

**Opening of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs Special Segment on
UNGASS preparations**

Morning of 14 March 2016

Video message from H.E Mogens Lykketoft

President of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

As you know only too well, April's Special Session is very timely.

Illicit drugs and drug-related crime continue to pose a serious threat to sustainable development, to undermine the rule of law and to endanger communities and the health of people across the world.

It is our responsibility, both individually and collectively, to address this transnational problem and to advance a truly global and effective response.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your work to date within the CND has been instrumental in this regard, both in terms of addressing substantive matters and defining the modalities for the special session.

Since the very beginning of my Presidency, I have enjoyed excellent collaboration with the Commission which will, I am sure, help us to deliver successful meetings in April.

I have met a number of times with members of the UNGASS Board and its Chair.

We have also had regular exchanges on the preparations for all aspects of UNGASS, including through joint briefings to member states and other stakeholders in New York, alongside briefings that were held in Vienna and Geneva.

The continued engagement of all member States whether represented in Vienna or New York, will be critical in the coming weeks.

To date, the preparatory process has provided Member States with an opportunity to exchange ideas and lessons on what works and what doesn't.

The comprehensive, integrated approach which the Commission has taken is very welcome – addresses the many aspects of this problem including those relating to health, human rights, criminal justice, international cooperation and the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would also like to express my appreciation for your efforts in ensuring that the preparatory work be undertaken in an inclusive manner.

As I mentioned to you before, we all have much to learn from the experience of different stakeholders.

And I am aware that you have actively sought their input throughout including as you now work to finalize the outcome document.

In February, I presided over an informal interactive stakeholder consultation, a summary of which has been shared with the Commission.

And I would like thank the Civil Society Task Force and other partners from the UNGASS board and the Secretariat for helping to make that meeting a success.

Also in February, the Inter-Parliamentary Union held a hearing on UNGASS in New York which brought out the many different views held by Parliamentarians on how best to tackle this problem.

The Special Session itself, can provide clear operational recommendations, based on the lessons learnt and experiences gained over recent years, and it can help bring the discussions on this crucial global issue to a global audience.

I understand deliberations on the outcome document started with over 200 pages of input which highlights just how seriously Member States are treating this issue.

The process for shaping this into a short and concise document will be an intense one.

But I am confident that all delegations will engage constructively so that the Vienna spirit prevails and that you will reach agreement as soon as possible.

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I wish you all the best for your deliberations and I look forward to seeing you in New York in April.

Thank you.