

14 September 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the closing of the 69th Session of the United Nations General
Assembly**

**H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President-elect of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

When we gathered in this Hall a little more than a year ago, we set out on a journey, seeking to put humanity on a path toward a more prosperous, sustainable future.

The issues we have addressed in this session have covered a wide range of challenges facing people around the globe. Our journey and the work we have accomplished together took us from the valleys of Lima to the architectural ensembles of Vienna, to the city of trees – Sendai and the hills of Addis Ababa.

As we have said all along, this session presented us with a historic opportunity to change our world, for the better. Guided by the overarching principles of cooperation, compromise and solidarity, we should feel heartened by all we have achieved thanks to our collective efforts.

Indeed, our shared vision of “putting people at the centre of everything we do” has yielded many important outcomes that will improve the everyday lives of men, women and children around the world.

Excellencies,

After 105 plenary meetings and 327 resolutions adopted during the session, today, we gather to take stock of the progress we have made during our journey together and reflect on the important work that remains on the road ahead.

The landmark agreement on the outcome document entitled “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was without question one of the major highlights of the session. It was an unprecedented collective undertaking with Member States and other stakeholders working tirelessly to formulate a universal, inclusive and transformative future development framework.

I thank and commend all those involved in the negotiation process for their strong commitment to creating an ambitious agenda. In particular, I would like to extend my appreciation to Ambassador David Donoghue, Permanent Representative of Ireland and Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya, for their steadfast efforts in shepherding the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

The agenda will guide our development efforts for the next 15 years.

Taking into account the needs of all people around the world, including the youth, women, the disabled and the most vulnerable, it will directly impact the livelihoods of people both today, and for generations to come.

Ensuring that the future development framework is accompanied by adequate resources for its implementation was of critical importance from the very outset of the session. To encourage dialogue among all stakeholders on this critical issue, I convened a High-level Thematic Debate on the Means of Implementation, in February.

The cornerstone of our renewed global partnership for development is now the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in July, following months of intense negotiations. My thanks and congratulations go to Ambassador George Talbot, Permanent Representative of Guyana, and Ambassador Geir Pedersen, Permanent Representative of Norway for their hard work as Co-Facilitators of those negotiations. I also wish to convey my sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Ethiopia for hosting this successful conference and their warm hospitality.

Yet, our endeavour to set our world on a sustainable course also requires that we urgently address one of the defining challenges of our time – climate change. Indeed, supporting efforts to reach a new, universally-binding climate change agreement was another important priority during the 69th session.

To keep the momentum moving forward ahead of the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP 21) in Paris, I convened a High-level Event on Climate Change in June. As was emphasized time and again, this generation represents our last hope for preserving the well-being of our planet for generations to come. In that context, it will be critical to reach a bold and ambitious agreement in Paris in December that promotes the achievement of sustainable development, while protecting the planet.

Excellencies,

Beyond these important accomplishments, the Assembly also showed responsiveness in the face of new challenges, including the Ebola outbreak. In its first resolution of the session, the Assembly endorsed the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), a first-of-its-kind public health mission. Such timely action in the face of a serious health emergency

demonstrated that with adequate political will and commitment, decisions by the Assembly can quickly translate into concrete actions on the ground.

Over the course of the session, we also witnessed a disquieting rise of radicalization and violent extremism around the world, fuelled by identity-based conflicts and cultural and religious tensions. With troubling frequency, violent attacks were carried out against innocent civilians; claiming the lives of men, women and children indiscriminately and also the destruction of irreplaceable artefacts of humanity's shared cultural heritage.

In response to this increasing threat, in April, we met for a High-level Thematic Debate on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation. Together, with religious leaders, we explored ways to foster dialogue, inclusiveness and mutual understanding as many speakers stressed the importance of leaving no one on the margins of society.

Indeed, ensuring that everybody is entitled to a life of rights and dignity is the cornerstone of our work within the United Nations. This session afforded us several opportunities to renew our commitment to fight against discrimination and promote human rights for all.

In December, we launched the International Decade for People of African Descent and in March we unveiled the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade on the grounds of the United Nations.

We marked the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women and for the first time the Office of the President of the General Assembly hosted the global observance of International Women's Day and we were proud to do so jointly with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women). A high-level thematic debate on this topic in March gave greater focus to advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

During the session we also considered how young people can fully utilize their talents and energy to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In doing so, we lay the foundation for a more prosperous future not only for ourselves, but for generations to come.

Furthermore, with the bestowing of the inaugural Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize in July, the General Assembly recognized the outstanding achievements of two champions, who have dedicated their lives to the service of humanity.

Excellencies,

As we mark the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations, we should use this occasion to consider how the Organization can transform and evolve to improve its capacity to respond to current and future challenges. Improving its efficiency and effectiveness was one of the priorities of the session.

As part of this reflection, we held a High-level Thematic Debate in on Strengthening Cooperation with Regional and Sub-regional Organizations in May. Indeed, owing to their knowledge of local dynamics and realities, regional organisations are well placed to work hand-in-hand with the United Nations to effectively address local, national, regional and international challenges.

I therefore welcome the recommendation on the need for stronger and more operational regional partnerships contained in the Report of the Secretary-General on the Future of Peace Operations. One example could be further institutionalizing and expanding the United Nations-African Union partnership. This was one of the key messages in the Political Declaration which was the outcome of the high-level thematic debate held in May.

In the context of the revitalization of the General Assembly, Member States have agreed to give a greater role to this body in the upcoming election of the Secretary-General. This is an important step toward openness and transparency in the selection process.

I would like to pay tribute to the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of work of the General Assembly, Ambassador Vladimir Drobnyak, Permanent Representative of Croatia, and Ambassador Wilfred Emvula, Permanent Representative of Namibia for their leadership.

Ten years ago, our leaders expressed support for an early reform of the Security Council. During this session, I made it one of my priorities in order to move this process forward. I thank the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations, Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica for his steadfast leadership throughout the negotiations. Together, we should muster the resolve to reform the Council in a way that reflects the geo-political realities of our current world.

We should build on the work done during this session and ensure that there is continued progress in this reform effort, and that we maintain a constructive, flexible spirit moving forward. I thank all Member States and groups for their commitment on this vital issue and urge you to keep the momentum.

I urge the Assembly to continue to reflect on these important areas in the next session with a view to identifying ways to better-align the Organization with our modern day geo-political realities.

Excellencies,

At the beginning of this session, I likened our work to a journey; one that has taken us around the world and allowed us to consider the Organization's important role in promoting better lives for all peoples. Along the way, it has been a great pleasure to meet and work with so many people who remain committed to the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

My appreciation goes to the Member States who have worked diligently throughout the session. I am thankful for your hard work and partnership, as well as your high-level participation at events throughout the session.

I am also grateful to the co-facilitators and chairs of the many inter-governmental processes that have been carried out during the session. Your commitment has enabled us to make a lasting, positive impact for many.

I also thank the numerous other stakeholders that participated in events during the session, including our partners from civil society, the business sector, youth, religious communities and academia.

I am grateful to the Secretary-General His Excellency Ban Ki-moon for his partnership and friendship.

I commend him for his commitment and steadfast efforts on behalf of people around the world. I also thank all staff of the Secretariat who have worked behind the scenes, and in particular the Departments of General Assembly and Conference Management; Economic and Social Affairs; as well as Public Information, for their professionalism and unwavering support over the course of these last twelve months.

As we bring this session to a close, I am convinced President-elect Lykketoft, will shepherd this august body in an efficient and inspirational manner for the 70th session.

In closing, I leave you with the words of Mr. Nelson Mandela who said, "I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb."

These are indeed important words to recall, as we both celebrate our many accomplishments from this 69th session of the General Assembly, while considering the important work that will take place in this Hall throughout the upcoming session, and for many years to come.

I thank you for your attention.