

**High-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International  
Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**

**10:00 a.m., 26 September 2016**

**Statement by H.E. Mr Peter Thomson,  
President of the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly**

*Honourable Ministers,*

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is an honour for me to address this High-Level Meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Today is a day that reminds us of the disastrous consequences of the use of nuclear weapons – the death and destruction that they can immediately cause; the longer-term damage to the environment, climate, human health, and sustainable development; and the existential threat to humanity that they ultimately pose.

I am heartened to see so many of you here today, and represented at such high levels. It gives me hope and assurance that the international community remains committed to pursuing this critical, longstanding issue.

*Excellencies,*

By now it goes without saying, that so long as nuclear weapons continue to exist, the threat they pose to humanity – whether through intentional use or accidental – remains unacceptably high.

We cannot risk the future of our world to one misstep, one poor judgement, or one technical failure.

And we cannot underestimate the determination of non-State actors to gain access to nuclear weapons, and to deliberately cause damage and suffering on the largest scale possible.

*Excellencies,*

The nuclear test performed earlier this month by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which was condemned by the UN Security Council as a violation of the non-proliferation regime, is a stark reminder of the ever-present danger posed by nuclear weapons and of the reason why we cannot stop working to find ways to address this issue.

As an international community, we must redouble our efforts to find a just and fair solution to address the differing views of Member States, so that real progress on nuclear disarmament can be made, and ultimately, a global consensus reached.

While this is not an easy task, with determination, open minds, and political will it is possible.

As a first step, we need to ensure that the commitments we have already made are turned into concrete action.

And second, we must work to increase public awareness of the risks posed by nuclear weapons, particularly among younger generations.

*Excellencies,*

The Asia Pacific region has been directly affected by nuclear weapons testing, and it still bears the environmental consequences and impacts to human health.

I know that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons will prevent their future use.

As President of the General Assembly, I will continue to follow this matter closely. I will encourage progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. And I will support all meaningful international efforts to bring us closer to a day, when nuclear weapons are only a chapter in our history books.

Thank you.