

**Remarks by Ambassador Peter Thomson, UNSG's Special Envoy for the Ocean, CBD Plenary, High-Level Segment, 3pm, 16 December 2022, Montreal**

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour of addressing you today in my capacity as the UNSG's Special Envoy for the Ocean - the ocean within which 80% of the life of Planet Earth is contained. But I speak also as a former President of the UN General Assembly, and as the citizen of a small island developing country. Most importantly, I stand here as the grandfather of four young girls, the youngest of whom is not yet three. Along with children throughout the seven continents and the ocean's scattered islands, she will inherit 21<sup>st</sup> century conditions shaped by the outcomes of this conference.

My youngest granddaughter will be eighty when dawn rises on the twenty-second century. Will she have spent her life within an environment flourishing in the embrace of bounteous Nature, or is her generation condemned to a bitter struggle in dark dystopian days? That, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the question. It is the question that is central to our deliberations here in Montreal, and either we embrace intergenerational justice, or we miss the essential point of being here.

These words are not hyperbole, they are honest reportage of current realities, informed by IPCC, IPBES and the WMO. The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has already declared a Red Alert for humanity, saying that we've been making war on Nature, that we're on track towards an unliveable world, and that we must make peace with Nature without delay.

If the outcomes of this UN Biodiversity Conference produce the universal transformational targets required to stop the predicted wave of near-term mass extinctions on Planet Earth, we will have put the sword to the dystopian future predicted by so many. Meet the targets of the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sustainable Development Agenda and the UN Biodiversity Conference, and today's leaders will have fulfilled the tasks demanded of them and our grandchildren will have the environmental security we wish for them.

For the Global Biodiversity Framework to be true to its purpose, the Ocean's place within it must be commensurate to its planetary role. From the awe-

inspiring creatures of the deep Ocean, to the struggles of life in the polar regions, from the tiny photosynthetic organisms producing half the planet's oxygen, to the teeming nutrition existing along our shorelines, that role is paramount and we turn our backs on the Ocean at our peril. Therefore, I say again, the Ocean is home to some 80% of the planet's biodiversity, and pure logic demands that its place within the Global Biodiversity Framework be fortified.

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In 1987 in Montreal, we finalized the global agreement to protect the stratospheric ozone layer by phasing out ozone-depleting substances. Unchecked, without the protective shield of that ozone layer, we would all have been subjected to life-threatening levels of ultraviolet radiation. Universally ratified, the Montreal Protocol stands today as a shining example of multilateral cooperation delivering on point.

When we depart Montreal this weekend, we must do so in the knowledge that we have again exercised the very best of multilateralism, that as a result of our coming together in consensus, the remaining biodiversity of this planet has the reprieve it needs to survive, and that intergenerational justice has indeed been seen to have been done.

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