

19 April 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the opening of the event “Listen first – Listening to children and  
youth is the first step to help them grow healthy and safe”**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Your Majesty, Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

It is a pleasure to participate in this event.

Over the past few hours, I have been listening intently to the views expressed by member states on both the UNGASS Outcome document and the world drug problem more generally.

The sharing of those views, whether in the plenary or in side events like this, allows us to advance the international debate and to understand better how to effectively address this global problem.

It is, of course, a complex problem – one that involves matters of human rights, social cohesion, sustainable development, science, criminal justice and international law.

And it therefore demands a comprehensive, integrated and multidisciplinary response, one that addresses these different dimensions in a balanced way and places the appropriate emphasis on individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.

Part of this involves taking effective and practical primary prevention measures that protect people, in particular children and youth – a focus that is echoed in the Outcome Document and indeed in the SDGs.

Everyone in this room knows that children and youth are among the groups most affected by the World Drug problem and that their exposure to risk factors is very high.

And it is also widely recognised that prevention, education and early intervention, can have a very powerful impact on this group.

The challenge we face, therefore, after committing to implement age-appropriate practical measures, tailored to the specific needs of children, youth and other vulnerable members of

society aimed at prevention, is to implement the measures that actually work – the knowledge is there.

What the ‘Listen first’ campaign tells us, is that any measures – whether focussed on strengthening families or on access to education, recreation or health care – must involve, as a starting point, listening to children and young people.

The simple act of listening – something which many of us parents, policy-makers and leaders, are not always known for doing so well – has been shown to be very effective, not just in terms of developing the correct prevention measures but also in terms of engaging children and young people before it is too late.

‘Listen first’ to understand better; listen first to demonstrate respect; listen first to empathise better.

After all, we know that self-confident and responsible children and youth will be less likely to the addictive use of drugs.

Your Majesty, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the UNGASS Outcome Document and the SDGs demand that member states and others take action now to make implementation a reality.

I commend the commitment that your presence here represents and I applaud the launch of the ‘Listen FIRST’ campaign today.

We are, of course, in the United Nations, an Organisation which was founded on the simple premise that by listening to others, we can overcome our differences and address our common challenges.

Let us not forget to listen to those who are our future.

The ones who demand from us that we listen, that we learn.

Thank you very much.