

13 June 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
At the opening of the Civil Society Forum: “Leave No One Behind:
The role of DPOs in the implementation of the Sustainable
Development Goals”**

Mr President, Mr Secretary General, Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to have been invited to participate in this Civil Society Forum focused on leaving no-one behind.

As you are aware, later today, I will host a panel discussion to follow up on the status of and progress made towards the realization of the development goals for persons with disabilities.

This Forum is an opportunity to identify some key points to bring to that meeting.

As President of the UN General Assembly and a politician for almost 50 years, I have spent a lot of the time diagnosing problems and identifying solutions including in terms of advancing more just and inclusive societies.

From that experience, I have one simple lesson to share.

To drive true transformation, you first need a vision.

Leaving no one behind calls for truly transformation change so today, I want to share with you my vision for what such a world would look like.

It will be a world where persons with disabilities everywhere, from New Delhi to New York, enjoy the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Where no child with disabilities grows up in extreme poverty, suffers from malnutrition or is forgotten when crises hit.

Where they go to school just like every other child, in a safe environment, with suitable support and a curriculum that responds to our 21st century world.

It will be a world where all persons with disabilities can afford the health care they need with secure access to well-equipped and well-staffed health clinics.

Where infrastructure, transportation, social protection and all public services are accessible for all.

Where job opportunities are equally shared and persons with disabilities get equal pay for equal work.

Where norms, policies and attitudes have changed such that persons with disabilities are not just valued as equals in society but empowered to actively participate in that society.

And lastly, it will be a world where justice and equality reign – where discrimination and discrimination-based violence is no longer tolerated and every step of the ladder in government and business alike, is fully accessible to all people, including those with disabilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, such a world would certainly be quite different to the one that we inhabit today, but it is not a utopia.

It is at the heart of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that 164 countries have ratified.

It is sketched out in the SDGs that 193 world leaders committed to achieve last September.

And it is within our grasp.

We have the resources, the technology and the know-how to make this happen.

What we need now are the leaders in government, civil society, the private sector to be the change we need to see.

We also need broad-based multi-stakeholder partnerships that can bring together efforts, knowledge and resources.

We need the principles of the Convention to guide our efforts – a convention that provides both us with human rights and development tools.

We need to engage persons with disabilities not only as beneficiaries but as agents of transformative change in society.

And finally, if we are to realise this vision of a world where no one is left behind, where persons with disabilities enjoy their full human rights, then we need to take action now and to drive forward, together and to make this transformation happen.

Thank you.