

28 May 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the lunch in honour of the President of the General Assembly in
Cairo**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

It is a pleasure to be in Cairo today at the invitation of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

This is of course a difficult time for your country and I wish to extend my sincere condolences to you all following the recent Egypt Air tragedy.

Ladies and gentlemen, as President of the General Assembly these past nine months, I have heard first-hand from member states about the range of challenges that they are facing today both individually and collectively.

And, as you who live here in the Middle East know better than most, those challenges are truly immense.

A global humanitarian crisis is affecting over 125,000 people and putting enormous strain on countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

60million people are displaced world-wider and pressure is on world leaders to find solutions at this September's Summit on Migrants and Refugees.

Despite breakthroughs in Addis, New York and Paris last year, the facts remain the same – 700 million people remain trapped in extreme poverty and the window of opportunity to avert the worst impacts of climate change is closing rapidly.

Complex conflicts and instability are wreaking havoc in Syria, Yemen, Libya and a number of sub-Saharan countries, in part due to the decisions of reckless leaders and growing distrust between global and regional powers.

Violent extremists and terrorists are exploiting disenfranchised or excluded young people all over the world, building on sectarian divides and spreading fear, death and hate across the world.

And many Governments, contrary to their international human rights obligations, their own commitments at the Human Rights Council and to what we all know drives economic development and social cohesion, are undermining systems of governance, clamping down on dissent, failing to protect fundamental freedoms and excluding those they disagree with from crucial political processes.

These are the challenges that member states have been raising since I took office last September including through the high level thematic debates that I have been convening this session.

Each challenge gives rise to different questions for member states and it is up to them to respond, to look at their own circumstances and determine whether they are on the right path or not.

But it also gives rise to questions regarding the role of the United Nations as it marks its 70th anniversary and welcomes a new Secretary-General later this year.

In the area of sustainable development, for example, member states are increasingly looking for a more streamlined, out-ward looking, solution-oriented UN that can help governments mobilize the capacity and resources needed to get implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals off to the best possible start.

In terms of international peace and security, a series of UN reviews demonstrate that concrete action is required to ensure the UN is better equipped to prevent conflicts and mediate peace, that it can offer more tailored support to member states in the face of global terrorism including in the context of UN peace operations, and that it can continue to offer something that keeps global and regional powers at the table.

In terms of human rights, the growing acceptance of the linkages between the human rights, peace and security and sustainable development, means the UN system must be better equipped to help member states build the foundations for human rights compliance – strengthening governance, the rule of law and access to justice.

None of these changes are revolutionary but at the same time, if done well, they could help member states address the immense challenges they are encountering today and see the United Nations fulfil the potential that founding member states like Egypt saw in it some 70 years ago.

Thank you once again and bon appetit.