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71st session of the General Assembly

Opening remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson, Revitalizing and Consolidating Efforts Towards the Implementation of Water-Related SDGs

Honourable Heads of States and Government,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you to the Governments of Tajikistan and Thailand, as well as the UN Development Programme for organizing this event.

I am pleased to be here with all of you and applaud your deep dedication to implementing the water-related SDGs.

While the obvious water-related SDGs are Goals 2, 3, 6, 12, 13 and 14; in effect water is also critical to many of the other goals.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is ambitious.

It is a masterplan – not only for our survival, for our thriving – on this planet.

This is why we have made the principle objective for the 71st session, a universal push to transform our world, through meaningful progress in implementing all 17 SDGs.

It's time we started to see concrete action on multiple fronts.

First, we need to sharpen the tools we use to support the most vulnerable including by reaching the 2 billion people anticipated to live in water stressed areas within ten years. It's a question of access, quality, affordability, sanitation, hygiene, water-use efficiency and more.

Second, in that context, we need to strengthen public awareness of the SDGs.

Those whose lives stand to benefit the most from the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda need to be empowered and to feel ownership of the Agenda in particular as it relates to water. This includes

every child at school, every community leader in the field, and every CEO at work. Everyone has a stake.

Third, implementation of the 2030 Agenda, at the speed and scale required, will depend on strategic and cooperative partnerships.

We must harness, as a priority and with a sense of urgency, all available resources – human and financial – and coordinate coherent action between governments, the UN, international organizations, the private sector, academia, civil society and foundations. When it comes to water, sanitation and oceans partnerships, there is much more work to be done.

Ultimately, every sector of society, every business, every household, and every individual relies on our clean water and healthy oceans for life and livelihood. And it will only be through cooperative action – across borders and across sectors – that will enable us to achieve the water-related goals.

And fourth, we must bear in mind the interconnected nature of the SDGs in all that we do. Progress made on one Goal will help to drive success in others.

On SDG14, for example, the UN will hold the Conference on Oceans (on SDG 14) in New York on 5-7 June 2016.

We are building this conference to be the game-changer for restoring the health and productivity of our oceans and for returning to a maritime world free of pollution, and with healthy fish-stocks and coastal ecosystems.

Doing so can also have a dramatic impact on food security, decent jobs, and an end to poverty.

We aim to bring together all partners – from scientists to policy makers, from civil society to the private sector – to contribute to finding long-term solutions. I encourage you all to attend.

Excellencies, when it comes to implementing the 2030 Agenda, we must be bold, we must be creative, we must be innovative, and we must ramp up our efforts.

Water knows no boundaries. And when it comes to addressing this challenge neither should we.

Thank you.