H.E. Mr Peter Thomson  
President of the 71st Session of the General Assembly  
International Energy Agency’s Second Global Conference on  
Energy Efficiency  
Opening remarks  
29 June, Paris

Distinguished Ministers,
Dr. Fatih Birol, Executive Director, International Energy Agency
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking the International Energy Agency for inviting me open the Second Global Conference on Energy Efficiency.

The focus of this Global conference on delivery is particularly timely. We are asking ourselves, “How can countries move quickly to implement better energy efficiency policies to bring social, economic and environmental benefits to their citizens?” Considering climate change alone, the importance of finding effective answers to that question is an existential one for our species on this planet.

We are called upon to bring focused attention to practical ways for the international community to work to improve energy efficiency. I am confident we possess the opportunity at this juncture of history to unlock a green energy revolution that will drive climate action and achieve environmental sustainability. I am also confident that we possess the ability to drive innovation...
and action at the scale necessary to achieve universal energy security.

These are goals that have eluded us for too long. It is time for concerted action by us all.

Across our world, nearly 1.1 billion people still do not have access to electricity, and even more do not have energy security. Many of those people live in sub-Saharan Africa, where the confluence of recurrent conflict, natural disasters, and a lack of affordable and uninterrupted energy, coalesce to dramatically inhibit economic growth and sustainable development.

At the same time, fossil fuels still account for over 80 percent of CO2 emissions and global temperatures are rising to new heights. Achieving universal access to clean, sustainable and affordable energy is thus not only an existential imperative, it is a major opportunity – a driver of green economic growth, sustainable development, and climate action for the future.

Indeed, if we are to succeed in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, it is clear we must leverage the transformative potential of sustainable energy to combat the adverse effects of climate change, and achieve universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services by 2030. We must do so in conformity with our universal commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 7.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*
In order for the international community to drive progress at the speed and scale necessary to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 7, a number of critical and complementary steps must be taken that will not only transform the global energy system, but will have a multiplier effect in helping to meet all other SDGs as well – both within national borders, and across the world.

And this begins with raising the level of our ambition by setting national energy efficiency targets.

Secondly, we must establish policy and regulatory frameworks across industries that will mobilize the collective action needed to achieve these targets and drive the sustainable energy transformation. This includes by developing integrated energy plans that feed into the Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement, and by sending clear energy price signals to the market that will create an enabling investment climate.

Thirdly, we must build strategic and innovative partnerships that bring together Governments at all levels, civil society, financial institutions, the private sector, and the academic and scientific communities to drive inclusive and coordinated action for sustainable energy and development. This includes encouraging local governments and private companies to set corporate energy efficiency goals, to purchase renewable and clean energy, and to pursue advances across the energy sector that can help drive SDG action.

Fourthly, we must work to mobilize the estimated US$770 billion needed annually until 2030 to drive the transition to renewable energy and achieve SDG 7. We have to build global
understanding of the massive business opportunities presented by the Sustainable Development Goals. These opportunities are potentially worth trillions of dollars by 2030 – particularly in the energy and infrastructure sectors.

The key lies in mobilising the necessary investments from public, private, blended and alternative sources to fill the gaps in the financial supply chain for sustainable energy, and to effectively meet internationally-agreed climate goals.

We must also take advantage of the current window of opportunity that exists to direct investments towards sustainable energy infrastructure, as a result of the historically-low interest rates, and the large pools of capital assets in low-yield investments.

Fifthly, we must look at opportunities to both harness and drive the rapid advances in innovation and disruptive technology. These can allow countries and businesses to leapfrog high-carbon models, put downward pressure on energy pricing, spur green economic growth, and drive the sustainable energy transformation.

And finally, we must take the positive efforts and successful initiatives being implemented within our national borders to countries across the world, to help close the energy access gap and achieve SDG7.

Coming from a Small Island Developing State like Fiji, the importance of the clean energy revolution could not be clearer to me. Also clear is that we must meet the need for human and institutional capacity-building to support this revolution.
For many Small Island Developing States, access to affordable energy remains a major constraint to sustainable economic growth and development. Most SIDS are still dependent on imported fossil fuels for electricity, despite the existential threat that climate change poses to their homes, and despite most SIDS being rich in renewable energy sources – particularly solar, water, wind, and geothermal.

Properly harnessed, these renewable sources can meet the majority of these countries’ agricultural, industrial and household needs, while also decreasing electricity costs, and creating decent jobs.

However, to unlock this potential, international support is required to enable developing countries to transition their energy systems. This includes through capacity-building and technical expertise for renewable energy policies and projects, and by nations meeting their official development assistance and climate action commitments.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

In all of this, of course, political leadership is vital.

And that is why a gathering such as this Global Conference on Energy Efficiency, bringing such a broad range of stakeholders, is so vital.

By providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and the building of collaborative models, this Global Conference on Energy Efficiency can be one of the most important moments in
the catalysing of transformative action to drive the energy revolution. More power to you!

I wish to acknowledge the leadership and commitment of the International Energy Agency and its members. You are core to the implementation of practical measures to achieve universal energy security, thereby doing your part in the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the ambitious targets set in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

*Ladies and gentleman,*

To conclude, improving the efficiency of global energy use is a critical component in global efforts to create a future for our world characterised by sustainability of peace, prosperity, and development.

Through a global commitment to achieving this single policy priority, our way of life on this planet can be transformed.

By achieving energy security for all, we can help to end hunger, overcome poverty, improve access to education, and strengthen health and wellbeing outcomes for all.

By improving energy efficiency we can combat climate change, create jobs, and foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

And by driving a green energy revolution, we can deliver cross-cutting implementation of all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.
Setting humanity firmly on the path towards a sustainable future is not an easy undertaking. But make no mistake, if we are going to provide our grandchildren with a secure place on this planet, we must faithfully implement the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Global Conference on Energy Efficiency is an important milepost along the way to that sustainable world. Therefore I wish you well in your deliberations. Much depends on their success.

I thank you for your attention.