

22 September 2016

71st session of the General Assembly

**Closing remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Call to action for the Ocean**

Honourable Heads of States and Government,
Honourable Ministers,
Under Secretary General Gyan Acharya,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the organizers of this event – the Governments of Grenada and Maldives, UN OHRLLS, and the Parley for Oceans – for continuing to advocate for action on Oceans.

And I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate USG Acharya and all in the OHRLLS on 15 years of successful advocacy and support for vulnerable countries.

Excellencies A healthy and vibrant Ocean is crucial to the survival of our people and planet.

It is a source for food, clean air, stable climate, rain and fresh water, transport and energy, recreation, and livelihoods.

The health of our Ocean is intrinsically linked to sustainable development, and particularly that of Small Island Developing States and coastal communities.

Unfortunately, incredible damage is being done to our oceans and seas, and this life-giving resource for humanity is being pushed to the point of collapse.

No one government, organisation or person, can restore our oceans alone. The international community needs to be involved.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted last year, is the masterplan to transform our world to one where extreme poverty has been eliminated, and peaceful, well-governed societies live sustainably, and in harmony, with our environment.

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

Strategic partnerships are crucial to these efforts.

I commend the partnership initiative between OHRLLS and the Parley for the Oceans.

Plastics are a major source of pollution on the high seas and a health threat to humans, wildlife, and the environment.

Parley for the Ocean's strategy to mitigate ocean plastic is crucial to our efforts to reverse the decline in the health of our Ocean.

Next year from 5 to 9 June 2017, the UN Conference on the implementation of SDG14 will be co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden in New York.

We are building this conference up to be the game- changer that restores our Ocean's well-being.

There will be seven partnership dialogues held during the Conference, and we encourage engagement by civil society and the private sector, so that this conference may bring about the concrete solutions that are necessary to save our oceans.

The importance and urgency to SIDS of a healthy and productive ocean is clearly highlighted in the SAMOA pathway.

In the lead up to the Conference, I look forward to your continued leadership role as SIDS to ensuring the success of the Oceans Conference.

We are encouraging representation at the highest level at the Conference, and I will advocate for funds for the Trust Fund to facilitate SIDS and LDC participation at the Conference.

Excellencies,

Given the interconnected nature of the SDGs, achieving progress on one goal will help to drive implementation of the other goals as well – the success of the Oceans Conference has the potential to harness momentum, catalyze action, and give implementation of the 2030 Agenda the kick start it needs.

Thank you.