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**Opening remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
“Strengthening Partnership for Inclusive Sustainable Development,
Good Governance, Peace & Stability in Africa”**

Your Excellency, Mr. Secretary-General,
Under-Secretary-General Abdelaziz,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before we begin, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep sadness at the sudden passing of our beloved colleague, Ambassador Girma Asmerom Tesfay of Eritrea.

During his long and distinguished diplomatic career, Ambassador Tesfay was a passionate and dedicated representative of his country, serving with distinction not only here at the United Nations, but also elsewhere in Africa, the US, and the European Union.

I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the people and the Government of Eritrea, as well as to Ambassador Tesfay’s family and friends, for their loss.

Let us now observe a minute’s silence in his honour. I am honoured to speak at this inaugural high-level opening of Africa Week.

The topic of today’s discussion – on “Strengthening Partnership for Inclusive Sustainable Development, Good Governance, Peace and Stability in Africa – could not be more timely, as it brings focused attention to a number of critical cross-cutting issues that are central to Africa’s achievement of sustainable peace and sustainable development.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Abdelaziz, his staff, and other partners for organizing today’s event.

The UN’s Africa Week is an important opportunity for the international community:

- to recognize recent progress in Africa, particularly in the political, social, economic, and peace and security fields;
- to raise awareness of ongoing challenges; and
- to mobilize international support to address these issues.

This year's Africa Week comes as Governments, the international community, civil society, and other stakeholders, look to take forward the implementation of the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and Paris Agreement which will enter into force on 4 November.

The imminent entry into force of the Paris Agreement is welcome news for the world, and particularly for Africa's prospects for sustainable development.

According to the Economic Commission for Africa, at present the African continent contributes only 3.8 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions, however, many African countries are amongst those most affected by climate change, with climate variability impacting extreme weather events, food and water security, and other forms of environmental degradation.

The 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and Paris Agreement together provide humanity with a universal masterplan that – if implemented urgently, effectively and at scale – will transform our world, by eliminating extreme poverty, building peaceful and inclusive societies, increasing prosperity, empowering women and girls, and combating climate change.

The African Union's adoption of its 2063 Agenda, and its decision to align it with the 2030 Agenda, deserves particular recognition. It is a clear demonstration of African States' commitment to driving coherent, coordinated, effective, efficient, and sustainable development.

Both the 2030 Agenda and the 2063 Agenda are based on an understanding of the interconnected nature of peace and security, development, good governance, rule of law, and human rights.

Both take an inclusive, people-centered approach to development; to empowering women and youth and harnessing the demographic dividend; and to ensuring that development gains reach all people in society – particularly the most vulnerable.

And both recognize the importance of strategic and operational partnerships, and of innovative sources of financing, to achieving sustainable development and sustainable peace.

It is critical now that we all look to build on the current high levels of energy and momentum to ensure that the words contained in these documents are translated into action.

The urgency of these efforts is why we have made the principle objective of the 71st Session of the General Assembly to drive a universal push for meaningful progress in implementing all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The SDG Implementation Team within my Office is currently finalizing an SDG Implementation Strategy, which will seek to drive implementation on three tracks:-

The first track will be by providing sustained engagement to support successful outcomes from previously mandated SDG events and processes, including the Habitat III Conference in Quito this

month; the COP22 in Marrakech in November; and the Oceans Conference on SDG 14 in New York in June.

The second track will be supporting existing efforts within and outside of the UN system to drive strategic partnerships, and implementation of each of the SDGs.

And the third track will be backing a number of signature events throughout the year that will lay the foundation for sustained action in key areas right up until the end of 2030.

This includes in the areas of raising global awareness of the SDGs, especially with youth and children; fostering and sustaining peace; empowering women and girls; tackling poverty and inequality; and securing better financing for sustainable development.

Each of the priority areas of the SDG Implementation Strategy is consistent with the key priority areas for Africa's development, as set out in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its NEPAD mechanism.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge African States' progress over the last decade in advancing socio-economic and human development – including through NEPAD, and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

This includes the commendable that many States have made in promoting good governance, particularly through the African Governance Architecture.

Of course, many challenges to Africa's development remain, including the need to improve infrastructure, increase investments, reduce dependency on commodity prices, and promote good governance at all levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to acknowledge the efforts that have gone into consolidating peace and security in Africa over the last decades. The decline in the number of cross-border conflicts is a noteworthy achievement.

The rise, however, of more protracted and complex intra-state conflicts over this period is of grave concern, including the rise of non-State actors, and increased acts of terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational organized crime – both within and across national borders.

Tackling these challenges require coherent, coordinated integrated and strategic responses involving all key strategic partners.

Fostering open and inclusive societies with accountable institutions are fundamental to sustaining peace, and to preventing and countering threats to peace and security. So too are strengthened strategic partnerships between States, within regional and sub-regional organizations, and with the United Nations, to ensure coherence and coordination of efforts.

The annual consultations between the UN Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, are an important platform in this regard – particularly in facilitating collaborative and coordinated efforts between the two institutions on political, strategic, and operational aspects of peace operations.

In this regard, I commend the recent decision to establish an African Union Peace Fund which aims to finance 25 percent of Africa’s peace and security activities through an import levy that will secure USD\$325 million.

It is an innovative initiative to mobilize financial resources for the continent’s peace operations, and I encourage others to support the financing of further funds required.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In many ways, Africa’s journey has been the United Nations journey. And as we embark upon our universal effort to transform our world, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Africa in this effort.

A great deal of work lies ahead, but I am steadfastly confident that sustainable peace and sustainable development are within reach. Indeed, as the great Mandela once said, “It always seems impossible until it’s done”.

I thank you.