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**71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly**

**Opening remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,  
COP22 High-Level Event :  
Sustainable Economic Transition and Economic Diversification**

Excellency, Mr. Salaheddine Mezouar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco and President of COP 22,  
Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Excellency, Mr. Khalid Al Falih, Minister of Energy, Industry, and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia,  
Mr. Jonathan Pershing, US Special Envoy for Climate Change,  
Mr. Andrei Marcu,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today.

The entry into force of the Paris Agreement earlier this month was the crowning moment of the international community's marathon effort to limit the destructive effects of climate change. Let us not mince words, left unchecked these destructive greenhouse gases threaten humanity's place on this planet.

I wish to particularly recognize the efforts of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today, in moving to complete its ratification process before the holding of this Conference. Saudi Arabia's ratification is a reflection of the Kingdom's strong commitment to addressing climate change and to work for a sustainable transition to a low-carbon economy.

With the world now agreeing on the urgent need for comprehensive climate action, we must shift our rhetorical commitments into practical implementation – first of the Paris Agreement commitments, and then moving beyond these targets.

Sustainable transition of economies, and economic diversification, will be critical to these efforts. The international community must take urgent and concrete steps to diversify the global energy mix.

The UNFCCC's adoption last May of a three-year work programme on “economic diversification to progress to a low-greenhouse gas economy and carbon neutrality, as well as on a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs” is an important step in this regard.

Engagement on this programme must now intensify, with emphasis on the measures needed to support developing country Parties to manage the economic and social impacts of climate change.

Effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will rely closely on our ability to transition to a green economy. Through our collective efforts, we must pursue this transition at an accelerated pace.

The transition to a green economy will require all countries – regardless of their stage of development – to make deep adjustments. Some of these will be cross-cutting in nature, while others will be different for developed and developing countries.

Cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and partnerships will be vital to these efforts, and will have to be tailored to different situations, national priorities, and development plans.

The greening of national economies, which will support transforming our way of life on this planet, will give rise to both challenges and opportunities.

One of the most significant and complex challenges to manage will be the impact on the global workforce. As we seek to drive global economic growth based on the principle of sustainability, unskilled workers worldwide will need to move to new, less labor-intensive economic models. Labor rights will need to be protected and expanded, and social safety nets strengthened, as the adaptation process takes hold.

Education and training will be critical to managing this transition, particularly to ensure that women and girls are empowered as full economic actors, with access to decent jobs and equal pay for equal work. Young people, people with disabilities, migrant workers and other vulnerable populations will also need to be provided the necessary tools to be integrated into the labor market, and to realize their full potential in safe and secure working environments.

As opportunities emerge throughout the process, these must be harnessed efficiently and effectively.

With adequate support in finance, science, technology and capacity-building, developing countries will be well-placed to leapfrog high-carbon models and spur green economic growth. In advanced economies, innovation will help to promote and hasten the shift to more sustainable patterns of production, consumption, and waste.

As inefficient subsidies are phased out, and global financial flows are redirected towards sustainable investments, a reinvigorating of global trade will be essential to increasing productivity in the world economy.

Global economic and financial governance systems that are just and democratic will also be instrumental in ensuring that all people across our world are able to benefit from the process of economic transition and diversification.

Greater access to financial services, including through the interconnectivity that the internet offers, will contribute to increased formalization of the economy, and the generation of domestic resources.

Developed country Parties must also meet and increase their commitments to providing additional climate finance to help developing countries finance adaptation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a global community, rapid strides have been made in recent months to put humanity on the path of sustainability, equity, and prosperity. These include the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework, and the New Urban Agenda outcome from Habitat III.

There is no room for half-heartedness in our commitment to realizing the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The impacts of climate change are real and affecting us all now.

The magnitude of the task ahead requires us all to commit to change. We will have to change our behavioral patterns as global citizens and consumers; we must rethink our running of economies, of doing business, and managing workforces. We will need to hold our leaders to account for protecting our environment and leading us with urgency towards a sustainable future.

The well-being of our grandchildren depends on us taking these actions now.

I wish you all a very productive discussion today.

Thank you.