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Panel discussion on Human Rights up Front

ECOSOC Chamber, 3-5pm, Wednesday 09 November 2015

**Opening remarks by H.E. Mr Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th session of the General Assembly**

Excellencies, Mr Deputy Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

Today, for the first time ever, the United Nations commemorates the dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and in doing so, recalls our responsibilities to prevent this Crime.

And tomorrow, we celebrate international human rights day and in the General Assembly.

In both cases, we are reminded of those who suffered the most egregious of human rights violations and look to the past for guidance on how best to prevent such violations and mass atrocities in the future.

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As we do so, we are reminded of the grave crisis and extraordinary human rights challenges in our world today.

The conditions which have led to the highest ever number of people fleeing conflict, injustice and extreme poverty are intolerable.

We are reminded also that the UN Charter and numerous GA-resolutions adopted over the past decades have underscored to us all, the vital importance of protecting human rights; and the centrality of early warning in both preventing serious human rights and humanitarian law violations and in ensuring that when those violations occur, that they do not develop into mass atrocities.

This includes mandate from the Charter, the General Assembly and the Security Council to the UN System on prevention, on human rights protection, and on integrated action across the three United Nations pillars which, in today's context, have never been more relevant.

Over the past two decades, the consequences of weaknesses in these areas have been grave, sometimes devastating, for people and communities.

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International peace and security has often been endangered and undermined.

National and regional development have suffered tremendously.

The financial costs for Member States, in terms of humanitarian assistance and harm to the global economy, are massive.

That is why I welcome today's discussion on the Secretary General's Human Rights up Front initiative.

By seeking to strengthen the United Nations System's preventive capacity and action in the face of potentially serious human rights and humanitarian law violations or mass atrocities, it is an example of how one important actor is seeking to meet its role and responsibilities.

I understand that the Deputy Secretary-General has briefed member states about this initiative each year since its inception two years ago and it is important that that conversation continues.

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I therefore look forward to hearing more on this from him and from our other speakers here today.

Thank you.