

22 September 2016

**71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly**

**Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson, President of the 71st Session of the General Assembly, at ASEAN-UN Ministerial Meeting**

Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you to His Excellency, Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lao People's Democratic Republic, for convening today's meeting.

I congratulate Lao DPR for its successful convening of the recent ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, and the outcomes of the 8th ASEAN-UN Summit.

Excellencies, The UN and ASEAN's longstanding cooperation is fundamental to each of our organisations.

Just as world leaders who drafted the UN Charter recognized the significance of regional organisations to the UN achieving its high ideals, the 'Founding Fathers' of ASEAN had the foresight to refer in the 'ASEAN Declaration' to the importance of adhering to the UN Charter.

In many ways, the histories, and trajectories of our organisations are intertwined.

The UN and ASEAN's cooperation has deepened and evolved over time to meet new and emerging global challenges. Let me mention some of the highest priorities for the coming year.

First, I firmly believe that at this moment, no challenge is more important and urgent to saving our people and planet, than implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

These Agreements, if implemented effectively and at speed and scale, have the potential to transform our world, by eliminating extreme poverty, supporting inclusive and sustained economic growth, combatting climate change, and protecting our environment.

And this is why I have made the principle objective of the 71st Session of the General Assembly, to drive a universal push to see meaningful progress in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Regional initiatives that support nationally led process are critical to these efforts, and I welcome ASEAN's work to align the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 with the 2030 Agenda.

I am also encouraged by the development of an ASEAN-UN Action Plan on Environment and Climate Change (2016-2020).

Second, in June 2017, the UN Conference on Oceans (on SDG 14) will be held in New York, bringing together partners to contribute to long-term solutions for the conservation and sustainable use of our oceans and its resources. The contribution of ASEAN countries to this discussion will be vital.

Third, the promotion and protection of human rights is fundamental to achieving the 2030 Agenda and will continue to be a priority during the 71st session.

In this regard, I ask all Member States to strive to further the promotion and protection of human rights within their societies, and note that ASEAN can play a key role in raising public awareness of the importance of human rights in the region.

Fourth, ASEAN's contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security is also clear.

I particularly thank ASEAN countries for their contributions to UN peacekeeping operations across the globe.

Regionally, ASEAN has, and will continue to play, a vital role in promoting stability, by fostering friendly relations, working to reduce tensions, and promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, thus also contributing to create peace and stability necessary for achieving the SDGs.

I also want to commend ASEAN's longstanding commitment to preserving Southeast Asia as a nuclear weapon free zone.

Next Monday, 26 September, the General Assembly will hold a High-Level Meeting to mark the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and I encourage all of your active participation.

Excellencies,

The close cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations is a testament to the shared values and ideals of both organisations.

I look forward to continuing this partnership during the 71st Session, as we work to achieve implement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the interests all of humanity.

Thank you.