

22 September 2016

71st session of the General Assembly

**Special remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
High Level Symposium 10 x 20 Initiative**

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the organizers and sponsors for this High-level Symposium which speaks directly to, and focuses on actions to implement SDG14, Target 5 – to protect at least 10 percent of coastal and marine areas by 2020.

Some say that achieving this target is impossible. But without ambition and purpose, we will have failed before we even tried to succeed.

I congratulate the partners of the 10×20 initiative for rising up to the challenge and taking leadership on this important issue.

One year on from the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda, it is clear that we need to do more to turn the wheels on implementation, so that our global commitments are put into action.

That is why we have made the principle objective for the 71st session, a universal push to transform our world, by driving meaningful progress in implementing all 17 SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda is the masterplan that we need to ensure the survival of our people, secure the health of our planet, and achieve prosperity for all.

Unfortunately, our beloved Ocean – the so called ‘origin and the engine of all life on this planet’ – is in crisis. Urgent action is required to reverse this decline.

Next year’s UN Conference on SDG14 on Oceans, will be co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden, here at the United Nations from 5 to 9 June.

This is the international community’s opportunity to put into action what was promised a year ago. We are building this conference up to be the game-changer for the way we ensure our Ocean’s well-being.

Strategic partnerships are crucial to the success of this conference. Seven partnership dialogues will be held which will lead to practical solutions to help achieve the SDG14 targets.

The 10×20 initiative directly contributes to mobilizing action in order to realize the promise of SDG14. And given the interconnected nature of the SDGs, progress on one goal will help to drive implementation of the other goals as well.

The involvement of 10×20 initiative members will be vital to the success of the Oceans Conference.

I encourage your engagement in support of the success of the Oceans conference, and I look forward to seeing you all here in June next year.

Thank you.