

12 April 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the opening of the informal dialogues with candidates for the
position of the United Nations Secretary-General**

Excellencies, distinguished candidates, ladies and gentleman, this is a historic moment.

Much of what we are embarking on today is without precedent at the UN.

For the first time in this Organization's 70-year history, the process for selecting and appointing the next Secretary-General is being genuinely guided by principles of transparency and inclusivity – and the dialogues that we are beginning today are at the very core of this change.

As the UN grapples with multiple crises and the Organization deals with some fundamental questions regarding its own role and performance; finding the best possible candidate to succeed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is absolutely crucial.

In line with General Assembly resolution 69/321, and pursuant to a letter dated 15 December 2015 from the President of the Security Council and I, the following 8 candidates have been presented, namely:

- Srgjan Kerim, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- Vesna Pusić, Republic of Croatia;
- Igor Lukšić, Montenegro;
- Danilo Türk, Slovenia;
- Irina Bokova, Bulgaria;
- Natalia Gherman, Republic of Moldova;
- Antonio Guterres, Portugal;
- Helen Clark, New Zealand;

These informal dialogues will be held in accordance with established practice for informal meetings of the General Assembly.

The meetings will be open and webcast with interpretation in all languages and I welcome all those watching from around the world.

A link to each webcast will be posted on my web page for future record.

As reflected in the schedule circulated in my letter dated 29 March 2016, each candidate will be afforded a two-hour meeting slot during which they will be invited to present their vision statement followed by questions from member states and civil society.

The vision statements address the challenges and opportunities facing the UN and the next Secretary-

General, and have been circulated to all member states in advance.

Candidates will be given the opportunity to respond to Member States' interventions at regular intervals.

Delegations wishing to take the floor can do so by pressing the button on the console before them.

I encourage Member States to pose questions in a short and focused manner, and in doing so to bear in mind questions already posed by others.

Equally, I urge candidates to restrict themselves and to be brief and precise in their answers.

Member States speaking on behalf of groups are invited to approach the list of speakers table and will be given priority.

I would like to appeal to representatives to limit their interventions to three minutes when speaking on behalf of a group and to two minutes when speaking in a national capacity.

To assist speakers in this regard, a light mechanism has been installed on the podium to facilitate compliance with the time limit.

A green light will be activated at the start of each speaker's question; an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of 3 minutes for questions on behalf of the group, and 2 minutes

for questions in national capacity; a red light will be activated when the 2 or 3 minute limit has elapsed.

I intend to enforce the time limit strictly, in the interest of ensuring equal opportunity and balanced approach for participation of all candidates as well as Members.

Excellencies, the level of interest in these dialogues from the global public and civil society is extraordinary.

On February 26, we opened a call for civil society to submit questions. More than 1000 questions have been submitted from 70 countries so far, thanks to efforts from the Non-governmental Liaison Service and across the UN system globally.

Questions have been proposed using the hashtag #UNSGcandidates on Twitter and Facebook, via Weibo [way-bwa] in China, and through an online form and email – reaching more than 78million people.

A dedicated and balanced civil society Committee reviewed all questions submitted and agreed a short-list of 30 of them.

Bearing this in mind, and for the purpose of transparency and inclusivity, each candidate will be asked to respond to one or two questions from Civil Society, time permitting.

I will also post 10 of the top remaining questions on my web site after the dialogues and I encourage each candidate to answer them in writing.

Excellencies, distinguished candidates, ladies and gentlemen, as I have said before, I view these dialogues as a potential game-changer for the United Nations.

They represent an opportunity for the General Assembly to reassert itself; to establish a new standard for transparency and inclusivity in decisive UN processes; and, most importantly, to help secure the best possible candidate to be our next UN Secretary-General.

With that, we will now begin.

I give the floor to His Excellency Igor Lukšić to present his vision statement.