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Statement H.E. Peter Thomson, Informal Meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a pleasure to join you today for the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform to be held during the 71st Session of the General Assembly.

While today may be the first meeting of the IGN, there have already been a number of milestones during this Session that point to a renewed spirit and commitment by Member States to a reform of the Security Council, with a view to ensuring that it is able to fulfil its Charter mandate of primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today's meeting follows the General Assembly Debate on Security Council Reform held last November, at which Member State after Member State rose to acknowledge the urgent need for reform, and their commitment to working together to find a path forward.

It also follows the first Security Council Open Debate held this year, on the highly relevant topic of 'Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace', as well as the High-level Dialogue on Building Sustainable Peace for All, which I hosted on 24 January.

During both of these events, Member States underlined the importance of revitalizing the United Nations so that it has the tools and structures in place to enable it to take a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent approach to peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights challenges.

Secretary-General Guterres has already brought energy and vision to this effort, announcing a roadmap to ensure that the United Nations system is able to do more to prevent outbreaks of violent conflict and sustain peace.

As members of the General Assembly, it falls to us to support his efforts, and ensure that the United Nations is best positioned to deal with the growing number, nature, and scale of modern-day threats to international peace and security.

Excellencies,

It has been 24 years since the 'Security Council reform' item was first placed on the General Assembly's agenda.

In this period, the peace and security challenges that our world faces have become increasingly complex. They have been compounded by exponential population growth, technological advances, interconnectivity, and mobility of people and ideas.

Modern peace and security considerations stretch far beyond inter-State armed conflicts. We must now address unconventional threats, including terrorism, violent extremism, and asymmetrical warfare.

Against this backdrop, new global challenges are emerging. The humanitarian and refugee crisis, climate change, rising radicalization, and xenophobia, widening inequality within and between States, and environmental degradation, all have peace and security implications, if they are not addressed early or managed well.

Excellencies,

All Member States have expressed the view, that the current structure of the Security Council must be reformed, in order to ensure that it is representative, responsive, efficient, and above all, effective.

But while the need for reform is agreed, long-standing differences on the nature of reform have held back substantive progress.

We must find ways to move beyond this impasse.

The first step must be that all delegations come to these negotiations with a renewed spirit of openness, compromise, and commitment to finding common ground.

History has shown us that the General Assembly is capable of bringing Member States together and finding consensus when humanity's greatest challenges need to be addressed.

It is this spirit that we can overcome the sensitive and complex issues involved in Security Council reform.

Let us therefore draw inspiration from major agreements that have recently been reached to address the major global challenges of our time, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Let us draw lessons from the precedents that we already have, including Member States' decision in 1965 to increase the number of non-permanent seats on the Council from six to the current ten.

And let us draw from the recent steps that have been made to improve institutional coordination between the General Assembly and Security Council, including through the more transparent and inclusive process to select and appoint the current Secretary-General.

Through open and honest dialogue, good faith consultations, cooperative spirit, flexibility and political will, I am confident the Co-chairs, Ambassadors Mohamed Khaled Khiari of Tunisia, and Ambassador Ion Jinga of Romania, will lead a meaningful IGN process.

I thank the Co-chairs once again for taking on this important task and urge all Member States to extend them their full cooperation.

I am committed to remaining engaged in the process by providing all support necessary to the Co-chairs.

Excellencies,

To conclude, I encourage you all to bring new energy and vision to your efforts to reform the Security Council. The community of nations is calling for a Security Council that best represents the era in which we live; one which is best constituted to maintain a safe and peaceful world for us all.

I thank you.