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

**Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson,  
FAO Informal Meeting: “The SDGs: Universal push to transform the world”**

H.E. Mr. José Graziano da Silva, Director General of FAO,  
H.E. Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of World Food Programme,  
Mr. Perin Saint Ange, Associate Vice President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just last week, I was in Marrakech attending the COP22 meeting, where I joined world leaders in celebrating the entry into force of the Paris Agreement.

I know many of you were also in Marrakesh and would, like me, have found it inspiring that so many leaders committed to building on the current high levels of momentum to address both climate change and the implementation the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Both of these agreements of course essential to eliminating extreme poverty and hunger and addressing food security around the world.

Excellencies,

As we meet, we should remind ourselves that around 800 million people around the world are suffering from hunger. We should also remember that around a third of the world’s population suffers from malnutrition, more than a quarter does not have decent sanitation, and nearly 1 billion people do not have access to safe water.

As we set out to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, we are confronted by the very real challenges of food security: the volatility of commodity prices; population growth; climate change, drought and natural disasters; conflict and other drivers of migration and lack of access to land and productivity. In addition, about one third of global soils are now degraded.

Urbanization is drawing people away from agriculture at a time when demand for food production is increasing. Indeed, the 2016 Report on the State of Food and Agriculture, forecasts that demand for food production is expected to increase by 50 percent or more by 2050.

Excellencies,

The cruel reality is that despite these figures, forecasts, and the suffering of so many people, around one third of the food produced globally is being lost or wasted.

What are we going to do about it? The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and other key outcomes adopted over the last 15 months, provide us with a universal masterplan for people, planet and prosperity.

If implemented efficiently, effectively and at scale, the Sustainable Development Goals will transform our world for the better. They will eliminate extreme poverty and hunger, build peaceful and inclusive societies, empower women and girls, combat climate change, and protect our natural environment.

The stakes are as high as they could possibly be – humanity’s place on this planet depends on the success of the masterplan we have put in place. But the challenges before us are gigantic, including land degradation, desertification, deforestation, fisheries, and water resource management and of course, climate change.

We must find ways of increasing food production by 2030, and of addressing the sustainable use of arable land and transforming our food and agriculture production and consumption patterns world-wide.

All Member States have a critical role to play in this regard.

As a first step, all Member States have a responsibility to mainstream the SDGs into national planning and budgeting processes. Relevant sectors, including energy, water, agriculture, and industry should be included in developing sustainable plans and policies, in order to reconcile their interests with the needs of growing populations.

Transparent governance, accountable and effective leadership, and inclusive decision-making processes are also critical to on-the-ground implementation.

Adopting targeted strategies to enable farmers – particularly the poorest and most vulnerable – to access markets, credit, services, social protections, weather information, and risk management, are also vital.

For such strategies to be effective, gender-sensitive planning is required. At present, women constitute nearly 45 percent of the farming community. Ensuring that they have equal access to resources, entitlements, and legal protections – including the right to own land – is essential.

Member States must also work to raise awareness of the SDGs within local communities, businesses and civil society, so that they feel ownership of the 2030 Agenda; so that they integrate them into their plans, and serve as agents for change while finding new ways of achieving the goals.

As well as innovation, achieving the SDGs will require transfer of technology and the mobilization of finance. Current estimates are that US\$5-7 trillion will be required from a range of sources, including the private and public sectors in order to achieve the goals.

Excellencies,

Rome-based agencies have an inescapable role in driving implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Key contributions include the provision of best practice technical assistance to Member States, sharing of expertise on data collection, monitoring, analysis, and reporting, and helping to facilitate the building of partnerships between public and private sector actors for SDG implementation

Given the interconnected nature of the SDGs, your work to address poverty and hunger eradication, health and well-being, clean water and energy, climate change, and protection of our lands and Ocean, is fundamental to the realization of the entire 2030 Agenda.

The scale of the challenge requires that the entire UN system delivers on SDG implementation in a coherent, effective, and efficient manner. To this end, Member States are currently discussing in New York the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which will help to guide the work of UN agencies over coming years.

Excellencies

For my part, given the urgent need for global action on the 2030 Agenda, I have made the principal objective of the 71st Session of the General Assembly, to drive a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key aspects of the plan developed by my office for the 71st session, include raising the global public's awareness of the importance of SDG implementation; strengthening momentum and sustaining political will in the implementation of each goal; encouraging UN and related agencies to work coherently, efficiently and effectively to achieve the SDGs; and ensuring that the benefits of the 2030 Agenda reach all people – particularly the most vulnerable.

Excellencies,

As part of our commitment to obtain momentum for the 2030 Agenda, the UN will be hosting a Conference on the Ocean on 5 – 9 June next year, at UN Headquarters in New York.

The Conference will bring together high-level stakeholders from across government, UN agencies, international finance institutions, business, industry, civil society, and the scientific and academic communities, in order to mobilize action to reverse the cycle of decline in which the Ocean is currently caught.

From marine pollution to declining fish stocks, from degraded coastal ecosystems to ocean acidification, the Ocean is in deep trouble. I thus call on you to commit to preparing for and participating on the next year's Ocean Conference. Broad cross-sector engagement will be critical to its success, and to harnessing the political will, resources, knowledge, and strategies needed to drive our work forward and substantially manage the Oceans resources.

Excellencies,

We are running out of time to act, if we are to meaningfully address climate change, safeguard our terrestrial and marine environment, and at the same time redress inequalities within and between our societies.

The next decade presents the ultimate test for humanity: to come together through the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda to save humanity's place on this planet. The lives, the lives of our children, grandchildren, and all future generations depend upon the success or failure of our efforts.