

18 November 2016

71st session of the General Assembly

**Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Meeting with the Council of the Organisation for
Economic Co-operation and Development**

Secretary-General Gurria,
Excellencies,

Thank you, Secretary-General, for inviting me to speak to the Council today.

The United Nations and the OECD enjoy a long-standing and collaborative partnership spanning nearly four decades. Over recent years, this cooperation has expanded considerably to cover a broad range of policy issues of mutual interest.

The strengthening of the UN and OECD's relationship could not be more timely, as the international community looks to address global challenges on an unprecedented scale.

As we meet, the United Nations is facing the highest number of simultaneous security and humanitarian crises in its history. The emergence of non-State actors, rise of terrorism and violent extremism, and expansion of asymmetrical warfare, is threatening international peace and security, and challenging the United Nations' capacity to respond.

The worst humanitarian and refugee crisis since the Second World War is also currently taking place, affecting millions of people across the globe who are fleeing armed conflict and persecution, escaping the effects of climate change and natural disasters, or searching for greater opportunity and better lives.

Inequality within and between nations is greater today than it was thirty years ago. And in many countries, we are seeing long-standing human rights protections being eroded. Xenophobia is on the march, with people far too often and far too quickly taking up hateful philosophies in their search for security in this rapidly changing world.

Unrestrained human activity is concurrently threatening the health of our planet. The last few years have been the hottest in recorded history, and catastrophic climate events are occurring with greater frequency and intensity than ever before – increasing food insecurity, exacerbating diseases, disrupting livelihoods, forcibly displacing entire communities, and dampening economic growth for millions across our world.

It is not an exaggeration to say that without shifting course, humanity's long-term future on this planet is under threat.

What is the solution to this unsustainable trajectory? The answer is that taken together, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, provide us with a universal masterplan for the future sustainability of people, planet, and prosperity.

The 2030 Agendas 17 Sustainable Development Goals, if implemented efficiently, effectively and at scale, will transform our world. They will eliminate extreme poverty, build peaceful and inclusive societies, tackle inequality, increase prosperity, advance gender equality and combat climate change.

The challenge of implementing these universally adopted agreements is significant, requiring urgent action from the international community if it is to happen soon enough to save our place on this planet.

It is precisely for this reason that I have made the principal objective of the UN General Assembly's 71st session a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This commitment is rooted in my deep belief that only through sustainable development will sustainable peace and human rights be realized for all people. And that in turn, sustainable development will only be achieved by sustaining peace and promoting and protecting all people's human rights.

A central component of my office's SDG Implementation Strategy is to raise global awareness of the SDGs, and to mobilize those actors with the greatest multiplier effect for the implementation of the SDGs. As a global forum for promoting policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world, the OECD is uniquely positioned to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and is therefore a vital partner in these efforts.

In this regard, I want to congratulate the OECD on its Action Plan to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Member and Partner countries. The support you give individually, and as a group, to support SDG implementation in all countries around the world is an essential element. However, given the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda, ultimately you will be measured by the progress you make in implementing the goals in your own countries, including the goals relating to the environment, sustainable consumption and production and climate change.

The SDGs provide an opportunity for the UN and OECD to scale up our cooperation, particularly by building on the OECD's strengths and comparative advantages in knowledge sharing and technical expertise.

Financing in all its forms is, of course, at the heart of our efforts to achieve the SDGs and to transform our planet. In this regard, the OECD can make an important contribution in three key areas:

One, given the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda, the OECD is well placed to use its analytical expertise, comparative advantage in developing standards and policies, and its ability to identify evidence-based best practices, to support all countries – including both members and non-members – in capacity-building for implementation, while taking into account the country-led and voluntary nature of the follow-up and review process.

Two, while preserving its flexibility and independence, as a global public good, the OECD should consider making available its knowledge, data and experience in global regulatory and policy frameworks to all countries. This will require strengthening the OECD's collaboration with the UN and its subsidiary bodies at the operational level, including on such issues as global taxation policy, and the measurement and use of Official Development Assistance, while bearing in mind the breadth of perspectives among UN Member States.

Three, the OECD's critical work with the G20 on the Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Finance, and Infrastructure Finance should continue as a priority, building on the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda, released at the Hangzhou Summit.

As two of the world's preeminent economic policy decision-making fora, cooperation between the G20 and the OECD can drive the mobilization of much needed long-term finance required to implement the SDGs.

Excellencies,

Earlier this week, I was in Marrakech to attend the COP22 meeting on climate change. While there, I had the opportunity to speak with Finance Ministers and private sector leaders from around the world on their indispensable role in SDG implementation, particularly in scaling up and mobilizing resources, and transitioning economies to inclusive, low-carbon models.

Among my key messages to them were that Governments, central banks and regulators need to work urgently to establish national policy frameworks that create enabling environments conducive to redirecting financial and capital markets towards inclusive, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable sectors, such as green growth investments.

On this note, I recognize that the OECD can play a key role to support this work, by sharing knowledge and best practices to help build national capacities.

In Marrakech, I also called on Development Finance Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks and donor countries to use Official Development Assistance efficiently and effectively, including: to ensure direct support reaches countries most in need, to de-risk sustainable investments, to enhance the mobilization of finance, to leverage financial support from the private sector, and to build the capacity of domestic revenue collection systems.

In this regard, the OECD clearly has a fundamental role to play in strengthening awareness and understanding of how ODA can be used to mobilize other forms of financing needed to achieve the SDGs. In 2015-16, for example, ODA amounted to USD\$135 billion. However, current estimates provide that financing the SDGs will require annual investments of USD\$3-7 trillion. The OECD can help to catalyze these funds through driving an international discourse on blending finance.

Excellencies,

Meeting the commitments made through the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement requires new forms of collaborative partnership and financing by the international community, and innovative forms of implementation, as described in SDG17.

We must therefore continue to build upon current momentum to push for implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda.

As part of these efforts, the UN will be hosting a Conference on the Ocean on 5 – 9 June next year, at UN Headquarters in New York. The Conference will bring together high-level stakeholders from across government, international finance institutions, business, industry, civil society, and the scientific and academic communities, in order to mobilize action to reverse the cycle of decline in which the Ocean is currently caught.

I encourage you to focus on preparing and participate at the Ocean Conference. Broad cross-sector engagement will be critical to its success, and to harnessing the political will, resources, knowledge and strategies needed to drive our work forward and substantially manage the Oceans resources.

Excellencies,

The gravity of the unsustainable future that we face demands urgent action from us all. Put simply, we are running out of time to act, if we are to address climate change, safeguard our environment , and redress inequalities within and between our societies.

We now face the ultimate test for humanity– to come together to save our place on this planet. Our lives, the lives of our children, grandchildren, and all future generations depend on the success of these endeavors.

I thank you.