

15 March 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the Panel discussion to mark the 10th anniversary of the Human
Rights Council - ‘Are Human Rights under assault?’**

Thank you very much Assistant Secretary-General Simonovic.

Mr Secretary General, President of the Human Rights Council, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Just two weeks ago, I had the pleasure to deliver opening remarks at the Plenary of the Human Rights Council’s 31st session.

While there, I met with many people who recounted their experiences of the HRC these past ten years.

Chief among them was former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who described to me the great lengths that he and the then President of the General Assembly – Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson – had to go to, to secure the establishment of the HRC.

Today, I think it is fair to say that those efforts were truly worth it.

Because the Human Rights Council is now a vital part of the United Nations architecture and the main United Nations body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The tools that it has developed and the issues it has addressed since 2005, is a testament to its relevance and ever-growing importance.

Take, for example, the Universal Periodic Review which has provided a space to engage each and every State in a dialogue about human rights issues in their own countries.

Or indeed, take the Special Procedures mandate holders which play an invaluable role in highlighting crucial issues around the globe.

In addition, the HRC has also been effective in responding to crises – both protracted and emerging, including places like Syria, Libya, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and indeed in the wake of the Arab Spring.

And in recent years, the Council has also served as an early warning system to sound alarm bells ahead of impending or worsening crises.

The reach of the Council is also expanding. Discussions at the HRC have often triggered discussions here in New York, whether in the General Assembly or in the UN Security Council as illustrated recently in relation to Syria or DPRK.

And overall, its recommendations, together with those from the Council's expert Special Procedures mandate-holders and the Treaty Bodies, provide member states with a powerful roadmap for change, and with clear guidance on what can be done to improve the human rights situation in our world.

Excellencies, Mr Secretary General, as we look to the next 10 years, I am confident that the Human Rights Council will go from strength to strength, if we the member states provide it with the support it requires.

Because, to answer the question before us today, yes the human rights of millions of individuals, vulnerable groups and isolated communities are under attack.

Think, for example of the disregard for human life, for human rights and for humanitarian law displayed in recent conflicts – including the Syria crisis.

Think of the continued violence and discrimination against women and girls, against migrants and refugees, or against persons based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Think of the 800million people who remain in abject poverty today; the **2,195 children who die from diarrhoea every day or the thousands of workers who are denied their rights by powerful and at times unaccountable corporate actors.**

Or think of the civil society activists including Human Rights Defenders whose lives are threatened or who face reprisals for their work to expose rights violation and pursue accountability, whether at the local level or the global level.

These, ladies and gentlemen, are just some of the people who need a strong Human Rights Council.

And it is our responsibility, individually and collectively, through our support, our focus and our engagement, to ensure that they have one.

I therefore look forward very much to this panel discussion and to continuing this discussion with you during the High Level Thematic Debate on Human Rights that I will hold here in New York on 12-13 July.

I thank you very much for your attention.