

21 September 2016

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

**Welcome Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson  
Special High Level Event by IRENA:  
“Leading the Way: Renewable Energy and SIDS”**

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we speak, 1.1 billion people around the world do not have access to electricity.

And fossil fuels account for over 80 percent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with global temperatures reaching new heights.

In the case of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), access to affordable energy remains a major constraint to their sustainable economic growth and development – an issue highlighted in the SAMOA Pathway.

Most SIDS continue to be dependent on imported fossil fuels, despite the existential threat of climate change, and despite most SIDS being rich in renewable energy sources – water, wind and geothermal.

Properly harnessed, these sources could meet the majority of SIDS’s agricultural, industrial and household needs.

For SIDS, sustainable energy has the potential not only to increase access, decrease electricity costs, create jobs, and mitigate climate change, but to save homes, families and communities, for present-day and future generations alike.

Implemented effectively, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Climate Agreement, have the potential to transform our world for people and planet alike, including by combatting the adverse effects of climate change

This is why I have made the principle objective of my Presidency of the 71st General Assembly, overseeing a universal push to see meaningful progress in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Achieving SDG7 on Affordable and Clean Energy will not only transform the global energy system but will have a multiplier effect in helping to meet all other SDGs as well.

Many SIDS have already begun the process to transition their energy systems, through the establishment of renewable energy policies and projects.

However, strategic partnerships that bring together political leadership, technical expertise, financing, and communities, are essential to supporting these efforts.

Regional initiatives such as the Pacific Energy Conference, action frameworks like IRENA's SIDS Lighthouses initiative, and renewable energy programmes like SIDS DOCK, all help to strengthen cooperation, institutional, policy, and planning frameworks, as well as financing and capacity building.

But more can and should be done, urgently and at scale.

The international community has a critical role to play in supporting transition efforts, by working in an integrated, innovative, coherent and efficient manner that builds on stakeholders' comparative advantages and focuses on delivering real added value.

Excellencies,

The time is ripe for scaling up action and investment in renewable energy in SIDS.

We have the proven technological solutions which are, each day, declining in costs.

We have better business models, and availability of financing.

We have the benefit of a growing awareness of climate science, and the importance of renewable energy to combating climate change.

And we have strong political commitment, creating a momentum of opportunity that must be seized.

We have the opportunity in our hands to support SIDS own efforts to transition their energy strategies towards renewable and sustainable energy options.

By doing so, we will prioritize inclusive and sustained economic growth, combat climate change, and open up, prosperity so that no one is left behind.

The future starts now, so let's get to it. Thank you.