

14 February 2017

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

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,  
Strategies and Approaches for Accelerating and Scaling up SDG14 Implementation**

Honourable Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga,  
Honourable Isabella Lovin, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden,  
Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, thank you to the Government of Tonga, UNDP, and the other organizing partners for tonight's event.

We are meeting during a week that has considerable significance in our efforts to halt the cycle of decline in which the Ocean is currently caught.

I have just come from delivering the closing remarks at the Inter-Parliamentary Union's annual hearing. This year the annual hearing focused on what Parliamentarians should be doing to preserve the Ocean and safeguard the Planet. Tomorrow is the start of a two-day preparatory meeting that will lay the foundations for The Ocean Conference to be held here at United Nations from 5-9 June.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Already can we see clear evidence of heightened awareness on the need for us to take urgent action to remedy the woes we have imposed on the Ocean.

Taken together with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, when world leaders came together in September 2015 to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, humanity has been provided with a universal masterplan for a sustainable future on this Planet.

The 2030 Agenda deliberately recognized that in order to achieve a sustainable future for humanity, dedicated action was needed to conserve and sustainably use the Ocean's resources. The required action was captured in Sustainable Development Goal 14, informally known as the Ocean's Goal or SDG14.

Through SDG14 and the targets and indicators that underpin it, we have before us a roadmap for overcoming Ocean's woes and maintaining its health.

But of course, to make SDG14's implementation successful, there must be a universal push towards its fulfilment. It is for this reason that the United Nations will be holding The Ocean Conference in June.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

With marine pollution cluttering the Ocean and choking our marine-life, hypoxic dead zones growing along our coasts, overfishing and IUU fishing threatening the sustainability of fish stocks, and the impacts of climate change raising sea levels, acidifying the Ocean, bleaching coral reefs, and overheating tropical waters, it is clear that timely and decisive action is needed to protect human habitat, food security, livelihoods, and well-being.

It is in this context that tonight's event is so important.

By showcasing concrete examples of successful strategies being taken around the world in support of SDG14 implementation, tonight's event serves as a catalyst for the kinds of innovative thought and solutions that are required to ensure SDG14 is fully achieved by 2030.

From reversing hypoxic dead zones to sustaining global tuna stocks, from reducing ocean acidification to managing coastal ecosystems, and from establishing marine protected areas to promoting transboundary cooperation, these case studies demonstrate approaches to SDG14 implementation that can be replicated and scaled-up across our world.

Talking about innovations, I want to take this opportunity to thank UNDP for its invaluable input to the Registry for Voluntary Commitments that will be so central to the support of SDG14's implementation. The registry will be launched on the conference website tomorrow. The voluntary commitments that will in time fill the registry, will be sourced from Governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, the scientific and academic communities, and all other relevant stakeholders; and I include in the latter any human being who cares about life in the Ocean and want to take positive action. The voluntary commitments registry will in effect constitute a grand work-plan for us all in supporting the implementation of SDG14.

Initiatives such as those being discussed this evening are precisely the kinds of projects that should be highlighted during the partnership dialogues and registered as voluntary commitments as part of our universal push for action.

I hope you will all be inspired by tonight's presentations, and will come to the Ocean Conference in June, armed with initiatives, partnerships, voluntary commitments and, above all, dedication to action to support the noble aims of SDG14.

I thank you.