

ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
Opening of the Ministerial Segment
17 July 2017, New York
9:00 – 10:15am
Statement by H.E. Mr Peter Thomson
President of the 71st session of the General Assembly

*President of ECOSOC,
Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentleman,*

It is an honor to join you all today at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Congratulations to ECOSOC for organizing and elevating the Forum this year; and indeed to the 44 Member States who volunteered to participate in this Forum's review.

The strong level of interest in this year's Forum is testament to the determination and commitment of nations across the world to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

The twelve months since the last High-Level Political Forum was held have been pivotal ones for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Coming on the heels of the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; and coinciding with a time of transition at the United Nations; there was pressure on the 71st. session to drive momentum of the SDGs in the direction of the global transformation envisaged by the three agreements.

As you know, the Office of the President of the General Assembly was mobilized at the start of the 71st session to power up momentum for implementing all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

During the 71st session, a series of High-Level SDG Action Events were convened, all bringing together some of the world's best minds from

across governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia to unlock key drivers of cross-cutting SDG implementation action, including sustaining peace, climate action, sustainable financing, technology and innovation, and education.

And we took our message to the world, meeting with Heads of Government, multilateral bodies, regional commissions, UN Country Teams, philanthropic foundations, business leaders, women's groups, grassroots actors, students and young people, to raise awareness of the SDGs and promote the global transformation needed to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

In all of these endeavors, we saw firsthand the enthusiasm and drive that people across the world have for the SDGs and the steps they are taking, from grassroots to global levels, to achieve the Goals. It was fortifying to observe that countries big and small have integrated the SDGs into their national development plans. And through the portal of the 71st session, we observed global consciousness rising to the imperative of shifting humankind's course away from the unsustainable trajectory it remains upon.

With the arrival of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and then of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, the leadership of the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda has been placed in safe and inspiring hands. But let us be honest with ourselves. To achieve the noble aims of the 17 SDG's all of us will have to elevate our commitment of resources, political will and partnership in support of the 2030 Agenda. Let there be no doubt that we are all in this together.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To drive progress on the SDGs at the speed and scale necessary, the prime focus has to be on-the-ground implementation, for this is where the transformative impacts amongst communities and across nations and regions has to occur.

Importantly, awareness of the SDGs must be globally comprehensive to all; so that all citizens understand they have rights and responsibilities on the long road to global sustainability. In support of this imperative, I have

written to heads of governments and universities worldwide, urging the universal teaching of the logic of the SDGs in curricula. I'm pleased to report that responses to this initiative have been very encouraging.

And of course meaningful partnerships are absolutely vital to our cause. Success will rely on Governments at all levels, civil society, innovators, financiers, and grassroots organisations working together in dynamic new partnerships to achieve the goals and ensure no one is left behind.

The Ocean Conference, held here at the United Nations just a month ago, was an example of that spirit of partnership. Around 6000 participants for all quarters of the concerned global community came together between June 5th and 9th at the United Nations to identify the full range of problems assailing the Ocean. Through the focussed partnership dialogues of the conference, a comprehensive raft of solutions was produced, and these solutions have been captured, analysed and are being modelled for implementation in the years ahead. The key to the successful implementation of the Ocean Conference's solutions will be the strategic maintenance of the spirit of partnership that produced them.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

We know the basic steps ahead. We know we must mobilize the necessary resources to meet our sustainable development objectives. We know that ODA commitments should be met and that we should be accelerating the allocation of resources in national budgets towards SDG implementation. The financial sector is ready to fund SDG-infrastructure projects, it requires us now to connect the two.

We know we have to utilize the unprecedented power of technology, innovation and interconnectivity to ramp up the implementation of the SDGs. In East Africa this year, I observed this power in action through the global GIG economy, producing digital services giving access to affordable banking and health, while integrating labor markets into the global economy.

Meanwhile, renewable, clean and affordable energy is coming on and off the grid to local communities in Asia, South America, and impacting the transformation of industry and infrastructure in Africa.

Much remains to be done to promote women and girls' rights, equal opportunity, economic empowerment and political participation. But change is well underway and will be an incremental driver for equality, growth and sustainability.

Sustaining peace, preventing conflicts, and addressing the root causes of displacement are core responsibilities for the United Nations. It is clear to us all that sustaining peace and sustainable development are inseparable.

And finally, we must all get fully behind the Secretary-General's lead in reforming the UN Development System to best-position it to support Member States' work in implementing the SDGs. These are basic steps, so let us proceed with renewed vigour on our communal journey.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In essence the 2030 Agenda is the pathway that will guide humankind to a sustainable way of life on this planet. Along with the Paris Climate Agreement, the 2030 Agenda is the promise we have made to our grandchildren and those who will come after them, that we will secure a relationship of balance between humanity and Mother Nature.

I applaud again all your efforts to date, and am confident the heightened ambition of this year's High Level Political Forum will propel us with fortified resolve to face the great challenges lying ahead. With redoubled energy and the true commitment, let us go out from this week to do all within our powers and purviews to implement and achieve the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you for your attention.