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71st session of the General Assembly

**Opening remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries**

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh,
Mr. Deputy-Secretary-General, Under-Secretary General,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be invited to speak at the annual Ministerial Meeting of Least Developed Countries.

I would like to begin by congratulating Member States on the successful Mid-term Review of the Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA) held in May, in Antalya, Turkey.

The Political Declaration that was adopted there was very significant in linking implementation of the Istanbul Program of Action to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

This was a particularly important step in bringing coherence to our sustainable development efforts.

Through these Agreements, we now have in our hands, a universal masterplan to transform our world.

A plan which, if implemented urgently, effectively, and at scale, will: eliminate extreme poverty; build prosperity; sustain peace; and combat climate change.

A plan which will address many issues of special relevance to LDCs, including making sure they have the capacity to deliver on the 2030 Agenda; ensuring Overseas Development Assistance reaches LDCs; strengthening LDC's resilience to external shocks; and addressing the highly diverse needs of individual LDCs.

The 71st Session of the General Assembly, will be critical to harnessing the momentum and support needed to turn these words into action.

It is for this reason that we have made the principle objective of the Session, to drive a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategic partnerships, and inclusive approaches, will be critical to our efforts, as will be empowering the large numbers of youth residing in the LDCs.

Youth have such an important role to play in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and we need to lift our investment in their education, health, and employment.

During this 71st Session, there will be a number of opportunities to push our implementation of the SDGs, including at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador next month, at the COP22 meeting in Marrakesh in October, and at the UN Conference on SDG 14 on Oceans, in June 2017, here in New York.

While these events are focused on specific Goals, given the interconnected nature of the SDGs, progress on one goal will help to drive implementation of the other goals. I urge your delegations to participate actively in these opportunities.

Excellencies,

My central message to you today is this: while I am deeply honoured to address this Group, it is my firm hope that through effective implementation of the SDGs, there will come a time soon when it is no longer necessary for this Group to exist!

Throughout the 71st session, I look forward to working with you all in this high endeavor.

Thank you.