

29 March 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the opening of the Special Event on “Raising awareness and
building resilience to disasters – experience from Japan”**

Ambassador Yoshikawa, Mr Toshihiro Nikai, Mr. Fukui, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to address this special Event today.

As we celebrate the first anniversary of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, let me seize this opportunity to pay a special tribute to Japan for its continued engagement on this matter from Hyogo to Sendai in order to build resilience to disaster and increase awareness at all levels. This effort has contributed to saving millions of lives around the world. Moreover, Japan experienced one of the most devastating earthquakes and Tsunamis in 2011 that caused huge damages. Needless to say that the Japanese experience in recovering from this disaster deserves to be shared with the whole membership. We look forward to hearing presentations from panelists.

Tsunamis, tropical cyclones, storms and other weather related events have also targeted many Small Islands and other developing countries, from Philippines to Vanuatu and Fiji, to mention few, causing huge damages to their economies and communities.

Disaster risks are driven and worsened by a variety of factors, including climate change; unsustainable land use, planning and management, ecosystem degradation as well as poverty. Climate change is anticipated to increase the frequency of heavy precipitation over many areas of the world, and to intensify droughts in other areas, further threatening food security and undermining efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development worldwide.

Such challenges need to be addressed through a holistic approach that involves all stakeholders. Our global interdependence and shared responsibility led the international community to establish appropriate frameworks in Hyogo and Sendai. The adoption of the 2030 sustainable development Agenda as well as the Paris Climate Agreement have further strengthened this global Framework.

Furthermore, the UN General Assembly adopted during this current session a resolution that established the World Tsunami Day, to be celebrated every 5th November. This text is a clear recognition of water related disasters that are continuing to claim lives and affect an increasing number of people around the world. Weather-related disasters, such as Tsunamis, floods and droughts affect developed and developing countries alike, but they have a much greater impact on the poorest and most vulnerable.

Implementing these different frameworks is our common challenge now. Experts and leaders in the area of disaster risk reduction, along with representatives from Government and other relevant stakeholders must come together and deliver urgently on this matter. It is also critical to dedicate appropriate efforts to meet goals and targets as well as other commitments made in Addis Ababa, New York and Paris.

Governments need to mainstream and incorporate disaster risk reduction as integral part of their economic planning and climate adaptation strategies. A variety of stakeholders shall be involved, including insurance companies, the private sector and civil society in order to improve disaster responses.

Furthermore, increased awareness and understanding of disaster risks, including the need to reduce risk factors, while strengthening and promoting exchange of data and best practices for early warning systems are critical elements.

Strengthening international cooperation and partnerships are also vital to build resilience and enhance urgent response, including through the provision of needed financial support for countries and communities in disaster prone areas, as well as appropriate capacity building and technology.

The High Level thematic debate I will convene on 21 April will seek to maintain political momentum and promote multi-stakeholder action at all levels to achieve SDGs, including on areas related to disaster risk reduction and other related risks and challenges. It will facilitate and highlight new strategic actions and partnerships to support implementation.

The upcoming Humanitarian Summit in May and the Habitat III conference in November 2016, could also constitute opportunities to address aspects of disaster risk reduction related to resulting humanitarian situations as well as the promotion of housing and sustainable urban development for an increasing world population, especially in urban areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we move towards the implementation of the sustainable development Agenda, a strengthened commitment on disaster risk reduction will be critical to shift towards a more resilient, prosperous and sustainable world and achieve different goals and targets. Let's invest in global efforts to address disaster risk reduction and other related challenges. Let's invest in saving millions of lives and economic assets around the world.

Thank you.