

**Statement by Denmark at the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, General Debate, 21 September 2023**

*Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates,*

The world is off track. This is the uncomfortable truth.

Eight years ago we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Denmark had just assumed the Presidency of the General Assembly. The adoption of the SDGs was a proud moment. Not just for Denmark, but for all of us. A historic moment where we – the United Nations - launched a transformational *agenda*.

Today, we need transformational *action*. Urgently and on a massive scale.

We need to get the SDGs back on track. We need to fast-track the green transition and accelerate climate adaptation. And we need to revitalize multilateralism and bring the UN and other institutions of global governance firmly into the 21st century.

These are immense tasks. But they are neither impossible, nor optional. It is the duty of our generation to get the world back on track. To break the vicious circle of distrust and division that is undermining our ability to act collectively. And to replace this vicious circle with trust and solidarity, as highlighted in the overarching theme for this year's UNGA.

Trust is not built on the promises we give. It is built on the promises we keep.

*Mr. President*

Halfway to 2030, only 15% of the sustainable development goals are on track to be realised. The rest are only progressing slowly. Or even moving in the wrong direction.

This year we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And it is as relevant today as ever. The SDGs seek to realize the human rights of all. Yet human rights are under pressure around the globe. This is not least true for women and girls – more than half of the world’s population.

For the first time in a generation, extreme poverty is increasing. Hunger levels are surpassing those of a decade ago while climate shocks are hitting those most vulnerable at accelerating speed. More than 360 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance worldwide.

All governments have a responsibility to prioritize the SDGs at home. But for some countries that is easier said than done. According to the Secretary-General, developing countries need a staggering 3.9 trillion USD between now and 2030 in order to achieve the Goals. To bridge that gap is not just their responsibility. It’s our shared responsibility.

For more than 40 years, Denmark has met the UN target of providing at least 0.7 per cent of GNI for development assistance. And we have continuously encouraged other rich countries to prioritise this target.

But even if we all lived up to the 0.7 UN target, it would only cover 10% of the financing gap. It’s simply not enough. We need to find new, innovative ways to finance the 2030 Agenda and realization of the Paris Agreement goals. By mobilizing domestic as well as international resources. Including private capital.

This year, Denmark is increasing our grant-based climate finance to the highest level ever. 745 million USD of which approximately 60% will be allocated for adaptation. Next year, we will double our contribution to the Green Climate Fund to approximately 234 million USD. We are also increasing our support to the Danish development finance institution - enabling it to triple its annual contribution to climate finance in developing countries. From 300 million USD today to approximately 900 million USD towards 2030. Denmark – a country

with a population of just below 6 million people – expects this year to contribute more than 1% of the 100 billion USD target. We expect our share to be even higher next year.

For Denmark, delivering on our promises is a matter of assuming global responsibility as well as showing international solidarity.

*Mr. President,*

To mobilize financing for development and climate action, we also need to better leverage the enormous potential of the international financial institutions. The development banks, including the World Bank, must raise, not billions, but trillions of dollars for climate action and the SDGs.

Growing burdens of debt are keeping struggling economies in a deadlock. A new creditor landscape is challenging existing mechanisms for debt treatment. This is a challenge we need to tackle together - as a global community and with the constructive engagement of all creditors.

Denmark is deeply engaged in these efforts. We will be pushing for the highest ambitions at the upcoming annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in Marrakesh as well as at COP28.

The international financial architecture must be revisited. Who decides? Who benefits? Is it fair? Is it working?

This is a conversation we need to have. The international financial architecture must reflect the world of Today, rather than the world of Yesterday.

*Mr. President*

The climate emergency is worsening. 2023 is on track to become the warmest year ever recorded. Unless we do something dramatic, the extremes of today will soon become the new normal.

Denmark is urging the world's biggest emitters to reduce their carbon emissions, phase-out fossil fuels and commit to renewable energy.

At the same time, we need to scale up significantly our efforts to adapt to climate change and address climate-induced loss and damages. Despite having contributed the least to climate change, it is the poorest and most vulnerable parts of the world who suffer the most devastating consequences.

We need to make COP28 the turning point in overcoming this global injustice.

As stated in the African leaders' Nairobi declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action: No country should ever have to choose between development aspirations and climate action. We agree. The fact is, that it no longer makes sense to talk about sustainable development without factoring in climate change. We are wasting valuable time and limited resources if we do not integrate our efforts for sustainable development and climate action.

*Mr. President,*

We are off track. And to get back on track, we need also to look at core institutions of our multilateral system and bring them into our time.

The world deserves a more representative, transparent and accountable Security Council! One that is better equipped to address global challenges. The Security Council needs to better reflect global realities as well as the desires, needs and concerns of people all over the world.

This includes limiting the use of the veto, also through voluntary restraint and enhanced accountability vis-à-vis the General Assembly. Denmark has been –

and will continue to be – actively engaged in this discussion.

To improve and strengthen our collective ability to prevent conflict and sustain peace, we need a new approach. The Secretary-General's *New Agenda for Peace* is a timely contribution to this debate. Denmark welcomes its call for a renewed focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As a current member of the Peacebuilding Commission and a major donor to the Peacebuilding Fund, we know it is one of the most valuable and efficient tools in the UN tool box.

Next year's Summit of the Future - and the process leading up to it – is a timely opportunity to move the discussions on this and other reform issues forward - based on the UN Secretary General's proposal of Our Common Agenda.

*Mr. President,*

Trust in multilateral cooperation is based on the universal respect for the rules that are underpinning it. And on accountability for violations of those rules.

Russia's blatant disrespect of the most fundamental principles of the UN Charter – including the principle of territorial sovereignty - is a tragedy for the United Nations. It is a look into a brutal world where international law has lost respect among nations and might is right.

The war is not just an unspeakable tragedy for the people of Ukraine. It has devastating effects for people around the world suffering under food shortages and other global consequences of this senseless war.

Denmark supports all meaningful efforts to stop Russia's aggression against Ukraine. We stand firmly with Ukraine and their Charter-based right to defend their territory. And we support President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula for a just peace. We encourage all countries to do the same.

Denmark seeks full accountability for Russia's unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine. This includes responsibility for crimes under international law as well as reparations. Ensuring that Russia and its representatives are held to account is a shared responsibility of us all, as members of the United Nations.

*Mr President,*

We take hope in the fact that following Russia's attack against Ukraine and against the UN Charter, we have seen overwhelming support for the Charter among UN member states. This we must build on – we have no choice.

The major problems of our time are interlinked and their solutions are interlinked as well. We can only solve the problems of our time through international cooperation. We must not allow the irresponsible behaviour of one Member State to derail and destroy our collective efforts to find common solutions to shared problems.

*Mr. President,*

Yesterday, Denmark was proud to sign the landmark High Seas Treaty that we adopted earlier this year. The treaty provides legally binding instruments for protecting and safeguarding the health of our oceans. A task vital to advance SDG number 14. It also holds tremendous symbolic value. It shows that despite growing tensions and divisions, we can still come together and find common ground.

At a time when positive news is hard to come by, that is very encouraging.

Keeping that in mind, Denmark will do our part to create tangible results, compromises and solutions in the UNGA78 session that stands before us.

This is the spirit of cooperation we want to bring to the UN and that we hope to bring to the UN Security Council in 2025-2026. We believe this spirit of cooperation will bring the world back on track.

Thank you.