

24 August 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Opening of the 2016 NGO Summit on Sustainable
Development Goals**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I am honoured to welcome you all to this year's NGO Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Your commitment to the ethos of global citizenship is admirable.

That commitment together with your energy, expertise and perseverance is an absolute prerequisite to fully implement the bold agenda we have before us.

Time again we have learned that the work ahead of us – to fully implement Agenda 2030 – cannot be tackled alone, from one sector or from one perspective.

We need all hands on deck.

When planning a route forward, it can be wise to look back.

Civil society and NGOs were critical in preparing the 2030 Agenda – bringing the voices of the world's most vulnerable to the UN negotiating tables.

You helped make the Agenda universal, comprehensive and integrated.

You encouraged member states to aim high.

You ensured they focussed on leaving no one behind.

And long before the SDGs, you partnered with governments, the UN, the private sector, and others on programming to deliver results on the ground.

Going forward, these efforts need to be strengthened and broadened.

To do so, I envision two complementary areas where work must be undertaken.

First, as I heard at my high level thematic debate on human rights last month, governments and others have to provide the environment at the country level to enable civil society to play its role.

Public intimidation, restrictions on civil society under the guise of anti-terrorism laws, targeting of humanitarian actors during conflict, extra-judicial killing of journalists and civil society leaders; excessive administrative demands for NGO registration etc – all of these steps undermine civil society.

Member States must create an environment conducive to the diverse work of civil society in order to realize the SDGs.

And both the United Nations and global leaders must speak out in support of your fundamental freedoms.

Second, the United Nations itself must continue to embrace transparency, openness and innovation with a view to strengthening its effectiveness.

As President of the General Assembly, I have applied these principles throughout the 70th session – to the different high level meetings, to the work of my office, to the process of selecting and appointing the next United Nations Secretary-General.

Indeed, civil society was directly engaged in that process – a first in UN history.

This trend must continue and expand right across the work of the UN.

The United Nation's legitimacy, capacity to make the right decisions, and ability to effect real change depends on it.

In this regard, I encourage you to enhance meaningful dialogue and understanding. Reach out to the Member States who make decisions on civil society engagement at the UN.

I also encourage you to focus your energies on those areas where your contribution can be as meaningful as possible.

Ultimately, this will also enhance efficiency and results on the ground.

As I come to the final months of my Presidency, you have truly helped to deliver during this seminal year – the year in which the United Nations turns 70 and the year the UN aims to turn new commitments into action.

So in conclusion, I extend my appreciation.

I fully appreciate your commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

And I especially appreciate your genuine efforts to continue discussions begun at the 66th UN DPI / NGP Conference in the Republic of Korea on the responsibility of NGOs in SDG implementation.

I wish you all successful deliberations.

Thank you.