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71st session of the General Assembly

**Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Closing: Inter-Parliamentary Union 2017 Parliamentary Hearing**

Honourable Saber Chowdhury, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Honourable Martin Chungong, Secretary General of IPU,
Distinguished Parliamentarians,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following two intense days of discussions, we come to the end of another rich and dynamic Inter-Parliamentary Union Annual Hearing at the United Nations.

I thank all the parliamentarians and other participants for the high levels of engagement, commitment, and leadership displayed over the last two days.

The energy and ideas generated have created much food for thought on how, collectively, we can act to address one of the most pressing issues facing our world – the health of the Ocean and the sustainability of its resources.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the course of four in-depth interactive sessions, we heard parliamentarians from across the world discuss the importance of the Ocean to achieving our broader sustainable development goals.

We have heard about the importance of implementing both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change if we want to secure a sustainable future for humanity on this planet.

We have also heard practical solutions for overcoming the many challenges the Ocean is faced with.

During the annual hearing, a wide-range of Ocean-related issues were raised, including climate change, marine pollution, marine protected areas, and the regeneration and protection of biodiversity.

A number of key thematic issues can be drawn from our discussions.

First, many parliamentarians raised the importance of international cooperation in addressing Ocean's issues.

This included through compliance with the UNCLOS framework, through regional agreements, and through strengthening existing frameworks, such as the BBNJ negotiations now underway for Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions.

Many participants called for greater cooperation through the sharing of best practices, technology, and financial support, and highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholders' partnerships, including through public-private partnership.

Second, Ocean governance was raised by a number of speakers as a critical means towards sustaining peace, maritime security, and friendly relations among nations.

Greater coordination of activities in the areas of fisheries, offshore energy, tourism, and shipping were highlighted as priorities.

Thirdly, many Parliamentarians raised the importance of addressing fishery-related issues and highlighted the need to strengthen regulatory frameworks for harvesting and addressing overfishing and IUU fishing.

They also stressed the need to find a balance between addressing the needs of small and artisanal fisheries, the commercial imperatives of large-scale exploitation, and of ensuring sustainable fisheries for generations to come.

And finally – and perhaps most importantly – the critical role of parliamentarians in pursuing our common Ocean-related priorities was discussed in detail.

This included by introducing laws and regulations, shaping public policy, increasing public awareness, prioritizing programmes and funding to Ocean-related activities, addressing weak governance, ensuring accountability for Government's meeting their global commitments, and by promoting the importance of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as fundamental means to restore the health and sustainability of the Ocean.

I want to take this opportunity to ask that you take home with you the following information. Tomorrow the UN will launch a Registry of Voluntary Commitments in support of the SDG14 on the website of The Ocean Conference. The registry will be open to all and will serve as a global work-plan to address Ocean's woes. I respectfully request that you visit the website upon your return to your countries and urge any of your constituents who care about the state of the Ocean, to register their voluntary commitments. The website's reference is www.oceanconference.un.org.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I want to once again thank all the participants for their engagement over the last two days, and for their expressions of commitment to act urgently, decisively and collectively to conserve and sustainably use the Ocean resources.

As you prepare to return home, I urge you to go back as standard bearers for the Ocean and ask that you serve as champions of action in your own countries.

I look forward to welcoming you all to the United Nations again for the Ocean Conference in June, and to engaging with you on the partnerships and voluntary commitments that have been inspired by your engagements over the last two days.

I wish you God speed in your travels and thank you for coming to the annual hearings in this pivotal year.

I thank you.