

6 April 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the opening of the Informal Interactive Civil Society Hearing as
part of the preparatory process towards the 2016 high-level meeting
on HIV/AIDS**

Excellencies, Mr Deputy Secretary-General (TBC), ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all.

Last September, world leaders gathered here at the UN to embrace the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a revolutionary and complex agenda.

Today, exactly six months later, we meet to discuss one of the most ambitious and concrete changes promised by that Agenda – an end to the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

And it is my pleasure to convene this Civil Society Hearing, as part of the preparatory process for the High-level meeting on this subject on 8-10 June.

I would like to begin by thanking the Stakeholder Task Force for their important contributions to date.

And I also extend a very warm welcome to all our civil society and other stakeholder partners, many of whom have travelled far and wide to participate in today's discussions.

You bring with you a wealth of experience from your daily work, and for many of you, personal insights from dealing with the disease in your own lives.

No matter what field we are discussing, sharing such experience and listening to insights like yours, is fundamental to understanding what our priorities should be and how we can respond most effectively.

I am therefore greatly encouraged by the interest shown by Member States in the preparations to date and I look forward very much to their active participation in today's discussions.

Ladies and gentlemen, the high-level meeting comes at a pivotal time in the global AIDS response. It represents an opportunity to translate into action September's ambitious HIV/AIDS commitments.

Over recent decades, we have made considerable progress against the epidemic.

Together, the international community achieved the 2011 Political Declaration goal of providing antiretroviral treatment to 15 million people living with HIV by 2015.

The world is well on its way to accomplish another critical goal, to eliminate new HIV infections among children and enable all children to be born free of HIV.

Yet there is much work to be done.

New HIV infection rates are falling too slowly.

Socially marginalized groups are often left behind and experience much higher HIV infection rates. Stigma, discrimination and other social and legal barriers exacerbate vulnerability to HIV and put life-saving services out of reach of millions.

This must change.

The international community, including development partners and national governments, must also close the resource gap to be able to end the AIDS epidemic.

Civil society organizations have been at the forefront of the fight against AIDS. Without civil society and other stakeholder advocacy, and without community-based treatment and prevention services, the response to AIDS would be a small fraction of the effort we see today.

The knowledge, energy, commitment and passion demonstrated by civil society is absolutely essential.

The academic and scientific community and the private sector are also key partners in the response. Today, therefore, I encourage you to highlight your key priorities and respond to some key questions:

How can the high-level meeting – and its outcome Declaration, lay the foundation for more robust, equitable, and strategic response to AIDS?

What commitments are necessary to ensure success for our shared mission to bring this epidemic to an end?

How do we take full advantage of the holistic vision of the 2030 Agenda, to strengthen the inter-linkages between the AIDS response and the SDGs?

Last but not least – how do we fulfill the promise of inclusiveness of the Agenda 2030, to make sure that no one is left behind, so that we can truly end the AIDS epidemic by 2030?

2016 is the year that we get the SDGs off to the best possible start. Action on the Aids epidemic must be a priority in this regard.

I therefore wish you all successful deliberations and I will return towards the end of your meeting to discuss the key messages coming out of your discussion.

Thank you.