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71st Session of the General Assembly

Concluding Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson, at “Advancing Together Towards the SDGs: World Conservation Congress Outcomes”

Honourable Heads of States and Government,
Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentleman,

I thank the Governments of France and Monaco; the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Wildlife Conservation Society for organizing this event.

I congratulate IUCN and all its members for the successful World Conservation Congress held in Hawaii earlier this month, and which endorsed the Hawaii commitments.

I also thank the distinguished panelists for their thought-provoking presentations today, which have enabled a stimulating discussion on how we can all contribute to meet the high expectations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The adoption last year of the 17 universal and integrated Sustainable Development Goals aimed to put the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.

Implemented effectively, the SDGs will ensure the survival of our people, health of our planet, and continued prosperity for all.

This includes speeding and scaling up combating climate change, restoring our oceans, protecting biodiversity, ending wildlife trafficking, and providing clean water and sanitation for all.

That is why, as President of the General Assembly, I have made the principle objective for the 71st session, overseeing a universal push to transform our world through meaningful progress in implementing all 17 SDGs.

Translating the ambitious 2030 Agenda from words on paper to concrete action, will require ensuring that there is awareness and ownership of the SDGs by those whose lives stand to benefit most from the transformation.

The ‘Hawaii commitments’ highlight the importance of engaging and empowering youth as – and I quote – ‘They have a greater stake in long-term sustainability’.

I strongly support this approach. Harnessing the energy and innovation of young people will be at the heart of implementing the SDGs.

Collective action by all relevant stakeholders is also critical to our implementation efforts.

The urgency, scale and ambition of the 2030 agenda requires that we harness as a priority all available resources – human and financial – from government, the UN, international organizations, the private sector, academia and civil society

IUCN’s experience in bringing together the expertise, resources and reach of its diverse membership to deliver concrete solutions, is an example of how we must all pull together to deliver on the SDGs.

The interconnected nature of the SDGs also means that implementation progress on one Goal can help to drive success in others.

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.

We are building this conference to be the game-changer to reverse the cycle of decline in the health of our oceans, and to ensure our Ocean’s well-being.

As the ‘Hawaii commitments’ state – “The world’s oceans, and the communities that depend on them, are under immense and unprecedented human pressures”.

The involvement of organisations like IUCN and its partners – with their proven track record on conservation – will be vital to the success of the Oceans Conference, including in ensuring that we have scientific data to anchor our policy recommendations.

I encourage your engagement in support of the success of the Oceans conference, and I look forward to seeing you all there.

Thank you once again to the organizers of today’s event for sharing the ‘Hawaii commitments’ of 2016 with the UN community.

As IUCN’s World Conservation Congress said, we are indeed ‘A planet at a crossroads’, and I firmly believe that implementing the SDGs is the ‘course corrector’ we need to guide us to the secure and harmonious future that we all want for our children, for our grandchildren, and for future generations.

Thank you.