

19 July 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the retreat ‘Towards a Stronger General Assembly’**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to participate in this retreat.

Thank you very much to our Finnish hosts for the kind invitation.

The 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly has been a landmark one.

Building on foundations laid by the 69<sup>th</sup> session, some highlights included:

- the adoption of the 2030 Agenda,
- the signing of the Paris Climate Agreement,
- the opening up of the process for selecting and appointing the next Secretary-General,
- and the holding of critical meetings including the Special Session on the World Drug Problem and the High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS.

All of this reflects positively on an Assembly that I believe is going through a real resurgence. I and my Office have sought to contribute to that resurgence and to strengthen the overall effectiveness and reach of the GA through action across five core areas.

**The first area is the advancement of the theme of the 70<sup>th</sup> session – A new Commitment to Action.**

As mandated, I organized three high level thematic debates.

It is challenging to find thematic space in the busy UN calendar for these debates; to attract high level participants; and to meet the demands of member states while also making the debates as interactive as possible.

To a large extent, however, I think we managed to do this.

In particular, by focusing on action to drive progress on both SDGs and Climate; on steps to keep the momentum going on the reviews in the area of peace and security; and on a recommitment to human rights – we sought to add value on major priorities of the Assembly including by providing member states with a genuine opportunity to communicate a set of tangible priorities for action by the incoming SG.

**The second area of focus for my Office has been the process for selecting the next UN Secretary-General.**

I believe we have managed to implement the strong mandate contained in Resolution 69/321, to the maximum.

The participation of all candidates presented thus far in informal meetings with the General Assembly was fantastic and demonstrated the UN General Assembly at its very best.

The sharing of vision statements, the joint letters with the President of the Security Council, the posting of resumés, the questions from people across the world etc – were also extremely positive developments.

I am confident that this new openness will have a direct impact on the deliberations of the Security-Council when they begin in two days' time; and have helped increase our chances of securing the best-possible candidate for the job.

**The third area of focus relates to increased transparency and accountability of the PGA and his/her Office.**

I had committed to these principles when elected in June last year but the allegations against the late Ambassador Ashe focused the minds on possible weaknesses in the governance of the Office of the PGA.

I have therefore developed and committed to my own principles of conduct; and used my website to disclose a great deal of information on the finances, official travel, staffing and activities of my Office.

Working closely with the co-facilitators of the General Assembly Revitalization Working Group, Ambassadors Drobnjak and Emvula, as well as with the Secretary-General's task force on the OPGA, a very strong draft code of conduct, an oath of office and language on financial disclosure are now included in the Working Group's draft resolution for the 70<sup>th</sup> session, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for overall confidence in the GA and its President that these aspects of the Resolution are maintained and if possible further strengthened.

**The fourth area of focus is stakeholder inclusion.**

The implementation of resolution requests with regard to stakeholder participation in GA meetings is a major body of work for the Office of the PGA.

I believe that my office has managed very successfully to include external voices in our discussions at the GA by working closely with the Non-Governmental Liaison service as well as

with colleagues in DESA – and last week’s Global Townhall with SG candidates was our biggest undertaking in this regard.

Clearly decisions in the GA will always be the preserve of member states but our ability to communicate with the outside world and to understand the impact of our decisions is critical to the relevance and effectiveness of our work.

In this context, it was extremely disappointing that a number of LGBT related NGOs were barred from attending the HIV/AIDS High Level Meeting.

It is also disappointing that the NGO Committee under ECOSOC has become such a battleground and that modalities for stakeholder participation becomes such a major stumbling block during GA negotiations.

This is not sustainable and I sincerely hope that in the near future, a more constructive and consistent approach can be found to deal with this issue.

**Lastly, during this session, I managed to take a few initiatives that I believe have also made the GA stronger in its own right.**

I have held regular meetings with the regional groups and members of the General Committee to consult and inform on my priorities and to hear feedback on important issues facing the Assembly.

My monthly meetings with the President of the Security Council have also been reported on in a transparent way with a summary of each of these meetings being circulated and uploaded to my website.

I also initiated a process under the leadership of the Permanent Representative of Colombia aimed at strategically aligning the agenda of future sessions of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda, including the SDGs.

After working with the Permanent Representatives of Morocco, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Mejía will hold a briefing on Monday 25 July informing Member States about the findings of the group’s work.

Of course, I could not have managed this session’s heavy workload without the assistance of a strong Office and the support of DGACM.

I wish to thank both the UN system entities and the member states for secondments to my Office which helped us put together a team that was both gender and regionally balanced.

Indeed this diversity enabled us to mediate with member states behind the scenes and resolve many difficult issues over the course of the session.

Overall, each of the above-mentioned five areas of focus sought to further strengthen the GA and I know that my successor, PGA-elect Thomson, also shares the view that these are critical issues. Indeed, I am fully confident that in his capable and experienced hands, the GA will be further strengthened in the 71<sup>st</sup> session.