

23 September 2016

71st session of the General Assembly

**Opening remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Fortieth annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77**

Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations
Your Excellency Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand,
Honourable Heads of States and Government,
Mr. Executive Secretary of the Group of 77,
Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to join you, and to address the 40th Annual Ministerial meeting of the G77 and China.

I commend you, Honourable Prime Minister of Thailand, for your leadership during a demanding year, and I congratulate the Republic of Ecuador for its election as the upcoming chair of the Group.

As the largest and the most diverse bloc at the United Nations, the Group of 77 and China is an indispensable partner at the General Assembly.

As a former Chair of the G77, I am keenly aware of the breadth and depth of the Group's engagement and contributions across the three pillars at the UN, and most particularly, in driving global consensus on development.

Just yesterday, I had the honour of speaking at the 30th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, while this Sunday, we will be marking the first anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. It is a reminder of how far the international community has come on these issues, because of the leadership of this Group.

The G77's role in formulating the 2030 Agenda was fundamental, and together with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and Paris Climate Agreement, we now have in our hands a universal masterplan to transform our world.

Achieving this transformation will rely on our collective ability to build attention, momentum, support and action.

The 71st Session of the General Assembly will be critical to these efforts. This is why I have made the principle objective of the session, driving a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

We need to make sure these goals are at the center of our national policies and priorities, and that adequate resources are made available for their implementation.

This fall, the General Assembly will hold consultations on the budget outline, as well as on the provision of resources to support SDG implementation. The outcomes of these deliberations will shape UN support to Member States on sustainable development for the coming biennium.

Over the coming year, there will be a number of other opportunities to push SDG implementation. In October, I'll be going to the UN Habitat III Conference in Quito and in November, I will attend the COP22 meeting in Marrakesh, where Member States will begin the process of translating their commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement into action.

Next June, the UN Conference on SDG 14 on Oceans, will be held here in New York. We are building this conference to be the game-changer for restoring the health of our oceans.

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 as well.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, at the necessary speed and scale, will require enhanced international cooperation. This includes strategic and cooperative partnerships between governments, the UN, international organizations, the private sector, academia, and civil society.

In this context, South-South cooperation represents the best expression of solidarity and interdependence among developing countries, and will be pivotal in complementing North-South, public and private SDG-implementation initiatives. I am committed to working with Member States to enhance the support it receives.

Equally important is the need to advance an integrated approach to realizing the SDGs, protecting human rights, and sustaining peace.

This session, we will welcome a new Secretary-General who must build on the work of our current Chief Administrative Officer – a person who, regardless of her or his nationality, must put the interests of the world's developing countries at the heart of the UN's agenda.

During this session, I will ensure there are ample opportunities for early interaction between the new Secretary-General and Member States so as to build a solid working relationship with the Assembly.

Excellencies, as President of the General Assembly, I am proud to bring a G77 perspective to the Office of the Presidency; to have two experienced former Permanent Representatives from the G77 in my

senior executive team; and to have the benefit of knowledge from more than 20 colleagues who are nationals of G77 members.

I am grateful for your continued support, leadership, and advice, and I look forward to working closely with you and your delegations in the months ahead.

Thank you.