



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

20 May 2016

Excellency,

In line with the theme of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, A New Commitment to Action, I will convene a third High-level Thematic Debate on 12-13 July 2016 entitled “UN@70 – Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda” at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The event takes place in the context of the 50th anniversary of the International Human Rights Covenants, the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development and the process to select and appoint the next United Nations Secretary-General.

It will be an opportunity to:

- take an overarching view of the human rights situation in our world today
- reinforce the foundations for human rights and how action to realize human rights can contribute to progress on peace and security and sustainable development and vice-versa
- highlight ways to strengthen the United Nations' role in this area and identify actions to unleash rapid improvements in the realization of human rights globally

The Debate will comprise of an opening segment, a plenary debate and interactive segments on three areas of focus: *Tackling Discrimination and Inequalities*, *Strengthening Governance*, *The Rule of Law and Access to Justice* and *Enabling Active Participation in Society*.

A preliminary outline and provisional programme is attached and I encourage your Mission to view the event website for updated material as it becomes available: <http://www.un.org/pga/70/events/human-rights/>. My office also stands ready to provide additional details.

It is my hope that this Debate will secure the highest possible level of participation from your government.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mogens Lykketoft', written in a cursive style.

Mogens Lykketoft

To all Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

UN@70: Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda
High-Level Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly

12-13 July 2016 – Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York
Preliminary outline

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Background

At the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as a series of UN reviews and action plans in the area of peace and security lies a demand for a stronger focus on human rights across all aspects of society. These developments demonstrate the ever-increasing linkages between the three pillars of the UN but they also highlight the need to ensure that each pillar is given equal prominence.

As part of his overall efforts to foster ‘A new Commitment to Action’, President Mogens Lykketoft will therefore focus his third High Level Thematic Debate (HLTD) on ‘**UN@70: Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda**’.

Objectives

In light of the 50th anniversary of the international human rights covenants, the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development and the process to select and appoint the next UN Secretary-General, the HLTD will be an opportunity to:

- take an overarching view of the human rights situation in our world today
- reinforce the foundations for human rights and how action to realize human rights can contribute to progress on peace and security and sustainable development and vice-versa
- highlight ways to strengthen the United Nations' role in this area and identify actions to unleash rapid improvements in the realization of human rights globally

Format

This event will comprise an opening segment, a plenary debate with ministerial participation and interactive segments on three areas of focus. Moderators for each interactive segment will draw on expert contributors and engage member states in an open discussion on these issues.

On the margins of the HLTD, an event is planned on 12 July to solicit the views of candidates for the position of UN Secretary-General on the challenges and opportunities facing the UN in the field of Human Rights.

Areas of focus

Combatting discrimination and inequalities: Non-discrimination is a central principle of international human rights law and indispensable to realizing all human rights, civil and political, economic, social and cultural. Yet people continue to be directly and indirectly discriminated against on a number of grounds. In addition, inequalities and discrimination are among the major drivers of poverty, exclusion and disenfranchisement which must be tackled to both prevent conflict and realize the 2030 Agenda. How can greater action be mobilized at global and national levels to address issues of discrimination and inequality?

Strengthening governance, the rule of law and access to justice: Human Rights will not be realized without access to justice, the rule of law and effective, transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions. Making progress at the national and global levels on these issues is also central to global peace and security and realizing the 2030 Agenda. There has been a consistent increase in demand for UN support, and for peer-learning amongst Member States in this area. How can actors strengthen collaboration to deliver on these areas?

Enabling active participation in society: Progress on global issues in the 21st century is increasingly dependent on the ability of stakeholders – governments, the private sector, civil society, human rights defenders, international organizations and others – to work together. Yet to do so, the right to engage, to advocate and to criticize must be respected. How can environments be created that facilitate positive inter-action and protect civil society space and fundamental freedoms?

Participation

High-level representatives from States, the UN-system, regional organisations, human rights bodies and mechanisms, civil society, think tanks and private sector will participate.

Note: Member States who will have Ministers in attendance are asked to contact the Office of the PGA (opga70@un.org) to discuss possible lead discussant roles in one of the interactive sessions.

Outcome

The concrete output will be a summary by the President of the General Assembly to be circulated to all Member States and posted on his website.

<http://www.un.org/pga/70/events/human-rights/>

UN@70: Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda
High-Level Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly

12-13 July 2016

Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York
Provisional programme

Day 1	Tuesday 12 July 2016
Morning session	
9:30am – 10:00am	<u>Opening Segment</u>
10:00am – 11.30am	<u>Ministerial Plenary Debate</u> UN@70 – Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda
11:35am – 1:00pm	<u>Interactive segment 1: Combatting discrimination and inequalities</u> Format: Moderated dialogue between member states and expert contributors
Afternoon session	
3.00pm – 4.30pm	<u>Interactive segment 2: Building the foundations for Human Rights – governance, the rule of law and access to justice</u> Format: Moderated dialogue between member states and expert contributors
4:35pm – 6.00pm	<u>Interactive segment 3: Enabling active participation in society</u> Format: Moderated dialogue between member states and expert contributors
6.30pm	<i>Moderated conversation with the candidates seeking to become the next UN Secretary-General – Challenges and opportunities facing the UN in the field of Human Rights (tbc)</i>
Day 2	Wednesday 13 July 2016
Morning session	
10:00am – 12.50pm	<u>Plenary Debate continued</u> UN@70 – Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda
Afternoon session	
3:00pm – 5.50pm	<u>Plenary Debate continued (as required)</u> UN@70 – Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda
5:55pm	<u>Closing Remarks:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the United Nations General Assembly