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Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson, Celebrating the deposit of instruments of ratification for the Paris Agreement

H.E. Ambassador João Vale de Almeida, Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations,
H.E. Mr. László Sólymos, Minister of Environment of Slovakia,
H.E., Mr. Miguel Arias Cañete, the European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to join you today to mark the recent deposit of instruments of ratification of the Paris Agreement by the European Union and its Member States.

I am overjoyed that with recent ratifications, the thresholds have been met so that the Paris Agreement will enter into force on 4 November.

I extend my warmest congratulations to the all Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Convention who have ratified the Agreement, and whose commitment, leadership and swift action has led to this historic moment.

As a Fijian, I know how important this step is to small pacific island states in particular. They are among the most vulnerable states to climate change and it is paramount for the future of these states – as well as the world in general – that the Paris Agreement is implemented. As a Fijian I am also pleased that Fiji was the first country in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest sympathies to the people and Government of Haiti, who were so badly hit by Hurricane Matthew earlier this week. The international community stands ready to assist. Science has long advised us that severe storms will be one of the effects of climate change. In the south Pacific we are witnessing devastating tropical storms and now Haiti and the Caribbean are being hit.

Climate change is an existential threat to humanity and poses the greatest challenge of our time. Reversing its' effects are fundamental to humanity's survival on this planet, and to our efforts transform our world through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Implemented effectively, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Paris Agreement, provide us with a universal masterplan that will eliminate extreme poverty, build peaceful and inclusive societies, increase prosperity, and combat climate change.

However, the success of this requires that they be implemented urgently, effectively and at scale. Moreover, there is a need for a change of course in the global economy to avoid a rise in the average temperature that will cross irreversible threshold.

The Paris Agreement provides us with the much-needed foundation for this urgent collective action. The Paris Agreement will help to transform the global economy to a green, sustainable, low carbon, and ultimately, carbon-neutral, one.

It will help to steer a clean energy transition around the world. It will provide much-needed adaptation, mitigation, and financing support to developing countries.

And it will drive the implementation of policies and tools that will make a real difference to the lives of people around our planet, by ensuring that States' climate targets are met.

It is critical that we, the international community, now build on this energy, excitement and momentum, to press States who have not yet ratified the Paris Agreement to move quickly to do so, and to ensure each and every Party to the agreement fulfils its commitments and makes its fair contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The upcoming COP22 meeting in Marrakech in November is an important milestone in this regard, and in our efforts to scale up climate action in order to meet the ultimate goal of less than 2 degrees Celsius, and ideally no more than 1.5. As we say in the islands, "1.5 to stay alive".

So once, again, congratulations to all involved – including Governments, UN agencies, civil society, activists, multilateral actors, academics, and the private sector – whose determination and drive has led to this historic achievement.

In many ways, our work has already started, and in even more ways, far more lies ahead.

But for this moment, I take this this opportunity to thank you – on my behalf, on behalf of my children and grandchildren – and indeed all of your grandchildren and children, and on behalf of all of our future generations.

Thank you.