

7 April 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the meeting of the Ad-hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of  
the UN General Assembly**

*Statement made by Ambassador Tomas Anker-Christensen, Chef de Cabinet of the Office of the President of the General Assembly*

Thank you Ambassador Emvula.

Before elaborating on some of the points made by the President on improving the functioning of the Office, allow me to touch briefly on other issues which are relevant to today's discussion.

First, the President has engaged frequently with the other organs of the UN, addressing the Security Council, meeting regularly with the President of ECOSOC, and enjoying very close cooperation with the Secretary-General and his Office. Such engagement is key to promoting coherence across the Organization.

Second, the President has met regularly with the General Committee, the chairs of all GA Committees and with representatives of the regional groups, aiming at doing so on a monthly basis. It is felt that this practice should continue as it greatly assists with the overall running of the Assembly.

Third, the President has taken a number of steps to keep the membership and the general public abreast of developments. This includes consistent sharing of information on the website regarding Trust Fund contributions, OPGA staff, his travels etc.

He also briefed member states in February on a number of his official trips to COP21, Davos, Abu Dhabi, Jordan and elsewhere as well as on preparations for the three High Level Thematic debates which will take place over the coming months.

In addition, the President published a list in January of the different processes being undertaken by facilitators this session and has updated that list regularly. I believe this practice could also be institutionalized and carried out both at the beginning of each session and in January each year.

### **Turning now to the functioning of OPGA**

First, allow me to elaborate a little on how this Office has experienced the changing role of the OPGA.

While the President continues to preside over GA meetings, the great majority of his work and that of his office, involves overseeing various negotiating processes; organizing formal and informal General Assembly meetings; preparing his high-level thematic debates and other major meetings; and facilitating greater stakeholder engagement in General Assembly affairs.

This session, 16 negotiations processes are taking place in the General Assembly, which must be followed by OPGA and for which facilitators have been or are being appointed.

7 formal high level events are taking place ranging from the 2030 Agenda Summit to HIV/AIDS; from the Special Session on Drugs to the World Summit on Information and Society. Each of these has their own unique preparatory process and often include a number of stakeholder meetings.

In addition, 3 PGA High Level Thematic Debates are being organized – a smaller number than in previous sessions.

In addition, the PGA is expected to convene approximately 20 informal GA meetings and briefings responding to the issues of the day or to calls from member states. These meetings discuss matters as diverse as SDG indicators, the Syrian Commission of Inquiry; the migrant and refugees crisis; the recent Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Allegations; children and youth affected by violent extremism, and many more.

Furthermore, each session is of course very different – last year, the post-2015 negotiations were center stage; this year it's SDG implementation and, in particular, SG selection which has been and will continue to be a major undertaking for the Office. The three days of informal meetings with candidates next week are the culmination for now of a process that was initiated with the adoption of resolution 69/321.

In total, the President has spoken at over 215 events so far.

While the PGA relies heavily on the immense contributions of the respective co-facilitators as well as support from DGACM and other parts of the system, behind each GA agenda item, each GA meeting or each event, lies a series of pre-meetings with the UN system, member states and other actors; a series of preparations which require time, expertise and knowledge.

It is our impression that this is not particular to the 70<sup>th</sup> PGA but is a development that has been in motion over some time. After all Member States do not add mandates based on who is the PGA in a given year.

This change in workload is in part due to a shift away from traditional Prep-com processes and towards informal consultations under the GA. It should be noted, however, that no additional resource have been secured for the Office to respond to that change in approach.

This overall context is important when considering how to strengthen the functioning of OPGA.

On the transition period between each session, OPGA70 received considerable support from both DGACM and President Sam Kutesa.

Despite this, it was surprising just how much it seemed like the Office was starting from scratch – no standardized system for engaging secondees; no standardized terms of reference for staff; no ethics training for staff despite OPGA70's requests; and no clarity on the Office's record-keeping system.

Each of these gaps can be addressed through administrative changes.

On financing, I wish only to touch on three points raised in the Taskforce report.

First, the report points to unspent balances of the OPGA regular budget.

As the President mentioned, this can in part be explained by a complication which arises at the end of each biennium budget when a large amount of the PGA's annual allocation is expected to be spent within the first three months of the PGA's term.

Failure to spend that amount results in it being removed from the PGA's budget and reported in the accounts as unspent.

This matter should be resolved as it is not prudent to expect a PGA to spend resources which are usually dedicated to High Level Thematic Debate, so early in his or her term.

Second, with regards to vetting contributions from the private sector, it is worth noting that the option outlined in this report regarding the possible role of Global Compact must take into account that the Global Compact would need a mandate to fulfil that role and may need a comprehensive vetting capacity for this purpose.

Third, the report proposes the establishment of an Oversight Office for OPGA. This may well have merit but would require further elaboration.

Lastly, on staffing, the President has clarified how the current turnover of staff could be addressed.

I wish only to add that the aim here is make the best of existing resources; address the current top-heavy structure of UN positions; and ensure that future PGAs are supported by a core group of staff at P2-P4 levels within the office – staff who are well versed in General Assembly and UN system matters.

I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have on these or any other issues raised by the President.

Thank you.