

12 November 2016

**71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly**

**Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson,  
COP22: Oceans Action Day**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Peter Thomson, who is currently en route to Marrakech.

First, allow me to commend the Government of Morocco and all the partner organisations that have organized this event.

The Ocean is fundamental to global climate systems, and to humanity's place on this planet.

Climate, weather, and air quality rely on the interaction between the Ocean and the atmosphere, while a warmer atmosphere and increasing concentration of greenhouse gases, exerts enormous pressure on the world's Ocean, its coasts, and marine ecosystems.

The impact of climate change and related atmospheric changes have serious implications for the Ocean, including sea level rises, higher levels of Ocean acidity, increasing deoxygenation, and reduced mixing of ocean water.

When world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Developments last year, they sought to put the world onto a path towards a sustainable and resilient future, for people, planet and prosperity.

Critically, this included Sustainable Development Goal 14, which pursues urgent action to help reverse the cycle of decline in which the Ocean is currently caught. It will do so through conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

The Paris Agreement that entered into force earlier this month is also critical to our efforts to realise a sustainable future, and action on the Paris agreement is fundamental to achieving the SDGs – particularly Goal 14. That is why we are so pleased to be part of today's event.

As we meet here in Marrakech, our focus is on action, and of how we can translate these recent historical global commitments into concrete change at local, national, and global levels.

Today's discussions have been vital in this regard; focusing on key actions that can tackle climate change and its impacts on the Ocean.

Some of the key areas of focus from today’s discussions included the importance of maintaining high-levels of political will and momentum to raise ambition and drive urgent action; the need to mobilize financing, provide capacity-building, and focus on solution-based approaches; and the criticality of bringing all stakeholders together in pursuit of global action.

Pursuing such actions are clearly central to our efforts to address climate change challenges and its impact on the Ocean, as well as to assisting governments in fulfilling their Nationally Determined Contributions and achieve the SDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another key opportunity to drive global climate action and the universal effort needed to return our Ocean to health is the UN Conference on the Ocean – in particular implementation of SDG14 – to be held in New York from 5 – 9 June 2017 at the United Nations in New York. The Co-Presidents for the Conference are Fiji and Sweden.

The Conference has three key aims:

- to adopt a universally agreed ‘Call for Action’ that will provide the political commitment needed to drive action to effectively implement SDG14 by 2030;
- to host seven partnership dialogues that will provide platforms for dialogue, and will stimulate the launching of strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships that will take forward achievement of SDG14 targets, and
- to provide the opportunity for key stakeholders to announce their own game-changing voluntary commitments that will drive achievement of SDG14.

We are inviting participation at the highest levels of government, as well from the UN system, international financial institutions, civil society, scientific and academic institutions, the private sector and all other stakeholders. I encourage you all to attend.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In coming days, as our focus shifts from Marrakech to the Ocean Conference New York, we encourage you to consider how to make best use of this opportunity to drive action – to identify key partnerships and commitments; to mobilize the global oceans community; and to galvanize support for the Conference.

To help fund the participation of developing countries, particularly Small Island Developing States, and Least Developed Countries, a trust fund will be established to accept voluntary contributions.

A preparatory meeting for the Ocean Conference will be held on 15-16 February in New York next year, to work on the Call for Action that will emanate from the conference.

Information on participating at both the Oceans Conference and the preparatory meeting is available on UN DESA's website. I note that the deadline to register your attendance is 8 January 2017.

In closing, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me once again thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

The work that you are doing is vital to us all – for the Ocean, for our place on this planet, and ultimately, for the peace and prosperity of us all.

I thank you.