

29 July 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At ‘Many Languages, One World’ – culmination of essay contest**

Good morning everyone.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to UN headquarters and to the home of the UN General Assembly.

Last September, leaders from all 193 UN member states were seated where you are seated today.

They came here to unite around a revolutionary plan to transform our world for the better.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the case for transformation has grown even stronger; the need for action even more urgent.

The essays submitted by you are a testament to that urgency.

Right now, we are witnessing a shocking global refugee and humanitarian crisis.

We are on the cusp of irreversible climate change.

Conflict and instability are affecting much of the middle-east and a number of African countries.

Violent extremists and terrorists are causing fear and pain across the world.

Xenophobia and populism are on the rise while public authorities are clamping down on civil liberties and civil society.

And 900million people remain in extreme poverty while inequalities soar both within and between many countries ....

The 2030 Agenda, together with the Paris Climate Agreement, is an eminently sensible and direct response to these challenges.

It is the best formula we have to pull ourselves back from the brink.

And it is the single greatest framework we have to strike out for a better future – to deliver globalization that benefits all people; to transition to economies that are low-carbon and climate resilient; and to foster societies that guarantee peace, gender equality, justice and freedom for all.

I have no doubt that multilingualism – the subject of today’s meeting – can make a strong contribution to arriving at such a future.

While you will communicate in the UN’s six official languages, there are of course hundreds of languages around the world through which people express their hopes and their dreams; their agreement and disagreement.

And contrary to words and actions of some of our current and aspiring world leaders, it is this diversity that will drive the transformation that our world desperately needs.

Multilingualism and diversity can provide us with different ways to view the world.

They can help us to be humble and more tolerant of others.

And they can expand the reservoir of ideas and innovation that we need to implement the SDGs.

In this regard, I wish to pay tribute to the 3600 participants in this year’s Many Languages, One World essay contest and in particular, I wish to thank the 60 students who will present their views here today.

I also thank the Department of Public Information and the [ELS Language Services, Inc.](#) for organizing this event.

To conclude, I wish to remind you of a line from the 2030 Agenda itself.

It reads as follows:

*“We the Peoples” are the celebrated opening words of the UN Charter. It is “We the Peoples” who are embarking today on the road to 2030....Millions have already engaged with, and will own, this Agenda. It is an Agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people – and this, we believe, will ensure its success.”*

With these words, I encourage you all when you leave these halls to make this your Agenda; to make this an Agenda for all; and to help us deliver a better future for people and planet alike.

Thank you.