

8 June 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the opening of the 2016 High-level Meeting on Ending AIDS**

Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, Honorable Ministers, Under Secretary-General Michel *Sidibé*, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to extend a special welcome to Ms. Loyce Maturu, representative of people living with HIV and Mr. Ndaba Mandela, AIDS Activist and grandson of the late Nelson Mandela. I also wish to sincerely thank the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for their enormous support with the preparations for this meeting.

Excellencies, Nelson Mandela once described HIV and AIDS as the greatest danger we have faced for many, many centuries; as being worse than a war.

How right he was.

It is hard to believe and hard to accept that some 34 million people have died from Aids-related diseases and that 14 million children have been orphaned as a result.

And it is even harder to believe and we should not accept that in this world of incredible possibility, approximately 6,000 new HIV infections occur daily and that some 36.9 million people are living with HIV.

Today is the moment, therefore, that collectively, we signal our intentions to strike out for victory, to fast-track efforts over the next five years and to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

This is an epidemic that undermines development, significantly impacts on economic growth and can be a major concern in conflict and post-conflict situations.

But most of all, it is an epidemic that haunts ordinary people particularly in developing countries – those who are living with, at risk of, and affected by HIV, as well as their families.

It affects women and girls more than any other group, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, where women and girls are more than twice as likely to become HIV positive than boys of the same age.

It can have tragic impacts for our young people who account for more than one third of all new HIV infections among adults, and who often have limited access to the information, services and programmes that they need to protect themselves from HIV.

And it greatly impacts on certain key populations that are globally at higher risk of HIV, such as those who inject drugs, sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender people and prisoners.

Over the coming days, let us be both mindful of and listen to these people.

Excellencies, in recent years, thanks to the political commitment of World Leaders and the incredible solidarity, innovation and bravery of others, we have been making strong progress towards the goals and targets set out in 2011.

But if we want to reach our 2030 target and deliver on the political declaration that you will consider shortly, all stakeholders must now step up to the plate.

We have to deliver greater global solidarity, bring more resources and spend them more effectively. We have to bring even greater collaboration and partnership, building on the many excellent initiatives created these past two decades aimed at prevention, treatment, care and support.

We have to pay much greater attention to the principles of equality and inclusion; uphold all human rights and speak out against discrimination and stigma.

We have to empower women and girls; ensure they gain access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and that they can live their lives free from violence.

We have to ensure that key populations are fully included in AIDS responses and services are made available to them.

And ultimately, we have to be accountable for the commitments we make on big stages like this one: to leave no one behind and to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals including by ensuring healthy lives and wellbeing for all.

Excellencies, ending the Aids epidemic would be one of the greatest achievements of our lifetimes.

It can be done and it must be done.

Thank you.