads of State and Government from every UN member state last September.

From the fact that we are building on the solid progress achieved by the MDGs.

And from the momentum that is being generated among many stakeholders around key transformative areas such as investing in social protection floors or shifting away from fossil fuels.

Clearly, investment in the 600 million adolescent girls in our world can be similarly transformative.

Imagine the contribution to society that they could make if we remove all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment; if we prioritize investment in their education and health; if we support them to realize their human rights and if we tackle harmful gender stereotypes head-on.

Imagine the positive impact of such changes for their own lives, for their families, their communities, and for broader societal and economic development.

In fact such a transformation – particularly empowered women joining the labor market – has been the greatest change in the global North in my lifetime, and it has brought incredible benefits for all of society.

The job of empowering adolescent girls now, however, is the responsibility of all of us.

It is a job for you and for me; for governments and communities; for UNFPA and for all of the UN system; for adolescent girls themselves and their male peers; for the private sector, religious leaders and civil society.

It is the right thing to do and it is the smart thing to do.

I therefore encourage all of you here today to identify concrete actions that you will take and new alliances that you will build to help realize the rights and potential of our world's adolescent girls.

Thank you.