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Video Message by H.E. Peter Thomson, Morocco Forum for Adolescent and Youth Human Rights

Greetings from New York!

Congratulations to the National Observatory for Children's Rights and HRH Princess Lalla Meryam for organizing the Morocco Forum for Adolescent and Youth Human Rights in partnership with the UN Population Fund.

And thank you for inviting me to deliver a few words.

Just three weeks ago, I was in beautiful Marrakech to attend the COP22 meeting on Climate Change. During my visit, I met with leaders of countries, industry, civil society and the scientific community, and my single message to them was this – it is imperative that you all act boldly, urgently and cooperatively to save our planet from the catastrophic effects of climate change.

As you know, the devastating impacts of climate change are already being felt across our world, with millions of people suffering from the effects of extreme weather events, including loss of life, homes, infrastructure, livelihoods, and food security.

As I spoke with leaders, I urged them to therefore see climate action as one part of our global efforts to transform our world to a sustainable future, through the universal masterplan of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

If the SDGs are implemented urgently and effectively, we will create a future where extreme poverty is eliminated, people live in peaceful and inclusive societies, prosperity is increased, women and girls are empowered, the environment is protected, and where the hopes and aspirations of all young people can be met.

While I was in Morocco, I also had the chance to meet with around 500 students at Cadi Ayyad University and to talk to them about the future of our world – the health of our planet, the place of humanity, and the importance of sustainable development. I left this discussion inspired by their level of knowledge, activism, and commitment to sustainable development – just as I been as I have meet with young people across our world.

Through the 2030 Agenda world leaders have set a timeline of 14 more years for the international community to transform our world and secure humanity's place on this earth.

For me, there is no greater moral imperative. It is for this reason that I have made the principle objective of this Session of the UN General Assembly to drive a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 SDGs.

Young people are fundamental to these efforts. As the inheritors of our earth, you stand the most to gain – or to lose – by the achievement of the SDGs. It is therefore vital that all 1.2 billion adolescents across our world – most of who are in developing countries – are empowered, and provided the skills and opportunities, to drive SDG implementation.

As a first step, I have already written to all Heads of State and Government encouraging them to include the SDGs on the education curricula of all schools. This will help to broaden the message of the SDGs, so all young people can serve as agents of change for sustainable development.

Initiatives such as the Morocco Forum are critical in this work to empower young people, by building networks, facilitating policy dialogue, and galvanizing momentum in support of youth-led civil society in the region.

World leaders recognized that young people must be at the front and center of our sustainable development efforts when they said in the 2030 Agenda itself –and I quote – “It lies in the hands of today’s younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations.”

I therefore leave each and every one of you with a simple call to action – join us in driving implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

be voices that amplify the message of the SDGs across our world; be educators who share with others your knowledge of the importance of the SDGs;

be motivators and examples to your families, friends and communities of what sustainable living embodies;

reward socially and environmentally conscious companies;

and be active citizens who demand urgent and responsible change from those around you.

Your efforts will help to create a safe, just, equitable and prosperous world for young people everyone – for you, for my children and grandchildren, and for all future generations.

Thank you and I wish you a successful Forum.