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Opening remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson at the Side-Event, “Accelerating capital flows and investments in the SDGs – Towards sustainable capital markets”

Minister Royal,
Minister Helgesen Mogens Lykketoft, President of the Seventieth Session,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to see so many high-level representatives from Member States, the UN system, civil society, and the private sector here today.

One year on from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, it is clear that far more needs to be done to turn this masterplan for saving people and planet, into concrete action and meaningful change.

Key among these challenges is mobilizing the necessary resources to adequately finance the SDGs.

Accelerating capital flows and investments into the SDGs is fundamental to these efforts, as is requiring capital markets to become more “sustainable”.

We all know – and indeed agreed in Addis Ababa – that in order to finance SDG implementation, we must: scale up public spending and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA); and intensify the mobilization of domestic resources – primarily through stronger taxation systems, and enhanced cooperation on international tax

However, we also all know that public funds will not be sufficient to meet the scale of financing required for sustainable development.

We therefore need to find new ways to increase and redirect private capital flows into SDG-related sectors. This process has already begun.

Encouragingly, some governments are already showing leadership in this area, introducing legislations, policies and regulatory frameworks to promote sustainable investments.

The G20 Group of countries has been actively contributing through the Climate Finance Study Group and the work of the Green Finance Study Group on voluntary actions countries can undertake to help mobilize private investment.

The adoption of the G20 Green Finance Action Plan, accomplished under China's bold leadership just a few weeks ago, is particularly welcome.

I commend international organisations such as UNEP which are also providing significant contributions including through their recent inquiry report on the design of a sustainable financial system and we will hear more from UNEP shortly.

Some private sector actors have also begun voluntarily moving in this direction, by taking steps to green their investment portfolios.

To those who are here today, I thank you for your initiative. You are leading the way to a sustainable future.

A greater, more systematic transformation is necessary. It will require active engagement by all stakeholders, including national authorities, the private sector, and local communities.

We will need to create better regulatory environments – at both national and international levels – which include adequate incentive structures to focus markets on socially responsible and green investments.

We will also need to improve market practices, enhance governance structures, and find innovative ways to promote economic growth that fosters social inclusion and protects the environment.

At the intergovernmental level, I suggest it is time to consider establishing a Group of Friends of SDG Finance to drive action at the UN.

The 2030 Agenda may be big, but the ramifications of inaction or ineffective implementation are bigger.

This is why I have made the principle objective of the Presidency of the 71st Session of the General Assembly to be to drive a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Reorienting global finance to increase funding for the SDGs, and make resource use more transparent and accountable, will be a critical element of this vital process.

I am looking forward to hearing from our distinguished panelists today on their innovative ideas for getting the transformation underway.

Thank you.