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Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson, Strengthening of Coordination of Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance of UN

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we mark the 25th anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on ‘Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations’.

Its adoption was a landmark development for the UN in establishing guiding principles for the coordination of humanitarian assistance, and in setting the UN humanitarian architecture.

While this is a moment for commemoration, regrettably it is taking place at a time of escalating humanitarian emergency and need.

Ongoing conflicts and the devastating impacts of climate change, extreme weather, and natural disasters, are compounding, and leading to the suffering of millions. The loss of life, homes, infrastructure, livelihoods, and food security are having devastating consequences.

Across our world, 128.6 million people are affected by conflict, violence, and disaster, with almost 93 million people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance.

Indeed, as we meet, the UN and its partners are launching the largest appeal in history for humanitarian funding and seeking US\$22.2 billion in 2017 to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of people across the globe.

I urge all Member States to contribute to this appeal.

Excellencies,

As we look to address the enormous scale of this challenge, we must strive to find new ways to sustain peace, resolve conflicts, combat climate change, better manage migrant and refugee flows, and respond to escalating humanitarian need.

In this context, it is critical that the international community engage in multi-year planning, enhance coordination between the UN and other humanitarian actors on the ground, and make best use of all available tools and resources at its disposal.

Fundamental to this is recognizing the interlinkages between sustainable development, peace and security, human rights, and humanitarian action, and finding new ways to bring these strands together and develop solutions. To this end, I will convene a High-Level Dialogue entitled “Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace” on 24 January 2017.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, must of course be prioritized for urgent action.

At the same time, the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, and commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit, must be seen as complementary to the SDGs, and implemented without delay.

Excellencies,

Long-term solutions are needed to break the cycles of recurrent crisis and conflict that the world is currently caught in.

If the SDGs are implemented urgently, effectively, and at scale, they will eradicate extreme poverty, advance gender equality, and protect our natural environment. Their implementation will meet humanitarian needs, as they will build peaceful and inclusive societies and combat climate change.

At present, over 65 million people have been forcibly displaced as a result of armed conflict and persecution. Flagrant attacks against civilians, schools and hospitals, and humanitarian and medical personnel continue, in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law.

I strongly condemn these actions. Political solutions to end these crises must be urgently found.

We must also ramp up our action to address climate change.

The science on climate change is unequivocal. We are currently on a pathway to a 3-4-degree temperature increase and the adverse impacts of this reality are undermining the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. The consequences for humanity will be catastrophic if the current trajectory is not radically altered.

As we all know, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of natural disasters, including droughts, storms, and floods with devastating consequences.

Developing countries – in particular least developed countries and small island developing countries – are acutely vulnerable to the resulting human and economic loss. It is estimated that in 2015, 19.2 million people were displaced by disasters associated with natural hazards.

To put it simply, combating climate change is a humanitarian imperative.

Excellencies,

It is only by working together that we will be able to improve humanitarian responses, reduce underlying causes, build resilience, and ensure that development gains reach our most vulnerable people – the millions of people relying on us for humanitarian assistance.

Collective responsibility and action are needed. I count on all of you to support these efforts.

Thank you.