

13 September 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Closing of the 70th session of the United Nations General  
Assembly**

Mr Secretary-General, His Excellency President Hage Geingob of Namibia, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

A year ago in this Hall I outlined how I hoped we could galvanize a new commitment to action and install a spirit of transparency and openness into our work.

I believe we **have** made considerable progress. And yet, so much more remains to be done. We kicked off with the largest Summit in UN history, adopting the 2030 agenda.

In a world of poverty, climate change, conflict and forced displacement, with impunity for rights violations and huge gender and social inequality, the adoption of the SDG's – together with the historic Paris Climate Agreement – have outlined the route for revolutionary transformation of our whole pattern of production and consumption.

It is not only possible. We don't really have a choice.

If we are to avoid a future of division and destruction, of crises on a scale far greater than those we see today, relentless and integrated implementation of SDG's and Climate action is an absolute necessity.

My first high level thematic debate focussed on exactly the plans, actions, finance, technology and partnerships needed for this.

We managed, after much discussion, to put the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review framework on a more solid footing. And you are now in a good position to consider how best to re-align the agenda for the General Assembly in light of the SDGs.

This Assembly also dealt with a list of important issues with relation to the SDG's:

- The 10-year review of the World Summit on Information Society showed how explosive technological development presents both incredible opportunities and challenges.
- The special Session on the World Drug Problem showed strong support for a response rooted in human rights and the advancement of public health.
- The meeting on the global battle against HIV and AIDS recommitted us to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.
- We saw a recommitment to the implementation of support for the Least Developed Countries in Antalya.
- We got preparations underway for next year's Conference on how to better protect our Oceans and marine biodiversity.
- And, now, in just over a week, leaders will address the large movements of refugees and migrants – to recommit to their international obligations and build on the achievements of the Secretary General's World Humanitarian Summit.

But it is obvious that achieving Agenda 2030 will also demand a reverse of trends in maintaining peace and security and in respect for human rights.

Deterioration in the protection of human rights is observed in many countries, as we mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Human Rights Council.

In my High Level Thematic Debate in July, we focused on how that deterioration affects issues of non-discrimination, the rule of law and civil society space.

The General Assembly has also held meetings on the Commission of Inquiry on Syria. We have also discussed the Secretary General's Human Rights Up Front Initiative, and the Responsibility to Protect.

All the while, dangerous conflicts are ongoing and expanding in size and numbers, causing enormous humanitarian catastrophes. Disarmament negotiations have only disclosed long-standing divides, and both military budgets and tensions between major countries have increased.

The General Assembly has discussed the three major UN reviews on peace building and peace operations, and on women, peace and security, – as well as the Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. And we have undertaken the ten-year review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The overarching focus of discussions in a high level thematic debate that I organized in May, and in the debate following the briefing by the Secretary-General, was on the urgent need for real change both in member states' approaches and in the tools available to the UN.

Peace keeping must be evaluated, and there must be zero tolerance for any sexual exploitation or abuse from UN peacekeepers.

And in the fifth committee, agreement is needed to provide better funding for mediation, prevention and peace building, in order to reduce the number of conflicts and costly peace keeping operations in the future.

According to the UN Charter, the Security Council is supposed to be the guardian of global peace and security. But in too many serious conflicts, there has been no consensus and no action.

We need major and minor powers to recreate what brought us to the SDGs and Climate Agreement – and to a negotiated outcome about the Iranian nuclear programme instead of new war or proliferation: We need to understand that also in implementing the Security Council roadmap to peace for Syria and the ceasefire agreed over the weekend; in the global fight against terrorism; in the need to stop arms race and reinvigorate disarmament negotiations, we have existential common interests that are much more important than our conflicts of interest.

We need Security Council reform that can contribute to this common understanding.

The discussion about this reform has been going on for more than two decades with only small steps forward. The work this year, facilitated by Ambassador Lucas of Luxembourg and building on last year's text and annex, points to a common understanding at least that we need an enlarged Council – better reflecting the geopolitical realities of the 21st century.

But if you are serious about reform, all key players including the permanent five have to change the script and be willing to compromise.

Reforms are important. But there is also within a few weeks the extremely important election of a new UN Secretary-General.

I am very proud that we broke new ground with unique transparency in the selection process. The two-hour presentation of each of the candidates in the General Assembly dialogues, and their collective Global Townhall debate, were important highlights and helped to include the global public in the debate about the future of the UN. And I hope that transparency proves instrumental in identifying the best possible new Secretary General over the coming months.

I appeal to the Security Council to also make the remaining process open and engaging to preserve the legitimacy of their recommendation as it feeds into Assembly's final decision.

Indeed, this morning, I sent a letter to the Council summarizing the process to date and setting out some of the lessons we have learned so far. That letter also addresses the call from a large number of members for the appointment of co-facilitators to prepare an appointment resolution during the next session.

In my view such a call is entirely consistent with the spirit of transparency and inclusivity which the process has been imbued with to date. At the same time, as we move to the final decision we must focus on forging consensus and ensuring that the next UN Secretary-General will receive both the full support of the membership and adequate preparation time before taking office.

Excellencies, transparency and openness, however, must go far beyond the SG selection process.

Throughout this session, I sought to instill greater transparency in everything we do – and I am delighted to see that many of the steps I have advanced relating to the integrity, transparency and accountability of my own office have now been codified in the GA Revitalization resolution adopted earlier this morning – and I look forward to witnessing the first ever taking of an oath of office by an incoming President in just a few moments.

But we also experienced deadlocks on the issue of civil society participation in UN meetings. The HIV/AIDS meeting was partially overshadowed by objections to NGOs that focus on LGBT issues.

It is time to find sustainable and reasonable solutions.

More broadly, we must also work to consistently improve the effectiveness of this Assembly.

There are, for example, outstanding challenges in the Fifth committee. While we managed to reach agreement on the budget in time, all too much rigidity remains in the organization and budgeting, – and in member states positions.

Similarly, on a number of occasions, agreement in negotiations was held up by one or two delegations alone, which in itself undermines the collective power of this Assembly.

In addition, it is clear that the workload on delegations, on the Office of the PGA and relevant parts of the Secretariat, is growing year on year and it is critical that we focus our efforts on those areas where we can add most value.

Excellencies, before concluding, allow me to extend my gratitude to all who contributed to the results in this session.

First of all – Secretary General Ban Ki-moon – it has been an honour and a pleasure to work closely and amicably with you and your team. We must all specially congratulate you with the successful outcome of your years of hard and tireless work for climate action. I wish you the very best both for the remainder of your term and for your future endeavours.

And I wish to thank you, the membership, for your commitment, cooperation and friendship during this session.

In particular, I wish to thank each of the Permanent Representatives who played a prominent role in bringing various processes forward – the Vice-Presidents, the various facilitators and chairs, the bureaus of the committees, the chairs of the regional groups, as well as the President of ECOSOC and the Presidents of the UN Security Council with whom I enjoyed close collaboration.

I also wish to thank colleagues across the Secretariat, especially Ms Catherine Pollard and her team in DGACM, who have been of immense assistance to me and my Office.

Similarly, I wish to thank all those who contributed to my office either through financial support or secondments. Not least I wish to thank each and every one of my own team who have been so professional, enthusiastic and innovative throughout.

A special thanks also to the Officials in the Foreign Ministry including the PR of Denmark and to the Government that asked me to come forward as candidate. I hope to have brought good Danish values and attitudes – directness included – to this year’s Presidency.

Excellencies, it has been a great honour to be your President.

I encourage you to continue to make this body more relevant, more outward-looking, more transparent, and of course, more effective.

In H.E. Peter Thomsen, you will have an excellent PGA71, who is committed to doing just that and to giving a universal push to the SDGs.

I thank you all for your attention.