

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

## **Ministerial Segment of the 2016 High-level Political Forum**

**9am, 18 July 2016,**

**Opening remarks by H.E. Mr Mogens Lykketoft,**

**President of the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly**

Distinguished Heads of State and Government, Deputy Secretary-General Mr Jan Eliasson, President of the Economic and Social Council Mr Oh Joon, Honorable Ministers, Excellencies and friends,

It is a great pleasure to be with you today, here, in the home of the SDGs – the High Level Political Forum.

When the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development last September, I was among the many who was filled with incredible hope for the future.

That hope is as strong as ever today.

Not because I have seen indisputable evidence that the transformation is underway but because when I look at the world, I see that there is no other way.

Simply put, the 2030 Agenda is the best framework we have to simultaneously prevent catastrophic climate change; end poverty, advance shared prosperity and secure peace and justice for all.

The incredible global humanitarian crisis, the upsurge in terrorism and violent extremism, the tragedies experienced by migrants and refugees and the rise of populism and intolerance, do not undermine the case for the SDGs.

In fact, by providing us with a glimpse of the future we will face if those Goals are not implemented, they strengthen it.

That is why it is so critical that those of us in a position to do so must shout from the rooftops that realizing the SDGs is possible.

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And that, with the right mix of political ambition, multi-stakeholder partnerships and relentless focus, it can become inevitable.

And this is where this Forum is critical.

I know from speaking to leaders across the world that change is happening, that the global movement for transformation is growing.

It is up to this Forum, whether under the ECOSOC or the GA, to reinforce that movement; and to provide space to highlight the institutional, technological, financial and scientific innovation that will drive this transformation.

This year, we are beginning to see the true potential of this forum.

I am particularly encouraged by the fact that 22 countries have volunteered for national presentations of their first critical steps.

Others should follow their fine example.

I am also encouraged by both the level of interest in the Forum and how inclusive and participatory many of the sessions have been.

And of course, it is extremely appropriate that we begin the SDG era with a focus on leaving no one behind.

During this 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that theme resonates across the UN's three pillars.

We know that inequality, exclusion and youth unemployment are among the root causes of today's threats to peace and security.

And we know also that non-discrimination and prioritizing those furthest behind first are central to realizing human rights.

It is therefore critical that we implement the SDGs through action across all three pillars.

For member states, the demands here are clear:

- Speak out against intolerance, discrimination and inequality.

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- Change the laws, institutions and policies that divide societies, and marginalize the most vulnerable groups and countries.
- Tackle the impunity, corruption and global tax evasion that is undermining trust in politics and institutions.
- Invest in those areas that we know can drive more equal societies – from women and girls to social protection, education to health, data and beyond.
- And create the legal and regulatory frameworks that will make green investment the best investment – for people, planet and private sector alike.

For the United Nations, there are also a set of clear demands.

Already this year, reviews in the area of peace and security have pointed to the concept of sustaining peace.

In this regard, the bureaucratic barriers within and across Departments, Agencies, Funds and Programmes must come down.

Greater resources need to be dedicated to mediation, prevention and peacebuilding.

And integration, collaboration and partnership must become the modus-operandi of the entire UN system.

For its part, the General Assembly has also been working to support implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda.

But it must be said that some of those discussions have not been as seamless as they perhaps should have been.

After the great collective achievements of 2015, all delegations have a duty to preserve the integrity and ambition of the Agenda; and to focus on delivering real added value.

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A fully empowered, fully utilized and further improved HLPF will be one of the best tools for doing just that.

In the end however, change will not happen in these halls.

Change will and must happen at the country and community level; in people's lives, in the economy and in the environment.

And it is this fact that we must keep to the fore of our minds when we meet here annually in the High Level Political Forum.

Thank you.