

14 March 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the Commission on the Status of Women: Women's empowerment  
and its link to sustainable development**

Mr Secretary General, Honorable ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen....I would like to begin by congratulating you all!

Because, this time last year, we did not have the 2030 Agenda. But today, thanks in part to the commitment of many in this room, not only do we have the new 2030 Agenda but we have what I believe is a revolutionary agenda.

One which can direct us towards a future where men and women, boys and girls, enjoy equal opportunities and full equality in a sustainable world.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is an excellent starting point for this 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Of course, the drive for Gender Equality has been the business of this Commission long before the Sustainable Development Goals.

And the empowerment of women and girls has been advanced by courageous feminists, women activists, government officials and others long before the 2030 Agenda was agreed.

So what exactly has changed since September?

In many respects, very little.

Women of all ages, of all religions and in all countries, continue to face discrimination.

Adolescent girls continue to suffer violence, an absence of opportunity and to have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights curtailed.

Political systems continue to pay lip-service to gender parity and governments continue to clamp down on those who defend human rights.

And labor laws and practices remain stacked in favor of men – as demonstrated by the fact that even in this Organization, the United Nations, we have yet to see a female Secretary-General.

But what the 2030 Agenda has achieved is a change of the narrative around both the importance of gender equality and what it is that gives rise to inequality.

The 2030 Agenda embraces the fact that gender equality is an absolute precondition for the other changes we want to bring about by 2030 – tackling poverty and inequality; building peaceful and inclusive societies, fostering shared prosperity and shifting to low-carbon climate resilient economies.

And compared with the MDGs, the SDGs go to the heart of the prejudices and structural causes of gender inequality.

Not only do the SDGs seek to ensure that women and girls can access essential services like health and quality education, they seek to empower them to make their own choices and enjoy their own rights.

They seek to increase women's participation not just in politics but across society; to give them the choice to share or even forego care-giver duties and to enter the labor market to become drivers of change.

With these changes, the time bound, measurable and universally applicable 2030 Agenda has dramatically increased our chances of realizing what was agreed in Beijing in 1995.

This new Agenda can inspire the SDG generation to join governments, women's organizations, the media, the private sector and others in what the He-for-She campaign calls, 'a bold, visible force for gender equality'.

And it can further situate the Commission on Status of Women as a critical part of that force.

Promoting reform, influencing policies and monitoring progress, this Commission has can be a watchdog which ensures that the entire implementation effort contributes to the realization of gender equality.

During this session, the Commission has a unique opportunity to provide guidance to governments and others who are aligning their plans, core strategies and funding with the 2030 Agenda.

It can remind governments that gender equality requires action not just on Goal 5 but right across the Agenda.

And it can highlight the pitfalls, opportunities and concrete steps towards a gender-equal world by 2030.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have fifteen years to make this transformation happen.

The needs are great and change is long overdue.

So let's get to it.

Thank you.