

13 February 2017

71st session of the General Assembly

**Closing Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Event on Innovation in Partnerships SDG 14: Life Below Water**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,

First, thank you to the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Permanent Mission of Sweden, One Earth, and the World Ocean Council for organizing today's event.

Unfortunately, I was unable to join you for this morning's discussions, as I was addressing the opening session of the 2017 Inter-Parliamentary Union's annual hearing.

It is significant to note that this year the Inter-Parliamentary Union decided to devote its annual parliamentary hearing to SDG14, and to discussing ways to 'preserve the ocean, safeguard the planet, and ensure human well-being in the context of the 2030 Agenda'.

The IPU's decision reinforces the fact that global awareness is building on the need for urgent action to reverse the cycle of decline in which the Ocean is currently caught. It speaks to the momentum and enthusiasm that is now being generated for The Ocean Conference, which as you know will be held from 5-9 June, here at the United Nations in New York.

Taken together with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, when world leaders came together in September 2015 to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they provided humanity with a universal masterplan for a sustainable future.

In so doing, they deliberately recognized that to achieve a sustainable future for humanity on this planet, dedicated action was needed to conserve and sustainably use the Ocean's resources. The required action was captured in Sustainable Development Goal 14, informally known as the Ocean's Goal.

Indeed, through SDG14 and the targets and indicators that underpin it, we have before us a roadmap for overcoming Ocean's woes and maintaining its health.

But of course, to make SDG14's implementation successful, there must be a universal push towards its fulfilment. It is for this reason that the United Nations will be hosting The Ocean Conference from 5-9 June, here in New York.

Apart from the heightened global consciousness needed to address the Ocean's woes, the conference will have three main outcomes. The first is a 'Call for Action' declaration that will provide the political universal commitment needed to drive implementation.

The second is a registry of voluntary commitments on measures of support for SGD14. Member States, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, the scientific and academic community, indeed all interested parties, are being invited to register their voluntary commitments of action to support implementation of SDG14.

This registry for voluntary commitments is being launched in the form of a UN website on Wednesday this week. It will be taking commitments from all interested parties between now and the end of the Ocean Conference in June.

The third is a report that will capture all these elements from the conference that will in effect serve as a work plan for the years ahead.

As part of the lead-up to the Ocean Conference, the United Nations is holding a Preparatory Meeting this Wednesday and Thursday at which discussions will be held on the elements for the 'Call for Action', and on the themes for the conference's seven partnership dialogues.

The partnership dialogues will be critical to the work of the Conference. They will comprehensively address the urgent challenges facing the Ocean, and each will be grounded in the most authoritative scientific information available.

I suggest to you that the partnership dialogues should be of particular importance to those of you gathered in this room. As all of you know, if we are to drive action on the scale needed to conserve and sustainably use the Ocean's resources, innovative new models of strategic collaborative partnership must be formed.

Thus, platforms such as this meeting are invaluable in strengthening diverse relationships to develop the partnerships needed to drive SDG14 to fruition.

Your discussions on gaps and challenges facing SDG14 implementation, and on innovative partnerships to effectively manage sustainable seafood harvesting, end overfishing, and combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and destructive fishing practices, are essential building blocks for The Ocean Conference's success.

I encourage all of you to develop your discussions, and as a result to bring the multi-stakeholder partnerships and commitments you form to the Ocean Conference, so that they can be registered as part of the universal push for action. At the Conference, the seven partnership dialogues will provide the opportunity for the best of the partnership commitments to be announced on the global platform provided.

The Ocean Conference is the only universal forum dedicated to supporting the implementation of SDG14. For the sake of Ocean's health, the conference must be a resounding success. After all, SDG14 is the only universally adopted measure in place to conserve and sustainably manage the resources of the Ocean.

As I said in my opening remarks at the Annual Hearing of the Inter-Parliamentary Union this morning.

Over the next two days, in many chambers around the UN campus, detailed discussions will be held on the urgent actions needed to protect the Ocean. I'm sure all of us want these actions to find their way to successful implementation, so that our children and all those who come after them will know the joy and the sustenance that Ocean's bounty provided to us all in our youth. Let us not deny them.

I wish you all the best for your deliberations this week.

I thank you.