

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/55/L.2)]

55/2. United Nations Millennium Declaration

The General Assembly

Adopts the following Declaration:

United Nations Millennium Declaration

I. Values and principles

1. We, heads of State and Government, have gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 6 to 8 September 2000, at the dawn of a new millennium, to reaffirm our faith in the Organization and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.
2. We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.
3. We reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which have proved timeless and universal. Indeed, their relevance and capacity to inspire have increased, as nations and peoples have become increasingly interconnected and interdependent.
4. We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. We rededicate ourselves to support all efforts to uphold the sovereign equality of all States, respect for their territorial integrity and political independence, resolution of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, the right to self-determination of peoples which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion and international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character.
5. We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at

present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed. We recognize that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge. Thus, only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable. These efforts must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and are formulated and implemented with their effective participation.

6. We consider certain fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. These include:

- **Freedom.** Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.
- **Equality.** No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.
- **Solidarity.** Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.
- **Tolerance.** Human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted.
- **Respect for nature.** Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.
- **Shared responsibility.** Responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally. As the most universal and most representative organization in the world, the United Nations must play the central role.

7. In order to translate these shared values into actions, we have identified key objectives to which we assign special significance.

II. Peace, security and disarmament

8. We will spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States, which has claimed more than 5 million lives in the past decade. We will also seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

9. We resolve therefore:

- To strengthen respect for the rule of law in international as in national affairs and, in particular, to ensure compliance by Member States with the decisions of the International Court of Justice, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, in cases to which they are parties.
- To make the United Nations more effective in maintaining peace and security by giving it the resources and tools it needs for conflict prevention, peaceful resolution of disputes, peacekeeping, post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. In this context, we take note of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and request the General Assembly to consider its recommendations expeditiously.
- To strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter.
- To ensure the implementation, by States Parties, of treaties in areas such as arms control and disarmament and of international humanitarian law and human rights law, and call upon all States to consider signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- To take concerted action against international terrorism, and to accede as soon as possible to all the relevant international conventions.
- To redouble our efforts to implement our commitment to counter the world drug problem.
- To intensify our efforts to fight transnational crime in all its dimensions, including trafficking as well as smuggling in human beings and money laundering.
- To minimize the adverse effects of United Nations economic sanctions on innocent populations, to subject such sanctions regimes to regular reviews and to eliminate the adverse effects of sanctions on third parties.
- To strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.
- To take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, especially by making arms transfers more transparent and supporting regional disarmament measures, taking

account of all the recommendations of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

- To call on all States to consider acceding to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, as well as the amended mines protocol to the Convention on conventional weapons.

10. We urge Member States to observe the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, now and in the future, and to support the International Olympic Committee in its efforts to promote peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic Ideal.

III. Development and poverty eradication

11. We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.

12. We resolve therefore to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty.

13. Success in meeting these objectives depends, *inter alia*, on good governance within each country. It also depends on good governance at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems. We are committed to an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system.

14. We are concerned about the obstacles developing countries face in mobilizing the resources needed to finance their sustained development. We will therefore make every effort to ensure the success of the High-level International and Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, to be held in 2001.

15. We also undertake to address the special needs of the least developed countries. In this context, we welcome the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in May 2001 and will endeavour to ensure its success. We call on the industrialized countries:

- To adopt, preferably by the time of that Conference, a policy of duty- and quota-free access for essentially all exports from the least developed countries;

- To implement the enhanced programme of debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries without further delay and to agree to cancel all official bilateral debts of those countries in return for their making demonstrable commitments to poverty reduction; and

- To grant more generous development assistance, especially to countries that are genuinely making an effort to apply their resources to poverty reduction.

16. We are also determined to deal comprehensively and effectively with the debt problems of low- and middle-income developing countries, through various national and international measures designed to make their debt sustainable in the long term.

17. We also resolve to address the special needs of small island developing States, by implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly rapidly and in full. We urge the international community to ensure that, in the development of a vulnerability index, the special needs of small island developing States are taken into account.

18. We recognize the special needs and problems of the landlocked developing countries, and urge both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this group of countries to meet their special development needs and to help them overcome the impediments of geography by improving their transit transport systems.

19. We resolve further:

- To halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water.

- To ensure that, by the same date, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education.

- By the same date, to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds, of their current rates.

- To have, by then, halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the scourge of malaria and other major diseases that afflict humanity.

- To provide special assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

- By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the "Cities Without Slums" initiative.

20. We also resolve:

- To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.

- To develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.
- To encourage the pharmaceutical industry to make essential drugs more widely available and affordable by all who need them in developing countries.
- To develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication.
- To ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies, in conformity with recommendations contained in the ECOSOC 2000 Ministerial Declaration, are available to all.

IV. Protecting our common environment

21. We must spare no effort to free all of humanity, and above all our children and grandchildren, from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs.
22. We reaffirm our support for the principles of sustainable development, including those set out in Agenda 21, agreed upon at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
23. We resolve therefore to adopt in all our environmental actions a new ethic of conservation and stewardship and, as first steps, we resolve:
 - To make every effort to ensure the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, preferably by the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 2002, and to embark on the required reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases.
 - To intensify our collective efforts for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.
 - To press for the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.
 - To stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels, which promote both equitable access and adequate supplies.
 - To intensify cooperation to reduce the number and effects of natural and man-made disasters.

- To ensure free access to information on the human genome sequence.

V. Human rights, democracy and good governance

24. We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.

25. We resolve therefore:

- To respect fully and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- To strive for the full protection and promotion in all our countries of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all.
- To strengthen the capacity of all our countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights.
- To combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- To take measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and their families, to eliminate the increasing acts of racism and xenophobia in many societies and to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies.
- To work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries.
- To ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information.

VI. Protecting the vulnerable

26. We will spare no effort to ensure that children and all civilian populations that suffer disproportionately the consequences of natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies are given every assistance and protection so that they can resume normal life as soon as possible.

We resolve therefore:

- To expand and strengthen the protection of civilians in complex emergencies, in conformity with international humanitarian law.

- To strengthen international cooperation, including burden sharing in, and the coordination of humanitarian assistance to, countries hosting refugees and to help all refugees and displaced persons to return voluntarily to their homes, in safety and dignity and to be smoothly reintegrated into their societies.
- To encourage the ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

VII. Meeting the special needs of Africa

27. We will support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy.

28. We resolve therefore:

- To give full support to the political and institutional structures of emerging democracies in Africa.
- To encourage and sustain regional and subregional mechanisms for preventing conflict and promoting political stability, and to ensure a reliable flow of resources for peacekeeping operations on the continent.
- To take special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa, including debt cancellation, improved market access, enhanced Official Development Assistance and increased flows of Foreign Direct Investment, as well as transfers of technology.
- To help Africa build up its capacity to tackle the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases.

VIII. Strengthening the United Nations

29. We will spare no effort to make the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing all of these priorities: the fight for development for all the peoples of the world, the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease; the fight against injustice; the fight against violence, terror and crime; and the fight against the degradation and destruction of our common home.

30. We resolve therefore:

- To reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively.
 - To intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.
 - To strengthen further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter.
 - To strengthen the International Court of Justice, in order to ensure justice and the rule of law in international affairs.
 - To encourage regular consultations and coordination among the principal organs of the United Nations in pursuit of their functions.
 - To ensure that the Organization is provided on a timely and predictable basis with the resources it needs to carry out its mandates.
 - To urge the Secretariat to make the best use of those resources, in accordance with clear rules and procedures agreed by the General Assembly, in the interests of all Member States, by adopting the best management practices and technologies available and by concentrating on those tasks that reflect the agreed priorities of Member States.
 - To promote adherence to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.
 - To ensure greater policy coherence and better cooperation between the United Nations, its agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization, as well as other multilateral bodies, with a view to achieving a fully coordinated approach to the problems of peace and development.
 - To strengthen further cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues.
 - To give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the Organization's goals and programmes.
31. We request the General Assembly to review on a regular basis the progress made in implementing the provisions of this Declaration, and ask the Secretary-General to issue periodic reports for consideration by the General Assembly and as a basis for further action.

32. We solemnly reaffirm, on this historic occasion, that the United Nations is the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development. We therefore pledge our unstinting support for these common objectives and our determination to achieve them.

*8th plenary meeting
8 September 2000*

2 August 2001

**Letter from Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
to All Permanent Missions and Permanent Observer Missions to the
United Nations, New York**

Excellency,

I am writing to you in connection with civil society outreach, a subject which has been discussed in the United Nations for a number of years.

In my acceptance speech last September, I stressed that the United Nations outreach towards civil society is closely related to the overall relevance of the Organisation. The development of this relationship is both a challenge and an opportunity. The work of civil society actors is indispensable and complements the role of the United Nations in many fields.

It is in this spirit I am pleased to enclose a copy of a reference document on the participation of civil society during the 1990s at the United Nations conferences and Special Sessions of the General Assembly prepared by my Office.

I am also enclosing a copy of a report of the UN Civil Society Outreach Symposium held under my patronage from 30 May to 2 June 2001 sponsored by the Stanley Foundation and the World Federation of United Nations Associations.

Both documents are also available on my web site (<http://www.un.org/ga/president>).

At the Millennium Summit, Member States resolved to give greater opportunities to civil society to contribute to the realization of the Organisation's goals and programmes. In this context, I hope that you will find these two documents useful and of interest when you continue your discussions on this issue.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Harri Holkeri

13 July 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the luncheon of the World Association of Former United Nations
Interns and Fellows (WAFUNIF) - "Poverty Eradication - Attaining
the Development Targets of the Millennium Declaration"**

It is a pleasure and great honor to address this association, whose members have served the United Nations over the years in so many valuable ways. I would like to thank the world association for the opportunity to participate in this luncheon.

Almost one year ago, the Heads of State and Government adopted the Millennium Declaration, which reaffirmed the development goals of the international community for the coming decades. This manifestation by world leaders of global consensus and a shared vision for the future of humankind was adopted at the highest political level. One of its most important targets is to halve the proportion of the people living in extreme poverty - on less than one dollar a day - by the year 2015.

Some argue that the Millennium targets are over-ambitious, even unrealistic. It is understandable to raise this concern, as we continue the discussion on how to attain the Millennium targets. This week, the United Nations Development Programme launched its annual flagship report, the Human Development Report. I have some good news. According to the report, reaching the Millennium goals of universal primary education and gender equality in education are well under way in many countries. Statistics also prove that poverty rates are declining fast enough in some countries with big populations, like China and India, to meet the poverty goal by the year 2015.

The bad news is that the majority of countries seem not yet to have established the national policies that would lead to attaining the Millennium targets. Ninety-three countries are not on track to reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds, as agreed last September. And policies in 74 countries with over one-third of the world's population are not on course to halve poverty by 2015.

The Millennium targets present a major policy challenge for both developed and developing countries. However, in my presentation today, I would like to affirm my confidence that the Millennium goals are realistic and within our range. The global community has massive human, technical, technological, and financial resources. Our awareness of relevant policies required is more advanced than ever. Perhaps most of all, we have the strong political will and commitment, as the Heads of State and Government attending the Millennium Summit clearly demonstrated.

There are several definitions of poverty and several ways to measure it. Traditionally, it has been measured in terms of income and consumption. Those people falling below a poverty line that

does not meet minimum acceptable standards of consumption are considered to live in extreme poverty. There are over one billion people in this category, earning less than one dollar a day. The highest poverty figures are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, but no country struggling with this issue should be neglected.

To tackle poverty, we need to understand that it is not only about low levels of income, but poverty often correlates with other indicators, such as early mortality, disease, illiteracy, unemployment, and inadequate access to health care and education. To illustrate poverty from the perspective of children, the most vulnerable among us, there are ten million children dying annually before the age of five, mostly due to malnutrition and preventable disease. Millions of other children, most of them girls, never attend school. From the macroeconomic standpoint, several poor countries suffer from supply-side constraints, lack of investment and systemic imbalances.

The United Nations has consistently emphasized the importance of these other dimensions of poverty. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, poverty is also a denial of human rights because everyone is entitled to the provision of basic human needs. Furthermore, the psychological effects of poverty may overshadow the experience of material deprivation. Social exclusion, inability to participate in decision-making, total lack of control over one's future, as well as lack of choices, of freedom and of personal security, make poverty even more difficult to overcome. Some of these qualitative dimensions of poverty are hard to measure, but they need to be included in our policy considerations.

Substantial policy change is needed to halve extreme poverty. Eradication of poverty requires not only economic growth, but also pro-poor strategies covering the multidimensional character of poverty and addressing all its root causes. In this context, we must focus on human capital, social development, and distributive mechanisms. Gender-sensitive policies are necessary, as poverty often affects more women and girls. This kind of approach is essential, because the benefits of growth do not necessarily automatically trickle down to the poor; indeed growth may even increase poverty and inequality within societies. Several studies, including those conducted by the UN University's World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) in Helsinki, verify that inequality is a serious obstacle to reducing poverty. Social inequality may also slow the speed of growth. Societies with high inequality will need a much more rapid rate of growth than countries with low inequality to meet the benchmark of halving extreme poverty.

Recently, we have seen signs of a shift in the development paradigm, which also concerns poverty eradication policies. Due to globalization, there has been an increase in trade and investment flows, but the expectation that global market forces would bring development has not been fully met. The record has been mixed: some countries have successfully adapted and benefited from globalization, but many others have not been able to take full advantage of opportunities offered by expanding markets. The fruits of globalization have been unevenly distributed among and within societies. The Asian financial crisis even illustrated that countries

which have benefited from globalization could become more vulnerable than others. This sent a shock wave throughout the world. Globalization remains a potential engine of economic growth and development, but national poverty policies have to include all dimensions of development.

Several Millennium targets are intertwined with poverty and underline its cross-sectoral nature. For example, although not an income-related disease, HIV/AIDS spreads faster when combined with poverty, and its impact is intensified. The HIV epidemic can further alienate the poor from society and increase their distress. Poor communities can be more exposed to it because of lack of knowledge and of access to health care, due to the high cost of drugs. A family may lose an important source of income when an employed family member becomes infected and ill. The roll call of AIDS orphans unfortunately highlights the intergenerational nature of poverty.

The Millennium Declaration emphasizes our collective responsibility towards welfare and development, but it also stresses the responsibility of national Governments. Societies and Governments themselves need to identify their development targets and coordinate local timetables and solutions for poverty eradication. Developing countries, however, cannot be left to handle this enormous task alone: the international community and the United Nations system must assist country-driven processes.

Attaining the Millennium targets requires patience and a long-term vision. National and international policies and actions are mutually supportive. At the national level, democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, transparent and accountable governance and administration, including combating and eliminating corruption are indispensable foundations for the realization of people-centered sustainable development. At the international level, improved management of globalization, with market access and debt relief, can produce beneficial effects for the eradication of poverty. Partnership with civil society at all these levels is a necessity.

One of the most critical issues facing developing countries, particularly the low-income countries, is development finance. I believe the main strength in development is people themselves, but development cooperation and aid are necessary to build human resources and institutional capacity.

9 July 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms
and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects**

I should like to warmly congratulate you on your election as the President of the Conference. I am confident that with your experience and wisdom, you will be able to guide this important Conference to a successful outcome.

Today, the international community gathers in this Hall to mount a collective response to the challenge to international peace and security, posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The holding of this conference reflects our collective awareness of the severity of the problems associated with this illicit trade, as well as our determination to solve them with a Programme of Action to be concluded at this Conference.

This conference is also an important part of the follow-up to the Millennium Summit. Last September, our Heads of State and Government resolved to take action to end illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, especially by making arms transfers more transparent and supporting regional disarmament measures, taking account of the recommendations of this conference. We must therefore show similar resolve in turning the commitments of the Summit Declaration into reality.

It is important to note that joint efforts by the United Nations, Governments and civil society have moved the issue of small arms to the centre of the international agenda in a matter of just a few years, a relatively short period in multilateral disarmament. It was only in 1995 that the UN Secretary-General brought to the world's attention the effects from the enormous proliferation of small arms and light weapons and made his plea for microdisarmament. For its part, the General Assembly quickly adopted, in 1997 and 1999, two governmental experts' reports on the issue. The Assembly also agreed to hold this Conference as the next step in solving the problems detailed in those reports.

In its action to date, the United Nations has made it clear that the uncontrolled spread and easy availability of small arms and light weapons currently kills more than 500,000 people each year in wars, civil strife, and crime. It sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts. It endangers peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. It undermines respect for international humanitarian law. It disrupts social, political and economic development. It causes the displacement of millions of innocent people. It threatens legitimate but weak governments and benefits terrorists as well as the perpetrators of organized crime.

The international community has realized that in order to prevent conflict, and sustain peace and development, this burning issue must be addressed urgently. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons must be ultimately eradicated. Global norms and a programme of action at the national, sub-regional, regional and global level must be put in place to prevent these weapons from accumulating at excessive and destabilizing levels and falling into the wrong hands.

This Conference provides an opportunity for the international community to agree to an effective Programme of Action. It must contain unambiguous political commitments and practical and firm measures. A vigorous follow-up mechanism with broad scope is crucial for effective implementation and further development of the Programme of Action.

People all over the world are looking to this Conference for meaningful steps towards enhancing human security and preventing further suffering and destruction of life. I urge all participating States to build on the hard work to date of Governments, sub-regional and regional organizations, the UN system and its agencies, and civil society. We must now demonstrate the maximum political will for the common good of all people and especially those who have suffered immensely from the illicit trade in small arms and who will continue to suffer if immediate action is not taken.

I thank you.

14 June 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at a seminar on girls' education under the theme
"I missed it but give me another chance"**

I have the pleasure to welcome you all to this seminar on an extremely important topic: girls' education. My warm welcome particularly to our speakers today, who come from different corners of the world to elucidate how girls' education is addressed in their particular situations, and how my own country, Finland, is contributing towards girls' education.

We all know that in the Millennium Declaration we resolved to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling, and that girls and boys would have equal access to all levels of education. This commitment reconfirms the Dakar Framework of Action, "Education for All" of April 2000, which by the same time frame, seeks to ensure that in particular girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, would have access to completely free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

The United Nations provides a framework for many international instruments. However, I am saddened by the fact that in spite of all these international agreements, commitments and conferences to promote universal education for all, more than 110 million children, most of them in the developing world, are denied a basic right - the right to education. Two thirds of these 110 million children are girls. They also constitute the majority of school dropouts.

I want to be optimistic. There has been some progress: since the 1960s, school enrolment and the literacy rate of girls and women has improved in many parts of the world.

I strongly believe that when the right to education becomes the norm, the whole world gains. When women and girls, future mothers, are educated, whole nations are educated. This conviction of mine has undisputedly been proven true by statistics.

I wish you well in your interesting deliberations on this important issue: the education of girls, with particular emphasis on giving them a second chance.

30 May – 1 June 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the UN Civil Society Outreach Symposium**

When I was elected as President of the Millennium Assembly I set only a few priorities for myself knowing that my time in office was limited to one year. One of these priorities was to work for a more open United Nations and to reach out to civil society as a whole to fully benefit from its expertise and to make the United Nations more relevant to the outside world. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to be here with you tonight to open this Symposium on UN Civil Society Outreach.

This Symposium is an excellent example of how connecting with people and NGOs outside the UN can help us within the Organisation to reach and accomplish our goals.

In taking up my office I had the idea that we should explore innovative ways and new avenues to enable civil society to contribute better and more effectively to the work of the United Nations system. But this initiative could be made real only with the help of two important civil society actors: the Stanley Foundation and the World Federation of United Nations Associations. I am truly grateful to you Mr. Stanley and Ms. Pietikäinen and the two organisations you represent for having taken up the challenge and the responsibility to organise this event - and I thank you for that. This Symposium demonstrates in a concrete manner that by working together with civil society we can accomplish our tasks. It also goes to show that we do not necessarily need to start with a 'Big Bang'. It is with small, but concrete steps that we can improve the working relationship between the UN and civil society.

One of the clear outcomes of the Summit was that the UN needs to work and co-operate with civil society to achieve the goals set in the Summit Declaration. Hence, building partnerships with civil society is not a choice, but a necessity. As President of the Assembly it is both my duty as well as a privilege to promote the implementation of the Declaration in this regard. I believe that both the UN and civil society as a whole can do better in terms of internal coherence and co-ordination.

During this Symposium our task should be to try to find new and better ways to work as partners in a team with the aim of fulfilling the agenda set for the UN. Working as partners is also in keeping with the letter of the UN Charter of being an Organisation of the peoples. We have a shared interest and I believe also a shared responsibility, to make things happen. We should try to make headway at all levels of cooperation: international, regional and national. In a globalized world we need to recognise that different civil society actors have different roles to play, and that they are all valuable and ultimately contribute to the same goals.

Time is limited. We only have two days. We cannot solve all the problems, but we must aim high and use all the experience and capacity present and available here in order to come up with concrete and innovative strategies on which we can build our forward-looking agenda within the UN system.

Finally, I should like to thank all participants for having taken the time from their busy schedules to participate in this event. As Patron of this event I am indeed impressed by the diversity and expertise amongst the participants. I encourage you to be creative and courageous and take advantage of this occasion in order to move our common agenda forward.

Let me propose a toast to a successful and productive UN - civil society relationship in the new Millennium!

21-22 May 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at a seminar on "Girls' Education: from Rhetoric to Action"**

I wish to welcome you all to this seminar on "Girls' Education, from Rhetoric to Action". I am making the following remarks in my capacity as the President of the 55th General Assembly of the United Nations, which is also known as the Millennium Assembly.

As many of you know, last September an unprecedented number of Heads of State and Government attended the Millennium Summit and committed themselves and their Governments to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, in which the welfare of children is a central element. The Heads of State and Government resolved to ensure that by 2015, not only would the proportion of people living in poverty be halved, but also children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling, and girls and boys would have equal access to all levels of education. This commitment reconfirms the Dakar Framework of Action, Education for All, of April 2000, which by the same time-frame seeks to ensure that in particular girls, children living in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, would have access to completely free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

The United Nations provides a framework for many international instruments and legislation, which confirm the right of children to education. This right has been repeatedly affirmed for example in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1989 in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and in the 1990 by the World Summit for Children, as well as by a number of United Nations Global Conferences of the 1990s. Many of these international instruments have specific reference to the girl child, and the particular need to protect the rights of the girl child.

International instruments exist - what is lacking is their full implementation. I am saddened to say that in spite of all these international agreements, commitments and conferences to promote universal education for all, the truth is that more than 110 million children, most of them in the developing world, are denied their basic right - the right to education - and that two thirds of these 110 million children are girls.

We are still far from equal treatment of children all over the world. In the industrialized countries, the primary school enrolment rate in 1999 was 98%, as compared with 57% in sub-Saharan Africa and 68% in the South Asia. Nevertheless, I want to be optimistic - development has taken place and since the 1960s the school enrolment and literary rate of girls and women has improved in many parts of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the primary school enrolment rate climbed from about 25% in 1960 to nearly 60% in 1980. After declining in the 1980s, school

enrolment in this region has again reached the level of about 60%. In 1960 the number of boys attending school was nearly twice that of girls. However, this gender gap is gradually narrowing, so that the primary school attendance rate of girls is currently about 57% as compared with about 61% of boys. At the same time about 50% of women in this region are literate. - These simple figures demonstrate that progress is there, yet much still needs to be done to make universal education a reality, not only a dream.

When the right to education becomes the norm the whole world gains. When women and girls, future mothers, are educated, the whole nation is educated. This has undisputedly been proven true by science and statistics.

Schools shape the future of our children. Not only are they sites of learning, but also sites for promoting values such as the principles of democracy and respect for each other. Governments bear a major responsibility to design school curricula so that they support the development of children to respect the integrity of others. The fundamental values of the Millennium Declaration may give guidance also here: the principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility contained in the Declaration should constitute the basic value framework in education.

The Special Session of the General Assembly on the 10-year review of the World Summit for Children is currently being prepared. I had the privilege of serving as the Head of the Finnish delegation to the World Summit for Children in September 1990. Now, I have the honor of serving as the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations at the time of preparing for the 10-year review.

Ten years ago, the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children resolved that one of the major tasks was to ensure that girls are given equal treatment and opportunity from the very beginning. Provision of basic education and literacy for all are among the most important contributions that can be made to the development of girls and children in general.

The Special Session of the General Assembly on the 10-year review of the World Summit for Children will be held from 19 to 21 September 2001. The review is based on national, regional and global reports, assessing the achievements of the last decade. Naturally, the review will serve as a template for planning for future actions. The expected outcomes of the special session include a global agenda with a set of goals and a plan of action devoted to ensuring three essential outcomes:

- The best possible start in life for all children;
- Good-quality basic education for all children; and
- The opportunity for all children, especially adolescents, to have meaningful participation in their communities.

The final preparatory committee meeting of this Special Session of the General Assembly will be held in mid-June to complete the outcome document. I may note here that education will be a strong crosscutting issue in this document, as indicated in the available drafts. It is also recognized that one of the basic requirements in creating a child-friendly world is to give every child the opportunity to complete basic education. Massive investment in education and training is needed. Schools can be used as conduits of information on primary health care and nutrition. I believe that modern information and communication technologies, when linked with older technologies, may be of service in these efforts.

We all know that girls and boys are not equally treated everywhere. The 10-year review will put specific emphasis on efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child, while at the same time promoting gender equality and equal access to services, including basic education.

It is not only the availability of education that matters - we need to ensure the quality of education as well. Too often underpaid, untrained and overworked teachers have to manage with overcrowded, unhealthy and poorly equipped classrooms. Yet, I believe that we should not look only at the infrastructure and at the need to construct more schools: literacy classes may be conducted successfully under a tree, if little else is available than a strong will to learn. Likewise, teacher training needs strong emphasis.

Speaking of education, we need to look at a whole range of institutions, which are linked to teaching and learning. Governments need to ensure that responsive, participatory and accountable systems of education and management of schools, at community and national levels are in place. Governments themselves need to invest more in education - and we, as the international community, need to support their efforts.

Let me add here a specific reference to the commitment of African governments. I am currently chairing an open-ended working group of the General Assembly on Africa, and I am happy to say that one of the two themes that this working group chose to focus its discussion on is education.

I could go on speaking on this topic, which is very close to my heart. However, my intervention was meant only to give you an overview of the issues and the work being done at the United Nations, in particular in the General Assembly. The education of girls is not a single vertical issue; it needs to be looked at in a horizontally coherent manner, as an essential part of our overall efforts to eliminate discrimination from this world, and in our target to improve the start of life for the future of mankind - our children.

14 May 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Special Event at the Third United Nations Conference on
the Least Developed Countries - "The Challenge of Eradicating
Poverty for Sustainable Development: International Community
Response" How can we reach the 2015 International
Development Goals?**

Why is it that we have so often failed in promoting sustainable development in the LDCs? One of the main reasons is that we have focused primarily on narrow and short-term goals. National rivalry, protectionism and the legacy of the Cold War, as well as coping with the sheer speed of change have overshadowed longer-term objectives.

The post-Cold War world is a globalized and interdependent one. Yet, one of the key dimensions of globalization has been overlooked: global responsibility. This shared responsibility was recognized in the Millennium Declaration, which reflected an unprecedented global consensus on international development targets. It gave clear direction for the international community.

Globalization can also give reason for optimism. Our technological know-how and financial resources are greater than ever. The international community is more or less in agreement on the root causes of poverty and development problems, as well as on their solutions. Several LDCs have experienced democratization and increased levels of civic participation in their societies. Many of them have launched ambitious - and often painful - macroeconomic reforms to increase openness and tear down trade barriers. There has also been a growing realization that development requires a stable domestic environment. As recognized by the national level preparations in LDCs, good governance and respect for human rights are prerequisites for all development efforts.

Now it is time for the international community to live up to global responsibility and to recognize the steps taken by the LDCs. In practice, this calls for a multidimensional and integrated approach, where different policies reinforce one another. We need to remove trade barriers and provide debt relief, as much as we need to build local health care and education systems. Finding the right balance varies from one society to another, but the main strength in development are the people of the LDCs themselves. Their efforts would undoubtedly benefit from better coherence and coordination within national and international policy making bodies.

The Millennium Declaration recognizes the importance of duty- and quota-free market access for the exports of LDCs. Achieving this could exceed the benefits of development aid. Improving trade relations paves the way to self-reliance and creates conditions for sustainable development.

Recently, the European Union agreed on tariff- and quota-free access for LDC products. I hope that especially other industrialized countries will follow this example.

Equal access to markets is a necessary but not sufficient condition for development. Supply constraints and declining terms of trade for LDCs may prevent them from taking full advantage of the open global trade system. Their productive capacities need to be strengthened and trade sectors diversified.

Furthermore, development cannot be left to the markets alone. This is because the market cannot guarantee public goods, especially in the poor countries. These public goods include social development, protection of the environment, equal access to education, knowledge and health care, as well as greater gender equality. Development co-operation and aid are necessary to build human resources and institutional capacity.

As for education, it is the fundamental right of every child. The education of girls cannot be overemphasized, as it is one of the keys to development. If left to the marketplace alone, education will not reach every child. The international community must also ensure that modern technology, especially information and communication technology are put at the service of development. This is yet another issue, which has special urgency in the poorest countries of the world.

LDCs have also suffered -more than other recipients - from aid fatigue. Some LDCs have not been able to receive and use aid effectively due to capacity constraints, others due to internal or external conflicts. If aid is mainly humanitarian and targeted to those at the margin of survival, its results may lack visibility. Faith in the effectiveness and rationale of aid declines.

In particular, external support is required during political and socioeconomic transition periods. I strongly urge the industrialized countries to raise the levels of ODA to meet the agreed targets of the international community. It is also important to continue efforts to make aid more effective and meaningful for local needs, because this is one of the best ways to overcome aid fatigue.

To reach our targets we need new kind of partnerships at all levels. National governments and intergovernmental organizations can no longer carry their tasks alone, but need the co-operation of their civil society partners. Today, non-governmental organizations are full-fledged members of the international community. Many NGOs have already started to assist to implement the goals of the Millennium Declaration. In addition, partnerships with the private sector and its enormous resources are needed if we are to solve the challenges of global development. The values and targets of the Millennium Declaration should be added to the ethical principles of private sector organizations.

International organizations should themselves constantly adapt to global change and define their tasks accordingly. In this context, a stronger partnership is needed between the United Nations and the international trade and financial institutions. Also, I warmly welcome the positive

initiatives and examples experienced at the regional level between LDCs and all their development partners.

Some have already rushed to claim that halving poverty by 2015 would require growth rates, which are unrealistic and beyond our range. This is, however, no time for defeatism, but for action in order to reach the required growth rates, especially in the LDCs. I am convinced that Governments and the international community can reach the set targets. They must show the same kind of enthusiasm and commitment in the follow-up to the Millennium Summit as was experienced when the commitments were made last September.

This LDC Conference is an integral part of the follow-up to the Millennium Summit. It provides an opportunity to turn our ambitious goals and global consensus into concrete action. For the peoples in the Least Developed Countries, therein lies an opportunity. It is our task to give them this opportunity.

14 May 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Least Developed Countries**

I am deeply honored to address, in my capacity as President of the Millennium Assembly, the opening of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. This Conference has been convened by the General Assembly, the chief policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations. It is the first major UN conference after last September's Millennium Summit, where our Heads of State and Government adopted the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed its ambitious development goals.

The Millennium Declaration is one of the most important UN documents of recent time. It brings together the global development agenda of the 1990's. It reflects a unique consensus on the values and principles of the international community. It represents the political will of Member States. That political will must now prevail.

This week's Conference is the first test whether Member States are truly committed to the implementation of the Declaration. Perhaps the most important goal was to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people who live in extreme poverty. Our Heads of State and Government also addressed the special needs of the least developed countries. They took upon themselves to ensure the success of this Conference. They called on the industrialized countries to provide improved market access, debt relief and development assistance to the LDCs.

The Programme of Action that you will adopt is extremely important for the United Nations. If it reflects a determination to implement the goals of the Millennium Declaration, the Programme's significance goes beyond the LDC context. It will strengthen the credibility of the Declaration. It will encourage other major events to follow suit. In the course of the next four months, five more special sessions or major conferences will follow the LDC Conference. Their themes cover human settlements, HIV/AIDS, small arms, racism and children. Next year, we will have international conferences on financing for development and on sustainable development. They all have been requested by the General Assembly to contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. You can set an example of how our common political will can prevail.

Adoption of an ambitious Programme is not, however, enough. Its adoption must be followed by action by LDC's and development partners alike. It is ultimately the Member States themselves who bear the main responsibility for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

In particular, the Programme of Action must be followed by a cohesive response by the industrialized countries. Most of the Ministers in this Hall representing donor countries are

responsible for development cooperation and trade. Ministers of finance are conspicuously absent. As Delegations return home, many of them will face one more hurdle, this time with their fellow cabinet members. I hope those present here will prevail. It would also bode well for next year's International Conference on Financing for Development. Mr. President,

Action by the North must have first priority also because the LDC's themselves have in so many cases already walked the extra mile. They have gone by the book prescribed by the North, too often without tangible rewards. We must maintain the faith of the LDCs and their citizens in the promise of open trade, free markets and fiscal restraint.

To conclude, let me once again emphasize the central role of the United Nations General Assembly in the follow-up to the Millennium Summit. To this end, the Assembly has asked to be kept informed about how each major event and conference contributes to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The Assembly, for its part, is ready to endorse the Programme of Action as soon as so requested by the Member States.

24 April 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for
the month of April**

The meeting was attended by the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for the month of April: Mozambique (African States), Papua New Guinea (Asian States), Azerbaijan (Eastern European States), Dominican Republic (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Canada (Western European and other States).

1. SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS

Regarding the upcoming General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS the President reminded of the need to come up with nominations for roundtable chairs; only the African group has indicated their nomination in writing as yet.

The President requested the regional chairs to provide him with information on the possible participation of Heads of State and Government, as well as other high-level participation from their region. He informed that he will also consult those Member States, which are not members of any regional group.

The President also reminded of the need to agree on the distribution of members of regional groups in the four roundtables.

He informed that UNAIDS and co-sponsoring agencies are preparing background notes for each of the roundtables to be distributed in advance to Member States so as to facilitate a focused discussion.

It was noted that the first informal informals on the draft declaration were held from 18 to 20 April. The two facilitators will now compile a new version, to be submitted to Member States around 11 May. This version will be negotiated during the week of open-ended informals of the plenary, starting 21 May.

The President also noted that possibly during this week one meeting will be used for consulting Member States on the organization and state-of-the-art of preparing the roundtables. He also expresses hope that the declaration of commitment will be finalized during that week. Delegations should come well prepared to those consultations.

The President informed regional chairs of his trip to Abuja.

Another thing the President wanted to draw the attention was the second list of civil society actors, totalling 227 organizations (including a number of private sector companies) which was submitted to Member States last Friday (20 April) as HIV/AIDS.CRP.2. Add.1. It was noted that possible responses are awaited during the first week of May, after which it goes to the Plenary. It was further noted that the President of the General Assembly will also consult with Member States on the list of civil society actors, which will participate in the roundtables, as well as on those which will speak in the Plenary. Work will be done in consultation with the substantive office and its non-governmental organization (NGO) coordination committee in Geneva.

The President noted that he has also sent a letter to the President of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to draw their attention, during the Spring Meetings of the Boards of Directors (end of this week), to the special session on HIV/AIDS.

2) RIO + 10

Concerning the preparations for the Rio + 10 Summit the President informed that after consultations with various parties through the CSD-9 chair and the CSD secretariat, and his office, an agreement has now been reached on the dates of the Rio+10 Summit. A resolution to this effect will be submitted to the General Assembly shortly. The dates of the Conference should then be confirmed to be from 2 to 11 September 2002, with a high-level segment from 9 to 11 September.

3) IMPROVING THE WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSEMBLY

The President noted that the non-paper, which was prepared after consultations together with Ambassador Valdes, was circulated to Member States yesterday. This non-paper, as indicated before, focuses on implementing existing decisions. The President has scheduled informal informals of the Plenary for May 10 and 11 (afternoons). The President expressed his hope that Member States will attend these informals and be ready to discuss the different points raised in the paper so that the process can be get moving.

4) SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

It was noted that the next substantive session of the open-ended working group will be held in two weeks time (May 7 to 11, with morning sessions on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and an afternoon session on Tuesday). At the next meeting under Cluster I the issue of the expansion of the Security Council will be discussed. To guide the discussions the Bureau has again prepared new conference room papers (CRP's), which will be coming out during this week. The Introductory Paper (CRP.4) came out already yesterday. Under Cluster II the working group will continue to go through the CRP.3, which was prepared for the March meeting. The President said that he is looking forward to an active participation by Member States.

5) AFRICA WORKING GROUP

(the Open-ended Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa)

Concerning the Africa Working Group the President told that together with the Secretariat they are currently busy preparing for the May session (29 May to 1 June). They are trying to make this meeting as operative and practical as possible for the monitoring purposes. They have invited key speakers and representatives of the United Nations system to make presentations on the implementation of two important themes. The first one is prevention and post-conflict peace building. The second theme is education. The President added that he urges Member States to participate actively in the May meeting.

6) FOLLOW-UP TO THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT

The President stressed that he continues to follow up the implementation of Resolution 162/55. That involves working with those in charge of preparations for major upcoming events, so as to ensure the inclusion of the aspect of the summit follow-up in these processes. Also in this connection, the President informed that he will be attending the Abuja African Summit this week. He further noted that he may also participate in the Least Developed Countries (LDC) conference in Brussels in May.

9 April 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the All China Women's Federation's luncheon**

I am honoured to have the opportunity to participate in this luncheon. While in Beijing and having this honour to be the guest of the All China Women's Federation I cannot think of any more appropriate subject to start than the Fourth World Conference on Women. A conference commonly known in the UN and around the world as 'the Beijing Conference'. Altogether 47,000 women and men, attended the Beijing Conference and the parallel Huairou NGO Forum. It was the largest-ever gathering of government and NGO representatives at a United Nations Conference. At the Conference 189 countries unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. The people and the government of People's Republic of China deserve full praise for having hosted this conference.

Many consider the Conference as a turning point in the advancement of the status of women and gender equality. Having gone over the Platform of Action to prepare my remarks for this occasion I tend to agree with them. It is indeed a very important document containing commitments that should be implemented very carefully by every government.

The basic goal of the Platform was the empowerment of all women in order to achieve sustainable, just and developed societies. It stated that the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women is essential for achieving this goal. It further emphasized that it is the duty of states, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights.

The special session of the General Assembly on Beijing +5 of last June aimed at identifying practical ways to implement the commitments made. It emphasized areas which have gained importance since the Beijing Conference, such as access to decision-making particularly in peace keeping processes, gender-sensitive approaches to HIV/AIDS and the realization of women's full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. In this connection I should like to welcome the recent decision by the Chinese government to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and I hope that considerations will continue to enable full implementation of the Convention.

There are several other important commitments in the Platform, but I would like to take up one, which I consider very important. It is the situation of the girl child, a concern I have stressed throughout my tenure. The girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow. Over five years ago governments agreed in Beijing that 'for the girl child to develop her full potential she needs to be nurtured in an enabling environment, where her spiritual, intellectual and material needs for

survival, protection and development are met and her equal rights safeguarded'. Yet the reality today in many parts of the world is that girls do not have equal access to nutrition, physical and mental health care and education or enjoy the same rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than boys. In addition girls are often subjected to various forms of sexual and economic exploitation.

At the Millennium Summit last September the heads of state and government resolved to ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education. If governments with the assistance of the UN system would make sure that this commitment is in fact implemented, it would make a huge difference for so many girls and boys and ultimately for the whole societies.

Although some notable gains have been made since the Beijing Conference, women worldwide continue to bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, illiteracy, dislocation, violence, poor nutrition, and ill health. Governments need to do more. NGOs and women's groups and associations such as yours have a key role to play to follow up that commitments made are implemented.

I should like to congratulate the women of this country and its government for having been very active in enhancing the status of women. China is a party to the Convention of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 1980 and has made achievements in many areas of gender equality. In particular I should like to congratulate you on the high number of women in the China National People's Congress, which was over 20% in the last elections. This same trend is to be seen also in number of Chinese women working in the UN, where almost 50% of the staff members from China are women. I encourage the government and the women in China to continue to enhance the equal status and human rights of women in all aspects.

Before I conclude, let me touch briefly the issue of opening the UN to the outside world, an appropriate topic to take up when addressing women's movements such as All China Women's Federation. I have repeatedly said that better governance requires better and wider participation. In the era of globalization, the UN and national governments cannot do their work alone. Therefore, one of my priorities as President of the Assembly has been to reach out to civil society in order to fully benefit from its expertise and to ensure its involvement in our work. In the case of women's organization we know that their contribution and participation has been vital for the advancement of women.

At the Summit Declaration a call was made for enhanced partnership and co-operation with civil society, including the private sector. To fulfill this commitment, I have emphasized that we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society to contribute to the work of the UN system. I will continue to keep this issue on my agenda and support all efforts to implement this commitment.

It has been a great pleasure to share some of my views on gender equality and advancement of women and I thank you for your attention.

9 April 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century
at the United Nations Association of China**

I should like thank you for this opportunity to share my views as President of the UN General Assembly on the Role of United Nations in this Century. As you may be aware it is the first time that Finland holds the Presidency of the Assembly, an honour that occurs about once in 200 hundred years for any Member of the United Nations. As President I endeavour to do my best to advance the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as enshrined in the Charter, in order to promote peace and security, greater social equality, democracy and human rights, sustainable human development, the alleviation of poverty and combating global environmental threats.

It gives me a great pleasure to start my official visit in China with a seminar at the United Nations Association of China and it fits very well with my priorities as President. Throughout my Presidency, I have stressed the important role civil society and organizations such as the UN Associations play in making the UN more relevant to the world outside. I was impressed when I learned before coming here about the variety of activities, that the UNA China has been involved during the past year, including disseminating information about UN and making international contacts. I was also glad to note that you have had the opportunity to visit my own country Finland. I encourage you to continue your efforts.

The topic given to me is not easy, and I will not even attempt to answer it in full. But I will try to outline some observations that I have made during my time in office.

But let me add that while difficult the topic is indeed very timely in light of the follow-up to the historic Millennium Summit that took place last September. In fact the Summit presented us with the role for the UN in the 21st Century: the Declaration adopted at the end of the Summit lays down the global agenda for the United Nations for the years to come. I could simply refer you to the Declaration and end my address here. But as you might guess, based on the mere amount of paper I have with me, and remembering that I am a former politician I am tempted to expand a little more on this issue. And if you allow me, I will continue another bit.

The Summit was the largest gathering ever of Heads of State and Government and it agreed on a set of values, principles and goals for the entire international community in the 21st century. Member States reaffirmed that the Organization is not meant to serve only Member States, but also the peoples of the world, in particular the most vulnerable. It laid down the fundamental values that guide our work: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. The Summit stressed the inter-linkages between development, peace and security as well as the need to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for everyone.

Furthermore, the Summit provided a momentum which will reinforce the implementation of the global agenda and its development targets, as defined in the global conferences of the 1990's .

One of the issues where the Summit stressed the importance of the UN is globalization. The Organisation can play a critical role in making sure that globalisation becomes a positive force for all and offers benefits in a more equal manner. I should add that a key issue in globalization is how information and knowledge could be made available to all. This is of course a relevant question also in China. The United Nations has been active in this field for sometime through its specialized agencies and funds and programmes and the Economic and Social Council. The focus has been on the issue of bridging the so-called "digital divide", and making knowledge available and accessible to all.

The Summit also reaffirmed the key role that the UN plays in maintaining peace and security. The nature of conflicts has made this task even more complex and the question of improving the UN's capacity to respond more effectively to crises was one of the Summit's themes. The so-called Brahimi report contained specific recommendations to enhance the UN's capacity to conduct peace operations more effectively. In short it proposed that the UN be given the resources and tools it needs to carry out peace operations. The proposed reform is a comprehensive package, including additional resources, organizational and management changes as well as changes in the way the Security Council works. As President of the Assembly I urged Member States to consider the recommendations urgently. Member States saw this as an opportunity for the UN and its Member States to show that they were serious about enabling the Organisation to do the job it has been mandated by the Charter, namely that of maintaining international peace and security. The first emergency package of reforms was adopted last fall which was encouraging, but the work needs to continue.

Development and poverty eradication will have to remain high on the agenda of the UN for years to come. Many of the forthcoming conferences and Special Sessions, such as the Conference on Least Developed Countries and Special Session on HIV/AIDS, will address these issues and I am hopeful that governments will adhere to their commitments made at the Summit and that we will see concrete results emerging from these and other events.

In light of the above the challenge, I believe, is to identify and develop the core strengths of the UN. This means also that the Organization needs to adapt constantly in order to respond to the new priorities established by its Membership.

Moreover, I believe that strengthening and revitalizing the Organization is in fact a prerequisite to achieving the priorities agreed in the Summit Declaration and to enabling the UN to carry out the tasks entrusted to it. Consequently, the pledge by Member States to spare no effort to make the UN a more effective instrument and to strengthen, it becomes very important and urgent.

In this connection I should like to take up briefly some of the relevant issues in strengthening the UN.

One particular area of reform where Member States resolved at the Summit to intensify their efforts is Security Council reform. The point that is repeatedly stressed in reform discussions is the need for the Council's composition to reflect the realities of today, compared to those of 55 years ago, to make it more representative and more legitimate.

Discussions on Security Council reform have been going on now for over 7 years. This reflects the fact that the issues at stake are at the very core of the United Nation's structure and functioning. Some improvements in the working methods of the Security Council have been accomplished, but the main issues still remain open. The need for reform is still very much a current matter.

The Millennium Summit outcome indicated that there is a renewed willingness by the membership to move forward on reform. But concrete results regarding expansion of the membership of the Council, decision making, including the veto, working methods and transparency are still awaited. The aim is a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

On the more general question of strengthening the UN I have as President tried to lead and keep the process of reform moving forward. To achieve concrete results on the reform and revitalization of the UN, it is of utmost importance to have the whole Membership on board.

Many important decisions were already taken last fall to strengthen the UN. The Assembly was able to agree on new scales of assessments both for the regular budget and for UN peacekeeping. This was a longstanding and complex issue, but in the end the Assembly reached consensus.

I already mentioned the decision adopting emergency measures to reinforce the Department of Peacekeeping Operations thus strengthening one of the core functions of the Organization. Decisions were also taken to improve the security and safety of UN personnel, to move towards results-based budgeting and on other issues that will contribute to strengthening the UN.

As President of the Assembly I have made an effort to guide its work in a more effective manner. But there is an overwhelming consensus that a concerted effort needs to be made in improving the working methods of the Assembly. Many decisions have been taken over the years to improve the work of the Assembly. But it is striking to note how few have been implemented. So I have put this issue now to Member States and they have responded positively to my call. Consultations have started to find common ground to move forward in a concrete manner in implementing decisions made towards improving the working methods of the Assembly.

Any reform requires compromises by all parties at a very practical level. Unless governments at the highest political level acknowledge and agree that to achieve the common good they need to let go some of their own individual priorities, nothing will move.

To conclude I should like go back to where I started: the role of civil society. In the Summit Declaration a call was made for enhanced partnership and co-operation with civil society, including the private sector. I have emphasized that we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society to contribute to the work of the UN system. I will continue to keep this issue on my agenda and support all efforts to implement this commitment.

I thank you for your attention.

3 April 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at a Luncheon at the United Nations University**

It is a pleasure to join you at this luncheon and to share some thoughts and observations about the UN and its work from the head quarter's perspective.

We have just opened the United Nations Gallery at the United Nations House. For me that was a very symbolic event of opening the doors of the UN to the outside world. One of my priorities as President of the Assembly has been to reach out to civil society in order to fully benefit from its expertise and to ensure its involvement in the work of the UN. I consider it is also to be a necessary means to strengthening the Organization. In this era of globalization, the UN and national governments cannot do their work alone.

As part of the implementation of the Summit Declaration, a call was made for enhanced partnership and co-operation with civil society, including the private sector. I myself have emphasized that we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society to contribute to the work of the UN system. The input from the academic community and research institutions is of particular importance. In this respect the United Nations University provides the UN with a great opportunity to build new linkages and broaden the old ones. It is important that the whole UN system takes full benefit from the work and research activities of the University. And I welcome the University's efforts to strengthen its working links with the UN organizations. It is crucial to further intensify this cooperation, by all parties, so that the University can implement its role as a think-tank for the UN system.

The Summit last September gave the UN family a huge task. Although the main responsibility to implement the commitments made rests with governments, the UN has a key role to play in assisting Member States in this process. Declaration. It is important that in its research activities the University contributes to the implementation of these recommendations.

Since I have this unique opportunity to meet representatives from so many different UN organizations and programmes I feel compelled to say a few words about the role of the UN system in general. Let me start by saluting UN personnel in the field - for your dedication, commitment and hard work. You provide the backbone of the work of the Organisation.

The Millennium Summit laid the agenda for our work. The main challenge now is to implement the Summit Declaration. In my view, the Declaration is one of the most important documents of recent time. If we are able to achieve its targets, it will have an enormous impact globally.

Your contribution to the follow-up and implementation of the Summit Declaration will be vital. The implementation mechanism within the UN system lies basically on the existing structures. This requires that the whole UN system will have to make an extra effort and work together towards the common goals set in the Declaration. Co-ordination is needed not only amongst the different players in the field, but also between the field offices and headquarters.

International and multilateral actors, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations, are becoming increasingly important in harnessing the positive powers of globalization. I have tried myself to further strengthen the bridges with the international financial institutions to foster co-operation and coherent policies on such important issues as financing for development.

Throughout my tenure as President an important concern of mine has been to find ways to improve the functioning of the General Assembly itself. I have tried to work in an open and transparent way with my colleagues and to foster a collaborative spirit. I have instituted some changes such as amending the rules to establish the dates for the opening of the Assembly's session each year. Consultation on this issue will continue when I return to New York.

One observation that I have made during my tenure has to do with the resources of the Organization. The United Nations is clearly under funded and in desperate need of adequate and dependable resources. Years of zero-nominal growth have taken their toll. It is a policy that has come to the end of its usefulness.

Let me conclude by expressing a word of thanks to the United Nations University for organizing this luncheon. This a sign of the good co-operation that will help us achieve the goals set in the Declaration. I trust that the spirit of teamwork will help us resolve the challenges ahead.

I would like to wish you all a very happy Sakura season and I hope that you will also have the opportunity to take some time and celebrate this time of the year with OHANAMI.

21 March 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for
the month of March**

The meeting was attended by the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for the month of March: Mauritius (African States), Pakistan (Asian States), Armenia (Eastern European States), Cuba (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Belgium (Western European and other States).

1. SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS

The major issue the President highlighted regarding the special session was the nomination of the chairs of the round tables. The President mentioned that he has taken this matter up also with the predecessors of the current chairs in January and February this year.

It was noted that there has been a letter of invitation to the special session by the Secretary General of the UN. In this letter Member States were invited to participate at the highest level, preferably at the Head of State or Government.

Accordingly, the President noted that the regional chairs might wish to convey to their members, that consideration should be given to the fact that heads of states might be among the participants in the round tables, which would place certain requirements also on the chairs and their ranking.

It was also noted that the resolution 55/13 decided that the Special Session will consist of plenary meetings and four round tables. The chairs will represent all other regional groups except the Western European and other States Group, which group is not required to nominate a chair.

Resolution 55/242, which was adopted in February this year on the organizational issues of the Special Session and the preparatory process, decided on the themes of each round table. The President noted that he hopes this decision will facilitate the selection of the chairs.

Another issue to which the President wanted to draw the attention of the regional chairs for the month of March, was the participation of member states in the round tables.

Resolution 55/242 gives guidance as for how many member states from each geographic group will be able to be included in each of the round tables. This request concerns now also the Western European and other states group.

Resolution 55/242 decided that the round tables shall compose of a mix of member states and United Nations organizations and civil society actors.

2. IMPROVING THE WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSEMBLY

The President informed the chairs that the chairpersons of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) Ambassador Kumalo and Ambassador Asadi had briefed him on the outcome of the JCC meeting. Their message was that there is an overwhelming consensus to improve the working methods of the Assembly and revitalize it and the JCC is supportive to the process.

In order to allow sufficient time for consultations for the time being the President said that he will continue, together with Ambassador Valdes, to consult Member States and major groups.

The President informed that he will prepare a non-paper focusing on implementing existing decisions and circulate it to Member States early April. This paper is meant to facilitate the discussions at the informal/informals of the Plenary to be arranged sometime late April.

3. SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

The President referred to the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group which was held the previous week. At the meeting the discussions focused on the veto as a voting instrument and the working methods of the Council. The veto is one of the questions that needs to be addressed in order to reach general agreement on the reform.

The papers submitted by the Vice-chairs and the President guided the discussions and participation was active and constructive. The aim is a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. Discussions will continue in May, and as the President hoped the chairs will understand it would be premature to make any comments now on possible outcomes.

4. AFRICA WORKING GROUP

(the Open-ended Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa)

The President noted that at the organisational session held 20 March the two themes on which the Group will focus its monitoring at its meeting in May were agreed upon They are prevention and post-conflict peace building and education. The Group had also agreed that at the meeting in July/August, the Group will make a short review or wrap up of the outcomes for Africa of the major events which will have taken place up to that time this year.

It was further noted that the meeting heard a statement by Under-Secretary-General Gambari, the main co-ordinator in the Secretariat side for this issue. He pledged the full and co-ordinated support form the Secretariat side, which was very encouraging.

The President had urged Member States to participate actively in the next meeting in May.

5. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT FOLLOW UP

The President told that he continues to follow up the implementation of Resolution 162/55. He has continued to follow up the preparations for major upcoming events to ensure follow up aspect in these processes.

In this connection the President had hosted a luncheon for members of the Bureau of the Small Arms Conference to discuss how that conference can be used as a tool in the implementation of the Summit Declaration. Participants had briefed the President about the progress made, including in the question of non-governmental organization (NGO) participation.

6. VISIT TO JAPAN AND CHINA

The President also informed the chairs that he will be travelling to Japan and China at the end of March at the invitation of the Governments of these countries. As before this trip takes place under the overall umbrella of the Millennium Summit follow up.

In Japan the President will be meeting with the Foreign Minister Kono and in China with Premier Zhu and Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Tang.

19 March 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
“Towards a Stronger United Nations” at the American Scandinavian
Society**

It is a great pleasure for me to address the American Scandinavia Society. I should like to thank you for this opportunity to share my views as President of the UN General Assembly on strengthening the United Nations. It is the first time that Finland holds the Presidency of the Assembly, an honour that occurs about once in 200 hundred years for any Member of the United Nations.

The topic for this evening could not be more timely - nor the audience for it more appropriate. The Nordics have a long history in the UN and a reputation as forerunners for reform. I believe that we are also regarded as 'runners' in the real sense relative to the slow pace of the UN. The Nordic proposals for the reform of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies in the early 90's were instrumental in bringing that process forward. So it should have come as no surprise that as President I have taken reform as one of my priorities.

The topic is also especially timely in the light of the ongoing follow-up to the historic Millennium Summit that took place last September.

At the Summit, the largest gathering ever of Heads of State and Government, a set of values, principles and goals for the entire international community in the early 21st century was agreed. The Summit provided a momentum which will reinforce the implementation of the global agenda and its development targets, as defined in the global conferences of the 1990's .

At the Summit Member States also reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. They reaffirmed that the Organization is not meant to serve only Member States, but also the peoples of the world, in particular the most vulnerable. The Summit stressed the inter-linkages between development, peace and security as well as the need to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for everyone.

Furthermore, Member States pledged to strengthen the UN, the only truly global organization today. I believe that strengthening and revitalizing the organization is a prerequisite to achieving all the priorities agreed in the Summit Declaration and to enable the UN to carry out the tasks entrusted to it.

One particular area of reform where Member States resolved to intensify their efforts at the Summit is Security Council reform. The point that is repeatedly stressed in reform discussions is the need for the Council's composition to reflect the realities of today, compared to those of 55 years ago, to make it more representative and more legitimate.

Just last week I was chairing the first round of discussions this year on the reform of the Security Council. I am fortunate to have my fellow Nordic, Ambassador Thorsteinn Ingolfsson of Iceland, as one of the Vice-Chairpersons to assist me in this challenging task. This shows that the Nordic co-operation and reform tradition is still very much alive at the UN.

Discussions on Security Council reform have been going on now for over 7 years and this seems like a long time, which it is. But one has to remember that the issues at stake are at the very core of the United Nation's structure and functioning. Some improvements in the working methods of the Security Council have been accomplished, but the main issues still remain open. The need for reform is still very much a current matter.

Our discussions of last week focused on the veto as a voting instrument and the working methods of the Council. There is no doubt that the veto is one of the questions that needs to be addressed in order to reach general agreement on the reform. The papers submitted by the Vice-chairs and me guided the discussions and participation was active and constructive.

The Millennium Summit outcome indicated that there is a renewed willingness by the membership to move forward on reform. But concrete results regarding expansion of the membership of the Council, decision making, including the veto, working methods and transparency are still awaited. The aim is a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. Discussions will continue in May, and as you will understand it would be premature to make any comments now on possible outcomes.

On the more general question of strengthening the UN I have as President tried to lead and keep the process of reform moving forward. To achieve concrete results on the reform and revitalization of the UN, it is of the utmost importance to have the whole Membership on board. I have urged Member States to engage in discussions, to implement decisions taken and make new initiatives to further the reform.

During the fall session of the Assembly I was very pleased to see how promptly Member States responded to the challenge. The implementation of the Summit Declaration was launched in December by consensus.

The Assembly rose to the challenge in other important ways to strengthen the UN. Firstly, it was able to agree on new scales of assessments both for the regular budget and for UN peacekeeping. This was a longstanding and complex issue that had generated a lot of heated discussion. Despite the complexities, the Assembly reached consensus.

The agreement will soon lead to the payment of a substantial portion of arrears owed to the UN by the United States. The goal must be a payment of all remaining arrears by the US. Putting the arrears question behind us will not only strengthen the relationship between the US and the UN but also help advance the American agenda in the UN.

Last fall, the Assembly also adopted a package of emergency measures to reinforce the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, an important step towards strengthening one of the core functions of the Organization. This is necessary in order to close the gap between the peace keeping tasks given to the UN, and the resources Member States make available to it. Decisions were also taken to improve the security and safety of UN personnel, and to move towards results-based budgeting and on other issues that will contribute to strengthening the UN.

Reform has been underway for the past few years under the able leadership of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. But it needs to continue throughout the Organization in order to make the UN stronger and more effective.

As President of the Assembly I have started, if I may put it, in my own 'backyard', that is, the General Assembly. I have made an effort to guide its work in a more effective manner.

Many decisions have been taken over the years to improve the work of the Assembly. But it is striking to note how many of these decisions have not been implemented. So I have put this issue now to Member States and they have responded positively to my call. Consultations have started to find common ground to move forward in a concrete manner in implementing decisions made towards improving the working methods of the Assembly.

My own experience is that it is often the practical and small things that count and ultimately add up to meaningful change.

One of these issues is reviewing the agenda of the Assembly. Despite some successes in the rationalization and streamlining of the agenda, the overall workload has not been reduced. The fact is that the total number of items on the agenda has been increasing over the years. The same goes for the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. What is needed is an agenda that enables the Assembly to focus its work more on current priorities and not on those of years gone by.

The division of labor between the Plenary session of the Assembly and its six Main Committees has become blurred. Whilst the Plenary should be the place where issues of high importance are debated in the presence of all Member States, it often discusses issues of a more routine character and, I dare say, often with only a half full audience. Some have also suggested that the Assembly's annual general debate could be working sessions and real debates on issues of current and global importance, rather than reading aloud pre-written statements covering the whole agenda.

The lack of continuity in the work of successive Assemblies is an issue that I have personally experienced. To provide some continuity, the model of a 'troika', used in other organizations, has been suggested. The 'GA troika' would include the present, previous and incoming Presidents of the General Assembly or representatives of these States, to be involved in major discussions of reform and of planning the work of the General Assembly. Another suggestion that has been made to the same effect is to strengthen the office of the President by providing on a continuous

basis substantial backup from the secretariat designated to support the office of the President as an institution.

Let me now turn to the issue of opening the UN to the outside world, another means to strengthening the Organization. Better governance requires better and wider participation. In the era of globalization, the UN and national governments cannot do their work alone. Therefore, one of my priorities as President of the Assembly has been to reach out to civil society in order to fully benefit from its expertise and to ensure its involvement in our work.

In the resolution on the implementation of the Summit Declaration, a call was made for enhanced partnership and co-operation with civil society, including the private sector. To fulfill this commitment, I have emphasized that we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society to contribute to the work of the UN system. I will continue to keep this issue on my agenda and support all efforts to implement this commitment.

In addition, international and multilateral actors, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations are becoming increasingly important in harnessing the positive powers of globalization. It is my intention to further strengthen the bridges to foster co-operation and coherent policies with the international financial institutions on such important issues as financing for development. This issue will be the topic of an International Conference next year in Mexico. In my view, the participation by the international financial institutions and by the national finance ministries of the donor countries is vital for this event to be a success.

To conclude, I should like to stress that the challenge is to identify and develop the core strengths of the UN. The Organization needs to adapt constantly in order to respond to the new priorities established by its Membership.

This requires compromises by all parties at a very practical level. Unless governments at the highest political level acknowledge and agree that to achieve the common good they need to let go some of their own individual priorities, nothing will move. I thank you for your attention.

26 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for
the month of February**

The meeting was attended by the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for the month of February: Mali (African States), Nepal (Asian States), Albania (Eastern European States), Costa Rica (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Austria (Western European and other States).

1. IMPROVING THE WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSEMBLY

The President noted that he has addressed the question of improving the working methods of the Assembly several times at these meetings with regional chairs. The membership had a very good exchange of views on 13 and 14 February at the open-ended brainstorming session of the General Committee. He added that he intends to arrange an informal informal of the Plenary some time in March.

In the meantime, together with Ambassador Valdes, the President will continue to consult Member States and major groups in order to prepare for that meeting. He will also, with the assistance of Ambassador Valdes, prepare a non-paper to facilitate discussions at the meeting. The President told that his goal, which he believes is shared by all, is to enable the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the UN to play its role effectively. He added that the focus is on implementing existing decisions.

2. SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

The responsibility to bring this process forward lies with the Member States. The President assured that he will do his best to facilitate the process.

The first substantive meeting will be from March 12 to 16 and the President said that he hopes to be able to focus the discussion so that progress can be made. All issues, including the veto, need to be discussed. It is important that Member States speak out in the working group and that capitals are linked to this process so as to engage the vital political will to move ahead - after 7 years.

3. AFRICA WORKING GROUP

Concerning the work of the Working Group, the President noted that he has just today sent a letter to inform Member States about the dates scheduled for the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa:

20 March 2001 (organisational session)
29 May through 1 June 2001; and
30 July through 3 August 2001.

The President added that it is his hope that all delegations will take an active part in these meetings in order to make the work of the Working Group a success. At the moment the bureau is consulting on the forthcoming work, including the possible themes to be monitored by the group. The need to try to focus the discussion on themes that have not been dealt sufficiently in the Working Group was noted. The question of conflict prevention and peace building has been mentioned, and the President said that he agrees that it is indeed important.

The President told that he looks forward co-operating also with the President of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Ambassador Belinga Eboutou, to follow up the recommendation of establishing an ad hoc advisory group on countries emerging from conflict. At the meeting of the Heads of Regional Organizations (February 5), the President had invited them to enhance their input to the work of the group, and he added that he hopes they take act upon his invitation.

4. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT FOLLOW UP

The President said that he continues to follow up the implementation of Resolution 162/55. There is a need to clarify the ideas about how and when the road map should come out and what is the procedure for the annual reports. In that context, the President noted that he recently hosted a luncheon for major groupings where the Secretariat briefed about the progress in preparing the road map and about cooperation within the Secretariat on the follow up. The Secretariat's intentions are to produce the road map, after considerable joint efforts (including through the ACC) within the Secretariat, not before this coming summer.

It was also noted that the President has attended systematically the preparations for major upcoming events to ensure follow up aspect in these processes. Furthermore, the monthly meetings with coordinators of these upcoming events have continued, during which reporting requirements and non-governmental organisation (NGO) participation have been discussed.

5. HIV/AIDS SPECIAL SESSION

The President reminded the Chairpersons of his letter of 20 February 2001, in which he requested their assistance in nominating the chairs of the roundtables in the special session on HIV/AIDS, which will be held on 25 to 27 June. The President added that he trusts that they will communicate to him the nominations from their groups soon.

In the same connection, the President also noted that the WEOG group would not need to react, as the Presidency of the session is with this group. Identification of the chairs of the roundtables - of which the President said that he is sure about - will facilitate further organizational issues, including participation of Member States in the round tables.

22 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
"Towards a stronger UN" at New England Center for International
and Regional Studies Bridgeport University**

It is an honor to join you tonight and to continue the tradition established by the University of Bridgeport to invite the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations to address your academic community. I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my views on strengthening the United Nations. It is a timely and opportune topic, especially in the light of the ongoing work of the historic Millennium Assembly.

For me personally, tonight's address is of particular importance because I have underlined the need for the UN to open up to the civil society at large. This includes continued and enhanced dialogue with the academic community, with which the UN already has a history of partnership.

Last September's Millennium Summit gave Member States an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The Summit reaffirmed that the Organization is not meant to serve only Member States, but also the peoples of the world, in particular the most vulnerable. The Summit stressed the inter-linkages between development, peace and security as well as the need to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for everyone. At the Summit Member States also pledged to strengthen the Organization, which is essential if we are to achieve the goals outlined in the Summit Declaration.

We all acknowledge that since the establishment of the United Nations, its achievements have been impressive in many areas of development, peace and security. The mandate given to us by the Summit reflects our global agenda for this coming century and as such is very ambitious. In my mind there is no doubt that the United Nations system needs to be strengthened and reformed in order to enable it to carry out the tasks entrusted to it.

One of the main challenges is to identify and develop the core strengths of the Organization. The UN needs to constantly adapt in order to respond to the new priorities established by its Membership. Furthermore, the UN needs to open up to the outside world. This requires political will and compromises by all parties at a very practical level. Unless Member States acknowledge and agree that to achieve the common good they need to let go some of their own individual priorities, nothing will move.

In my discussions with Member States and in listening to their statements, I sense that there is a renewed recognition and emerging consensus that we need to reinforce our efforts and equip the Organization with appropriate tools to achieve the goals we have set.

During the fall session of the Assembly I was very pleased to see how promptly Member States responded to the challenge. The implementation of the Summit Declaration was launched in December by consensus and with co-operation from all sides. Subsequently the Secretary General, for his part, responded by appointing a panel to advise on the world's development financing needs.

The Assembly rose to the challenge in other important ways to strengthen the UN. Firstly, it was able to agree on new scales of assessments both for the regular budget and for UN peacekeeping. This was an unusually complex and difficult issue that had generated a lot of heated discussion. Despite the complexities, the Assembly, just hours before the start of its holiday recess, reached consensus. In my view, this historic agreement has the potential of greatly improving the spirit of our work.

In addition, the agreement will soon lead to the payment of a substantial portion of the arrears owed to the UN by the United States. Ultimately, the goal must be a payment of all remaining arrears by the US. Putting the arrears question behind us will not only strengthen the relationship between the US and the UN but also help advance the American agenda in the UN.

Last fall, the Assembly also adopted a package of emergency measures to reinforce the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a step towards strengthening one of the core functions of the Organization. This is necessary so as to close the gap between the tasks we ask the UN to carry out, and the resources we make available to it. Decisions were also taken to improve the security and safety of UN personnel, to move towards results-based budgeting and on other issues that will contribute to strengthening the UN.

Reform has been underway for the past couple of years under the able leadership of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. But it needs to continue throughout the Organization in order to make the UN stronger and more effective. In fact, strengthening the Organization is a prerequisite to achieve all the priorities agreed in the Summit Declaration.

For my part, I have tried to lead and keep this process moving forward. To have concrete results on the reform and revitalization of the UN, it is of utmost importance to have the whole Membership on board. I have urged Member States to engage in discussions, to implement decisions taken and make new initiatives to further the reform.

As President of the Assembly I have started with my own 'backyard', if I may put it that way, the Assembly. I have made an effort to guide its work in a more effective manner.

In this regard, it is striking how many decisions Member States have already taken over the years, to improve the work of the Assembly. But it is perhaps even more striking to find out how many of these decisions have not been implemented. So how to move forwards on this issue? My experience is that it is often the practical and small things that count and ultimately add up to change.

One of these issues might be reviewing the agenda of the Assembly. Despite some successes in the rationalization and streamlining of the agenda, the overall workload has not been reduced. The fact is that the total number of items on the agenda has been increasing over the years. The same goes for the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. I believe that we should now make a serious attempt to review the agenda of the General Assembly. This is essential if we are to focus our work more on current priorities and not on those of years gone by.

One possible way to do this might be greater use of clustering, biennializing or triennializing the consideration of agenda items. Agenda items of closely related substance could be merged within a single agenda title or could be incorporated as sub-items.

Moreover, the division of labor between the Plenary and the Main Committees has become blurred. To make the Assembly matter on issues of critical importance to Governments, we need to address this issue. Whilst the Plenary should be the place where issues of high importance are debated in the presence of all Member States, it is in fact, often discussing issues of a routine character and, I dare say, often with only a half full audience.

One concern that has been raised is the lack of continuity in the work of successive Assemblies. To provide some continuity, the model of a 'troika', used in other organizations, has been suggested. The 'GA troika' would include the present, previous and incoming Presidents of the General Assembly or representatives of these States, to be involved in major discussions of reform and of planning the work of the General Assembly. Another suggestion that has been made to the same effect is to make more effective use of the General Committee, the bureau of the General Assembly, which is comprised of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the Chairpersons of its Main Committees.

I should also add that the experience of the round tables at the Summit has inspired some to suggest that maybe the Assembly's annual general debate could be made more interactive and focus on issues of particular importance each year rather than cover the whole of the global agenda.

In addition to enhancing the effectiveness of the General Assembly, work is under way - and has been for more than seven years - to reform the Security Council. The Millennium Summit Declaration called for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. There were several calls - both in the Summit and during the last fall's debates - for the Council's composition to reflect the realities of today, in order to make it "more representative and more legitimate". I hope that the statements made indicate a willingness by the membership to move forward on this issue as we continue to consider it in the coming weeks and months.

Let me now turn briefly to the issue of opening the UN to the outside world, a key means to strengthen the Organization. Better governance requires better and wider participation. In the era of globalization, the UN and national governments cannot do their work alone. Therefore, one of

my priorities as President of the Assembly has been to reach out to civil society in order to fully benefit from its expertise and to ensure its involvement in our work.

In the resolution on the implementation of the Summit Declaration, a call was made for enhanced partnership and co-operation with civil society, including the private sector. To fulfill this commitment, we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society to contribute to the work of the UN system. I will continue to keep this issue on my agenda and support all efforts to implement this commitment.

In addition to civil society, international and multilateral actors, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations are becoming increasingly important in harnessing the positive powers of globalization. It is my intention to try and build bridges with the international financial institutions - IFI's - on such important issues as financing for development. This issue will be the topic of a high-level meeting next year and in my view, the best way for the event to be a success is through participation by the IFI's and also by the national finance ministries of the donor countries.

In concluding I would like to reiterate my firm belief: Reform and strengthening of the United Nations is not an option, but a necessity.

22 February 2001

**Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly
55th session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**55th session of the General Assembly
Item 182: Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit
meeting with the Coordinators of the upcoming events**

As part of the President's follow up activities on the implementation of the Summit Declaration and to establish how best to make use of upcoming events within the United Nations system in the implementation of the Summit the office of the Assembly President arranged the 4th meeting with the coordinators of these events on February 22, 2001. The representatives of the respective secretariat departments/units were also invited.

The meeting focused on three issues: progress in preparations and updates on issues relating to civil society involvement and reporting and feed back from the events and conferences to the General Assembly.

General information on how the preparations are progressing

Participants were invited to assess whether and how well the different preparation processes have been understood and used as part of the implementation of the Summit. At the outset it was noted that in some cases the substantive negotiations have not yet progressed sufficiently to make this assessment.

All in all the different processes are perceived to and do in practice act as implementation tools of the Summit.

LDC-III:

Poverty eradication will be the central theme in this conference. Progress was quite slow in the last preparatory meeting, but hopefully the inter-sessional meetings and the next preparatory meeting will make good progress.

Istanbul + 5 (Habitat):

Preparatory process going on in Nairobi, briefing will be submitted later directly to the President.

HIV/AIDS Special Session:

The focus has been so far on the organisational issues. But the topic of HIV/AIDS is cross cutting and will be a very important part of the follow up to the Summit.

Small Arms Conference:

The next preparatory meeting in March will discuss also the issues that are of relevance in the Summit follow up based on the Chairman's draft on action plan.

Racism conference:

The conference has many thematic linkages to the outcome of the Summit and is thus very relevant in the follow up. The regional preparatory meetings have been held. Next inter-sessional meeting is in March and the President was invited to send a letter to remind the session of the Summit follow-up aspect.

Special Session on Children:

The Summit has been a key input for the Special Session on Children preparations. The aim is to have an overarching policy guidance that will cover many cross sectoral issues also dealt in the Summit.

World Food Summit+5:

This event aims to play a co-ordinating role in the follow up to the Summit. Preparatory structure is led by the Committee of the World Food Security.

Financing for development:

There is a strong reference and link to the Summit in this process. It is particularly important to remind ourselves of the fact that the Heads of States made the commitments in September, since finance issues are not dealt solely by the Foreign Ministries.

The President's office informed participants about the President's participation in several events and conferences in order to underline the role these events play in the implementation process. An updated calendar of the up coming events and conferences is enclosed for information purposes (annex).

Civil society

The Office of the President drew attention to the fact that the issue was put on the agenda of the meeting for two main reasons: it is a common procedural point of all upcoming events, so synergies could be developed to rationalize negotiations that often take a huge part of the substantial negotiations. Furthermore strengthening the contribution of civil society was part of the Summit declaration, which again the President is keen to follow up.

It was pointed out that civil society participation is crucial in order to make these events a success. This is also part of the Summit follow up. Participants stressed that there are political sensitivities concerning the participation arrangements. It was noted that more attention should be paid to the general question of organising civil society participation.

Participants were invited once again to send information on the process, including preparations of any non-papers and time tables as well as which meetings would discuss this issue to General

Assembly secretariat in order to have a focal point for information on the civil society involvement. In this way information will be available to all coordinators from the office of Mr. Perfiliev/GA Affairs.

Reporting back to the General Assembly

In the Resolution 162/55 various events and conferences are requested to report to the Assembly on how they will contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. At the last meeting it was suggested that a separate section on the Summit follow-up be included in the respective reports of these events and conferences.

Now it was noted that maybe we should try to be more ambitious, and try to see whether through co-operation of all relevant secretariat entities we could provide the Member States with a consolidated account of all events that will take place this year. This should be done without creating an additional burden/reporting channel. Participants were invited to consider the reporting modalities further and present ideas or thoughts at the next meeting on how the reporting back to the Assembly could be done in practice, including by using electronic reporting, oral reports or similar processes.

The President's office briefed the participants also about the ongoing efforts within the secretariat concerning the preparations of the road map.

Annex

Millennium Summit Follow-up Dates for Up-Coming Events/Conferences and their Preparatory Processes

March

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
· Open-ended informal consultations of the Plenary; New York

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
· Open-Ended Inter-sessional Working Group; Geneva (6-9)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
· Open-ended Informals of the Plenary; New York (13)

United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;

· 3rd Prepcom; New York (19-30)

April

Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC-III);
 · 3rd Prepcom; New York (2-6)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
 · Open-ended Informal Consultations of the Plenary; New York (23-27)

May

High Level International Intergovernmental Consideration of Financing for Development;
 · 3rd Prepcom; New York (2-8)

Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, (LDC III);
 · Brussels (14-20)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
 · Open-ended informals of the Plenary; New York (21-25)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
 · Open-ended Informal Consultations; New York (29)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
 · Plenary; New York (31)

Ten-Year Review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (RIO+10);
 · 1st Prepcom, organizational session

World Food Summit + 5 Committee on World Food Security

May-June

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
 · 2nd Prepcom; Geneva (May 21- June 1)

June

Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul +5);
 · New York (6-8)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Children;
 · 3rd Substantive Session, New York (11-15)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
 · New York (25-27)

World Food Summit + 5;
 FAO Council

July

July UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;
 · New York (9-20)

August-September

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
 · Durban, South Africa (Aug. 31- Sep. 7)

56th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

11 September 2001 - 10 September 2002

September

Special Session of the General Assembly on Children
 · New York (19-21)

November

FAO Congress
 · Rome (2-13)

Food Summit + 5 (FAO)
 · Rome (13-17)

January

High Level International Intergovernmental Consideration of Financing for DevelopmentPrepcom (tentative)

FirstQuarter of year 2002

High Level International Intergovernmental Consideration of Financing for Development

January-April

World Summit on Sustainable Development (RIO+10);
· Prepcoms to be decided

May

World Summit on Sustainable Development (RIO+10);
· Ministerial Prepcom, Jakarta, Indonesia

TBD

World Summit on Sustainable Development (RIO+10);
· Johannesburg, South Africa

12 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for
Development**

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the Preparatory Committee for the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, and to share with you some thoughts at the outset of your deliberations.

The Millennium Declaration, which expresses the resolve of the Heads of State and Government, underlined the important linkage between development and peace. It also reiterated the goal of halving the extreme poverty by the year 2015. In my view, the clarification of the roles of the various partners involved in development financing is one necessary step in our fight against poverty and in our efforts to reach the other goals of the Millennium Summit. I am convinced that the Financing for Development process per se will contribute to a variety of other discussions taking place within various fora and events.

I am personally committed to the Financing for Development process, which is seeking fresh ways of thinking and acting together, and looking for fresh angles and interlinkages, rather than preparing merely for an isolated event. As a global intergovernmental forum, the United Nations is well suited to facilitate this preparatory process - a process which implements the philosophy of working together towards a common goal. The report of the Secretary General, which is before this preparatory committee, represents an unprecedented effort to involve all concerned. The issues on your preliminary agenda are difficult, but absolutely vital and need to be discussed openly.

I believe that complementarity between different forms of development financing can be improved. I have made personal efforts to convince colleagues and partners within and outside the United Nations of the necessity of achieving horizontal coherence and thinking both nationally and internationally. I should like to add here that coherence starts at home. I have personally brought this matter, and the need to participate in this process, to the attention of the ministers of finance and international trade of my own country. To me this process represents an important link between the domestic and international levels of thinking and decision-making, and therefore, I am happy to note that the whole process is built on constructive participation by various entities: governments, United Nations secretariats, funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO, and the regional organizations, as well as on active contributions by the civil society. Complementarity is sharing.

Finally, Mr. Co-chairmen, I am convinced that under your able leadership, this preparatory committee will be able to tackle the difficult questions ahead of us. I believe that confidence and trust between all partners concerned in this process will help secure financing for development on a predictable and sustainable basis. I wish you success during the coming two weeks and in the months to come.

5 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the 2nd Meeting of the Preparatory Committee on the Third
United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries**

I would like to express my gratitude to the Committee for giving me this opportunity to share some of my views as you proceed with the preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries.

Your work in this Committee is not a simple technical exercise of agreeing on a common text. Your task goes beyond that. Your collective work must engender a sense of hope for a better future in the minds of seven hundred million people living in LDCs. This preparatory process must culminate in concrete actions at the Conference that will help free these millions of people from poverty and deprivation.

As President of the General Assembly, I have been entrusted by Member States with the responsibility to follow-up the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The Third Conference on LDCs, which will be the first major conference to take place after the Summit, together with other upcoming conferences, is a major mechanism at the disposal of the General Assembly in implementing the commitments of the Declaration.

The Millennium Declaration successfully articulated actions in three critical areas concerning development in LDCs, namely trade, ODA and debt, where external support could make a major difference. The world leaders agreed upon the target of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. The other commitments in the Declaration concerning human rights, democracy, good governance, peace and security and protection of the vulnerable, are equally important in accelerating development and eradicating poverty. I am pleased that the draft Programme of Action that you are considering captures all these dimensions of the Millennium Declaration by following a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach. The comprehensive scope of the Millennium Declaration reinforces the need for an integrated and coordinated approach within the UN in the implementation of its commitments.

There is an urgency to take concrete action in LDCs. The primary responsibility in meeting the Millennium development targets rests on the shoulders of the LDC-governments themselves. They must strengthen a range of national policies, by putting people at the center of these policies, improving good governance involving all stakeholders, and in the process taking charge of their own destiny. On the other hand, the international community, the United Nations system and Member States must be prepared to assist in order to achieve our goals.

To create a meaningful dialogue, reciprocal cooperation, and a more just world we all need to walk an extra mile. We need to go beyond rigid positions, to transcend the status quo. Remember, we are doing this for the poorest of the poor - women, men and children living at the margin of existence.

I would like to echo the strong emphasis made in the draft Programme of Action on the importance of involving all stakeholders, nationally and internationally. Development can no longer be viewed as the business of governments alone. It is the collective business of, in the words of the UN Charter, the peoples of the United Nations. Unless we are able to effectively involve civil society, the private sector, the media, lawmakers and academia in the process, we will deprive ourselves of the enormous potential offered by these entities. Your non-governmental partners are also present during this preparatory meeting, if not in this very room. I urge you to bring them in to your midst throughout the process. A broad based dialogue among all the stakeholders will give the outcome a stronger foundation and a broader ownership.

The international community, in particular the industrialized countries, must make stronger efforts to ensure the success of national policies of least developed countries. The fact that this is the first UN Conference hosted by the European Union signals the willingness of development partners to remain collectively engaged in the development of LDCs.

It is particularly noteworthy that the policies and actions contained in the draft Programme of Action are based on the set of universal values enshrined in the Millennium Declaration, namely: solidarity, shared responsibility, freedom, democracy, equality, common concern for world peace and security, and the well being of next generations.

Many of the recommendations in the draft Programme of Action are derived from the outcomes of major UN Conferences and Summits. All of these linkages provide an opportunity to an integrated approach, where the Millennium Declaration is an overarching theme.

Achieving the targets of the Millennium Declaration will make our world safer, more stable and more prosperous. Translating this hope into reality will require, among other things, efficient mechanisms for implementation and follow-up of the Programme of Action at all levels. The United Nations system will have an important part in this. Playing this role will require us to refuse to accept business as usual, and insist on harnessing the strength of the entire system at global, regional and national levels. As you approach this particular task, let me assure you of my full support.

29 January 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Second Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the Special Session on Children**

I am grateful for the opportunity to address this meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session on Children. I wish to welcome everyone, in particular the children and young people whose attendance and participation here is highly appreciated by all of us.

I am inspired by the work already undertaken by many in this room on behalf of children and optimistic about what can and will be done in this new Millennium. Last September, at the Millennium Summit, we re-affirmed a set of universal values, such as freedom, equality, non-violence, and shared responsibility. These universal values include respect for children - for their rights, voices, and lives. In the Millennium Declaration, we agreed that children have the right to live in dignity, free from hunger and poverty, and free from fear of violence, oppression and injustice. According to the Declaration, children everywhere should be able to complete primary schooling and have equal access to all levels of education. Children are entitled to participation, development, and a clean environment, and to have protection from natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies. Now it is our duty to act and implement these goals of the Millennium Declaration.

As President of the General Assembly, I am entrusted to follow-up the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The Special Session on Children is one of the tools in this implementation process and a successful outcome is one step towards meeting our Millennium commitments. The Special Session on Children is an opportunity - but not our only one - to reaffirm our commitment to the rights of children and to develop a wide variety of partnerships. The Millennium follow-up is an over-arching theme, which links different conferences and special sessions together in a meaningful and holistic way.

My personal interest in the Special Session on Children, however, goes back a decade, when I had the privilege to serve as Head of the Finnish delegation to the 1990 World Summit on Children. I can still recall the atmosphere and commitment that filled the discussions during that exciting week. We believed then that we could make a difference in the lives of children. And I think we were right. Over the past decade, we have accomplished a great deal.

Of all the successes of the past ten years, the near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the most significant. Child rights are now recognized as human rights, to be protected by governments as a matter of legal obligation, social responsibility and economic imperative. The role of civil society is crucial to advance the rights of every child to live a healthy life in a climate of peace and security.

But we have unfinished business from the 1990 Summit. Poverty has spanned still another generation. Divides within countries and across nations - educational and digital - have deepened. Political and social unrest cast dark shadows over the lives of millions. HIV is evermore rampant.

Too many children are without access to basic social services. There are numbers of girls and boys working in hazardous occupations, instead of attending school. Children are being exploited, abused and trafficked. Girls and women often suffer especially from conflicts and violence. Young people still fight adult wars and die adult deaths. We must implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and underline the importance of ratifying and implementing the two Optional Protocols adopted last year.

And yet, I share with many in this room optimism that springs from several sources.

I am happy to note that the outcome document drafted for this meeting identifies three overarching goals for children: the best possible early childhood for all children, a good-quality basic education for all children and the opportunities for all children and young people to participate in their communities.

I find hope in the fact that we now know some things with more certainty than ten years ago. Providing children with the best possible start in life is one of the most important steps to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Healthy children learn better, have more energy and skills, and are able to articulate their needs and plan their future constructively. We need to enable the creative energy and curiosity of children to be translated into change by respecting diversity - and by turning away from aggression and frustrations caused by the prospects of a bleak future.

We know a great deal more today about breaking barriers stopping girls going to school, ranging from parents' attitudes, girls' workloads at home, long and unsafe journeys, and lack of sanitary facilities at school, to insensitive curriculum and lack of teachers due to HIV/AIDS. Within the UN system, we have learned how much can be gained from combining the expertise of individual agencies and other partners into joint programmes and policy support. The Girls' Education Initiative is one example. The initiatives and mechanisms of co-ordination have helped mobilize additional resources and secured high visibility and commitment by the international community.

I find my greatest hope in the participation of children and young people in the Special Session. I am also encouraged to see here today so many Personal Representatives of Heads of State, who have an important role and specific tasks in national societies.

With you all, I look forward to an outcome from the Special Session that is concise, innovative, action-oriented and time-bound, translating commitments and resolutions concerning children into decisive actions. I welcome the national level preparations and reports, which will assist us to define national targets, differing from society to society.

Hopefully, a decade from now, when today's girls and boys sit here in our place, they will be able to say that the world was made a safer, healthier, and richer place by our actions. I strongly believe we have the ability, and most importantly, we have the will, as has been demonstrated over the past ten years and throughout this preparatory process.

My best to you as you take on your work.

17 January 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Forum of the Indonesia Council on World Affairs -
"Strengthening the UN system: a recipe for promoting peace,
security and development in light of the Millennium Summit"**

I am honored to address this Forum on the theme of Strengthening the UN system: a recipe for promoting peace, security and development in light of the Millennium Summit. This is a timely and opportune topic, not only for the Organization that I represent, but also for Indonesia, a country that is working towards the establishment of a stronger democracy. I am also honored to address such a distinguished audience, whose composition reflects the growing prestige of the Indonesia Council on World Affairs.

Last September's Millennium Summit gave Member States an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The Summit reaffirmed that the Organization is not meant to serve only Member States, but also the peoples of the world, in particular the most vulnerable. The Summit stressed the inter-linkages between development, peace and security as well as the need to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for everyone. At the Summit Member States also pledged to strengthen the Organization, which is essential if we are to achieve the goals outlined in the Summit Declaration.

We all acknowledge that since the establishment of the United Nations, its achievements have been impressive in many areas of development, peace and security. The mandate given to us by the Summit reflects our global agenda for this coming century and as such is very ambitious. In my mind there is no doubt that the United Nations system needs to be strengthened and reformed in order to enable it to carry out the tasks entrusted to it.

One of the main challenges is to identify and develop the core strengths of the Organization. The UN needs to constantly adapt in order to respond to the new priorities established by its Membership. Furthermore, the UN needs to open up to the outside world. This requires political will and compromises by all parties at a very practical level. Unless Member States acknowledge and agree that to achieve the common good they need to let go some of their own individual priorities, nothing will move.

In my discussions with Member States and in listening to their statements, I sense that there is a renewed recognition and emerging consensus that we need to reinforce our efforts and equip the Organization with appropriate tools to achieve the goals we have set.

During the fall session of the Assembly I was very pleased to see how promptly Member States responded to the challenge. The implementation of the Summit Declaration was launched in December by consensus and with co-operation from all sides. Subsequently the Secretary General, for his part, responded by appointing a panel to advise on the world's development financing needs.

The Assembly rose to the challenge in other important ways to strengthen the UN. Firstly, it was able to agree on new scales of assessments both for the regular budget and for UN peacekeeping. This was an unusually complex and difficult issue that had generated a lot of heated discussion. Despite the complexities, the Assembly, just hours before the start of its holiday recess, reached consensus. In my view, this historic agreement has the potential of greatly improving the spirit of our work, in addition to enabling the payment of a substantial portion of the arrears owed to the UN by the United States.

The Assembly also adopted a package of emergency measures to reinforce the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a step towards strengthening one of the core functions of the Organization. Decisions were also taken to improve the security and safety of UN personnel, to move towards results-based budgeting and on other issues that will contribute to strengthening the UN.

Reform has been underway for the past couple of years under the able leadership of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. But it needs to continue throughout the Organization in order to make the UN stronger and more effective. In fact, strengthening the Organization is not so much a recipe - as described in the title of my address - as it is a prerequisite to achieve all the priorities agreed in the Summit Declaration.

For my part, I have tried to lead and keep this process moving forward. To have concrete results on the reform and revitalization of the UN, it is of utmost importance to have the whole Membership on board. I have urged Member States to engage in discussions, to implement decisions taken and make new initiatives to further the reform.

As President of the Assembly I have started with my own 'backyard', if I may put it that way, the Assembly. I have made an effort to guide its work in a more effective manner.

It is striking how many decisions Member States have already taken over the years, to improve the work of the Assembly. But it is perhaps even more striking to find out how many of these decision have not been implemented. So how to move forwards on this issue? My experience is that it is often the practical and small things that count and ultimately add up to change.

One of these issues might be reviewing the agenda of the Assembly. Despite some successes in the rationalization and streamlining of the agenda, the overall workload has not been reduced. The fact is that the total number of items on the agenda has been increasing over the years. The same goes for the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. I believe that we

should now make a serious attempt to review the agenda of the General Assembly. This is essential if we are to focus our work more on current priorities and not on those of years gone by.

One possible way to do this might be greater use of clustering, biennializing or triennializing the consideration of agenda items. Agenda items of closely related substance could be merged within a single agenda title or could be incorporated as sub-items.

Moreover, the division of labor between the Plenary and the Main Committees has become blurred. To make the Assembly matter on issues of critical importance to Governments, we need to address this issue. Whilst the Plenary should be the place where issues of high importance are debated in the presence of all Member States, it is in fact, often discussing issues of a routine character and, I dare say, often with only a half full audience.

One concern that has been raised is the lack of continuity in the work of successive Assemblies. To provide some continuity, the model of a 'troika', used in other organizations, has been suggested. The 'GA troika' would include the present, previous and incoming Presidents of the General Assembly or representatives of these States, to be involved in major discussions of reform and of planning the work of the General Assembly. Another suggestion that has been made to the same effect is to make more effective use of the General Committee, the bureau of the General Assembly, which is comprised of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the Chairpersons of its Main Committees.

I should also add that the Office of President of the General Assembly should be provided with sufficient human resources. Presently, the UN does not provide the Office with any professional staff. This unfortunately hampers the continuity of managing the issues from one President to the other. I should also mention here, that the experience of the round tables at the Summit has inspired some to suggest that maybe the Assembly's annual general debate could be made more interactive and focus on issues of particular importance each year rather than cover the whole of the global agenda.

To discuss these and other ideas I will be convening an informal 'brainstorming' session of the General Committee after my return to New York. The General Committee could, indeed, be used as a 'business committee' to oversee the smooth and effective functioning of the General Assembly.

Let me now turn briefly to the issue of opening the UN to the outside world. As I pointed out earlier, this is one of the key means to strengthen the Organization. One of my own priorities as President of the Assembly has been to reach out to civil society in order to fully benefit from its expertise and to ensure its involvement in our work. In the resolution on the implementation of the Summit Declaration, a call was made for enhanced partnership and co-operation with civil society, including the private sector. To fulfill this commitment, I believe we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society, including NGOs from the South, to contribute to the work of the UN system. I will continue to keep this issue on my agenda and support all efforts to implement this commitment.

In concluding I would like to reiterate my firm belief: Reform and strengthening of the United Nations is not an option, but a necessity.

23 December 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the conclusion of the first part of the 55th Session**

It has been a very busy three and half months for all of us and I believe we should be quite satisfied with the results achieved. The Assembly has taken action on many important issues. I do not intend to go through them all of them here. I will post a short summary on the work of the Committees and the plenary on my web page for this purpose.

For now, I would like to share some observations on the work done so far and thoughts on how we might want to go about the business next year.

The Millennium Summit was the seminal event of this General Assembly and laid the agenda for our work. The main challenge for the Millennium Assembly was how to implement the Summit Declaration.

In my view, the Declaration is one of the most important documents of recent time. If we are able to achieve its targets, it will have an enormous impact globally.

I am therefore very pleased that with the co-operation and support of all Delegations we managed to establish a follow-up mechanism to the Millennium Summit as an integral part of the on-going work of the United Nations in resolution 55/162.

It is also clear to me that in order to implement these goals the United Nations needs to open up. We need to enhance international co-operation, build bridges between societies and improve global governance. We need to reach out to other international and multilateral actors, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations as well as civil society as a whole. As I have stressed many times, the significance and relevance of the United Nations in the future will depend on our ability to involve our partners and civil society in our work.

In the past few weeks two major items on the Assembly's agenda have dominated our discussions: what will the Assembly decide concerning the implementation of the Brahimi report and will it agree to a new scale of assessments.

As far as the Brahimi report is concerned, the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a high-level panel and the report presented by this panel was welcome and timely. The report is a valuable contribution to the efforts to strengthen one of the UN's core functions - the maintenance of international peace and security.

As the President of the General Assembly I encouraged the Assembly to consider this extensive report in a speedy manner and together with Member States we managed to reach agreement in the very short time of one month. Given the complexity of this issue and the time pressure, I think we can be quite satisfied with the results. Much-needed additional resources will be made available to the Secretariat. However, work will have to continue in the New Year and I trust that the political will is there to complete the effort.

During the past couple of weeks we had extremely difficult and complex negotiations on the scale of assessments. I made several appeals myself to Delegations to come up with a substantive negotiated agreement - by consensus - on the two scales of assessments. That a compromise was finally reached shows that Delegations put the interests of the Organization above everything else and understood the seriousness of the consequences to the Organization of a failure to reach consensus on this critical issue. I commend the Delegations for the outcome reached today.

Throughout this session an important concern of mine has been to find ways to improve the functioning of the General Assembly itself. I have tried to work in an open and transparent way with my colleagues and to foster a collaborative spirit. I have instituted some changes such as amending the rules to establish the dates for the opening of the Assembly's session each year. I am looking at ways to streamline the Assembly's huge agenda and I will be working on this and other proposals next year.

In order to guide this process and to give it some focus I intend to convene an informal 'brainstorming' session of the General Committee sometime in February. I will also prepare a non-paper in connection with the above-mentioned brainstorming session. I believe that several small steps can actually have a big impact together.

Looking ahead to next year, we will have a full calendar of meetings and conferences. For my part, I will keep the momentum going through the special sessions of the General Assembly on human settlements and HIV/AIDS and the other activities of the General Assembly. Concerning the special session on HIV/AIDS, my office and I, with the help of two able facilitators, will have a central role in the preparatory process. I will also chair two working groups that will start meeting next year: on Security Council reform and concerning Africa's special needs.

One observation that I have made during my tenure - having come to the UN from the outside - has to do with the resources of the Organization. The United Nations is clearly underfunded and in desperate need of more adequate resources. Years of zero-nominal growth have taken their toll. It is a policy that has clearly come to the end of its usefulness.

All in all, we have all worked hard and I am sure you are looking forward to a well-deserved break. Before we take that break, let me express a word of thanks. First of all I should like to thank all Ambassadors and delegates for their co-operation. Special thanks go to the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, as well as to the Chairpersons and bureaus of the Main Committees and working groups, not least to Ambassador Gert Rosenthal who chaired a historic

session of the Fifth Committee, for their valuable co-operation and leadership in bringing our work to conclusion. You have shown that the Millennium Summit has indeed created a Momentum and a new spirit of political will that will help us achieve the goals set in the Declaration. I trust that this kind of consensus building and teamwork will help us resolve the challenges ahead.

I should also like to extend my thanks to the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan and to the Secretariat as a whole. In particular, I wish to thank the hard-working staff of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services under the able leadership of Under-Secretary-General Yongjian Jin. Special thanks go to the teams of Mr. Vadim Perfiliev and Mr. Özdinch Mustafa, as well as to our interpreters, conference room officers and documentation officers. Without them, our meetings would not have been possible. My team and I are deeply grateful to all of them.

Finally, I wish to thank the media, which has followed our agenda this session. Through them, I hope, we have been able to convey a more open and more easily understandable picture of the work of the General Assembly to the general public.

I would like to wish you a very happy holiday and I look forward to working with you in the New Year.

12 December 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for
the month of December**

The meeting was attended by the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for the month of December: Madagascar (African States), Mongolia (Asian States), Ukraine (Eastern European States), Chile (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Andorra (Western European and other States).

The President stressed that although some important issues are still pending the 55th session of the General Assembly has been successful and several substantive results have been achieved.

The President reminded that he has taken up the question of the reform of the Assembly and its working methods in many occasions and statements, including at the Forum of Small States on November 15, 2000. He encouraged to visit his web site where all statements can be found.

He repeated his invitation to the Member States to discuss the issue on how to improve the Assembly working methods, focusing on the implementation of already existing General Assembly resolutions, such as resolutions 51/241 and 48/264.

The President told that he intends to convene an informal 'brainstorming' session of the General Committee to discuss how to improve the working methods of the General Assembly sometime in February 2001. The President will take it upon himself to prepare a non-paper (food for thought) sometime in the year 2001, in connection with the above mentioned brainstorming session of the General Committee. The President welcomes suggestions and ideas already beforehand, in order to have an idea where the priorities of the Member States lie on this issue.

The President intends to nominate a facilitator to assist him in the process and the issue will be discussed with the whole membership, most probably in the informals of the plenary.

11 December 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the opening of the fourth Session of the Conference of Parties
to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

It is an honour to participate in the opening of the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. In my capacity as President of the 55th session of the General Assembly, I should like to reiterate the continued commitment and support of the Assembly to this Convention and to this session.

I wish to express my appreciation also to the Government of Germany, the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the City of Bonn for the warm welcome that has been extended to me. I am convinced that the beautiful banks of the Rhine River and the generous support by the people of this city will contribute towards successful discussions in this Fourth Conference of the Parties of the Desertification Convention.

This Convention has truly become one of the important global legal instruments. Already 171 states have ratified it. As Parties to the Convention, I know you will do your utmost to achieve concrete progress in its implementation. This Convention is important, because it focuses on areas where the balance between the needs of human beings and ecosystems is most delicate and most difficult to achieve, and where the very existence of people is threatened. Dry and semi-dry ecosystems often sustain the poorest of the poor people.

In the Millennium Summit last September, the heads of State and Governments resolved to give priority to eradicate poverty that affects the lives of more than 1.2 billion people. Your work here, in this Fourth Session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification touches the very heart of this. Translated into local level, your work serves as a conduit to concrete actions that enable the poor to live within the limits of the carrying capacity of fragile ecosystems. Indeed, the only way to address poverty is through creating sustainable livelihoods and tackling the root causes of poverty - the unequal distribution of productive assets, access to resources, land-ownership and tenure.

The Millennium Summit offered new stewardship for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It reiterated the validity and importance of the goals of the Convention to Combat Desertification. The Summit gave strong emphasis to the special needs of Africa where poverty and its consequences are most pronounced. In tandem with the Millennium Summit, the Convention also addresses the situation in Africa, where land degradation hits the poorest people most seriously.

Land degradation and loss of soil fertility are great environmental threats - they are very difficult to reverse once they have taken place. Unless effective preventive action is taken, the new millennium faces a true problem of global food insecurity, coupled with an increasing number of refugees, internally displaced people, instability and conflicts.

Co-operation and partnership are keys to practical and wise solutions towards sustainable development. I am encouraged that this Convention is seeking such strategic partnerships that will support its efficient implementation. I am assured that the United Nations family and our other partners stand ready to co-operate. I welcome the decision of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme to co-operate with the Convention and the fact that UNDP is mainstreaming action against desertification at the national and regional level. I find this decision important. It supports national, sub-regional and regional efforts to alleviate the impact of drought and desertification. In this context, we need to acknowledge the strong commitment by the affected countries in implementing the Convention - we need to support these efforts internationally.

I am also pleased that the other United Nations Conventions, born from the Rio process, are now actively seeking synergies in the area of sustainable management of arid lands within the overall context of global benefits. The recent review of cooperation between the Global Environment Facility and the Rio Conventions was also positive.

These few examples reiterate the fact that this Convention really is about partnerships. It is through partnerships that we will be able to empower the poor to help themselves. I was encouraged to learn that more than thirty National Action Programmes have already been prepared by the affected countries. These programmes involve a variety of partners: the private sector, local communities, women's groups and non-governmental organisations. National Focal Points of the Ministries of Environment or Agriculture have been the driving forces in preparing these programmes. In order for these programmes to be turned into action, and for them to become an integral part of the development plans of the countries concerned, co-operation between different ministries is essential. Only then can full implementation of National Action Programmes be achieved.

We have some homework to do at the international level. The commitment of the developing countries to fulfil their obligations under the Convention should not only be recognized and praised. But their example should galvanize the interest of the international community. Therefore, the National Action Programmes should find their way onto the meeting agendas of the UN, the Bretton Woods Institutions, OECD/DAC and the European Union as well as those of the bilateral donors. The fourth Conference of Parties constitutes an excellent opportunity to show and reiterate our support to those countries and their peoples which are affected by desertification and drought.

I understand that this session has a very demanding agenda before it. In a surprisingly short period of time the Parties have undertaken their obligations and provided National Reports on the implementation of the Convention. The work is impressive: 115 reports from developing

countries together with the 60 reports of donor countries and international organisations. I hope that your rich discussion of these reports will draw valuable lessons for further action.

I wish you every success in your deliberations and decisions.

7 December 2000

**Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly
55th session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**55th session of the General Assembly
Item 182: Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit
meeting with the Coordinators of the upcoming events**

In order to establish how best to make use of upcoming events within the United Nations system in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit the office of the Assembly President arranged the third meeting with the coordinators of these events on December 7, 2000. The representatives of the respective secretariat departments/units were also invited.

At the beginning a short summary of the Summit follow-up process was made with particular attention to the aspect of using the upcoming events in the process of implementing the outcome of the Millennium Summit. These meetings with the coordinators are part of the President's efforts to follow-up the implementation of the Summit Declaration. Furthermore attention was drawn to the aspects of including coordinated follow-up procedures already at this stage to the processes in particular through enhanced co-ordination and exchange of information within the secretariat. This would make the processes coherent, as is called for in the draft resolution L.56 and to make the different processes complementary.

The meeting focused on two specific issues: civil society's involvement and reporting and feed back from the events and conferences to the General Assembly.

Civil society

Without going into substance participants were invited to share information on the process, including preparations of any non-papers and time tables as well as which meetings would discuss this issue.

Participants were requested to send any information, including possible non-papers, to General Assembly secretariat in order to have a focal point for information on the civil society involvement. In this way information will be available to all coordinators from the office of Mr. Perfiliev.

Istanbul + 5 (Habitat):

Indicated that the resolutions (L.53 and L.54) have been adopted and the process is under way.

Small Arms Conference:

Preparatory committee has discussed the issues. The Chairperson will circulate a non-paper shortly on the modalities of participation.

Financing for development:

Process is on its way, hearings will continue.

Children Summit:

Participation and accreditation have been decided already (A/55/43/Part 1), so called 'no objection basis', modalities are still being planned.

HIV/AIDS Special Session:

The non-paper is coming out during the on the week starting 11 December.

LDC-III and Racism conferences:

Promised to inform the GA secretariat on their respective processes on this issue.

Reporting back to the General Assembly

In the draft resolution different events and conferences are requested to report to the Assembly on how they will contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The importance to have continuity in the process was stressed so that the reporting will take place during preparations but also after the events as part of follow up.

Participants were invited to state any ideas or thoughts on how the reporting back to the Assembly could be done in practice. It was suggested that a separate section on the Summit follow-up be included in the reports of these events and conferences.

Participants suggested that the President would participate, if possible, in all upcoming events and conferences in order to underline the role these events play in the implementation process. A calendar of the up coming events and conferences is enclosed, the Rio+10 process is added to the list (annex).

Annex

**Millennium Summit Follow-up
Dates for Up-Coming Events/Conferences and their Preparatory Processes**

January

United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;

- 2nd Prepcom; New York (8-19)

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
· Informal Consultations; Geneva (15-16)

January-February

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
· Open-ended informal/informal consultations of the Plenary; New York (17 January-Mid February)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Children;
· Second Substantive Session; New York (Jan. 29- Feb. 2)

February

Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC-III);
· 2nd Prepcom; New York (5-9)

High Level International Intergovernmental Consideration of Financing for Development;
· 2nd Prepcom; New York (12-23)

Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul +5);
· 2nd Prepcom; Nairobi (19-23)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
· Plenary of the General Assembly; New York
· Circulation of the Report of the SG and the Issues Paper (20)

February-March

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
· Open-ended informal consultations of the Plenary; New York (Feb. 26-Mar. 2)
· Circulation of the first draft outline of the Declaration of Commitment (Mar. 13)

March

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
· Open-Ended Inter-sessional Working Group;
Geneva (6-9)

United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;

- 3rd Prepcom; New York (19-30)

March-April

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;

- Open-ended informal/informal consultations of the Plenary; New York

April

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;

- Open-ended informal consultations of the Plenary; New York (23-27)

Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC-III);

- 3rd Prepcom; New York (2-6)

April-May

High Level International Intergovernmental Consideration of Financing for Development;

- 3rd Prepcom; New York (Apr. 30-May 11)

Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, (LDC III);

- Brussels (14-20)

May

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;

- Draft decision on the recommendation by the GA to the special session on the Declaration of Commitment
- Plenary of the General Assembly, New York

Ten-Year Review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (RIO+10);

- 1st Prepcom

May-June

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;

- 2nd Prepcom; Geneva (May 21- June 1)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Children;
· 3rd Substantive Session, New York (11-15)

June

Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul +5);
· New York (6-8)

Special Session of the General Assembly on Review of the Problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in All Its Aspects;
· New York (25-27)

July

UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;
· New York (9-20)

August-September

World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
· Durban, South Africa (Aug. 31- Sep. 7)

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September

Special Session of the General Assembly on Children
· New York (19-21)

First Quarter of year 2002

High Level International Intergovernmental Consideration of Financing for Development

January-April

World Summit on Sustainable Development (RIO+10);
· Prepcoms to be decided

May

World Summit on Sustainable Development (RIO+10);
· Ministerial Prepcom, Jakarta, Indonesia

June-September

World Summit on Sustainable Development (RIO+10);
· Johannesburg, South Africa

United Nations
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 182:

A/55/L.56

Draft resolution submitted by the President of the General Assembly

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000,

Having considered the Millennium Declaration,

Expressing satisfaction that, for the first time in history, so many heads of State and Government gathered at a Summit in New York and reached a successful conclusion and adopted the Millennium Declaration,

Stressing the need for maintaining the political will and momentum of the Millennium Summit at the national, regional and international levels in order to translate commitments into concrete action,

Recognizing the necessity to create a framework for the implementation of the Declaration,

Stressing the importance of a comprehensive and balanced approach in implementation and follow-up,

1. *Calls for* an integrated, coordinated, comprehensive and balanced approach in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration at the national, regional and international levels;
2. *Recognizes* that Governments bear the main responsibility, individually and collectively, for action and implementation of the Declaration;
3. *Calls upon* the entire United Nations system to assist Member States in every way possible in the implementation of the Declaration;
4. *Decides* to use existing structures and mechanisms and upcoming events and special sessions of the General Assembly as well as related conferences and events to the maximum extent possible in the implementation of the Declaration and requests the President of the General Assembly to follow up these processes;

5. *Requests* the Main Committees of the General Assembly to ensure that the outcome of the Summit is taken into account in their work;
6. *Calls upon* all relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to be involved in the follow-up to the Summit, and invites specialized agencies and related organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen and adjust their activities, programmes and medium-term strategies, as appropriate, to take into account the follow-up to the Summit;
7. *Invites* the regional commissions, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and regional development banks, to review progress made towards implementing the Declaration;
8. *Requests* the United Nations system to take action to meet the special needs of Africa and to strengthen the broad range of its engagement in Africa, with a view to intensifying support for poverty eradication and sustainable development, for combating diseases and pandemics and for the process of conflict prevention and the consolidation of democracy;
9. *Recognizes* that the implementation of the Declaration will require resources and adequate financing at the national, regional and international levels and that additional financial resources are needed, in particular in Africa and the least developed countries;
10. *Requests* the appropriate bodies to consider urgently how the implementation of the Declaration should relate to the biennial budget process and the medium-term plan;
11. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure system-wide coordination to assist with the implementation and invites him to identify, within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, innovative ways of enhancing cooperation and coherence throughout the United Nations system;
12. *Invites* the Bretton Woods institutions to be actively involved in the implementation of and follow-up to the Summit and to enhance their cooperation with other parts of the United Nations system for a coherent implementation of the Declaration;
13. *Also invites* the World Trade Organization to contribute to the implementation of the Declaration;
14. *Call for* enhanced partnership and cooperation with national parliaments as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to ensure their contribution to the implementation of the Declaration;
15. *Requests* the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization to keep the General Assembly informed on how they contribute to the implementation of the Declaration;

16. *Also requests* that the events and conferences referred to in paragraph 4 above keep the General Assembly informed about how they contribute to the implementation of the Declaration;

17. *Reiterates* the call to assess, on a regular basis, progress towards implementing the Declaration;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in this context, to prepare a long-term "road map" towards the implementation of the Declaration within the United Nations system and to submit it to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session;

19. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to prepare a periodic report every five years and annual reports to review progress towards implementing the Declaration, taking into account the following:

- (a) The broad array of specific goals and commitments enunciated in the Declaration should be reflected, while allowing each annual report to look in greater depth at one or two areas covered in the Declaration;
- (b) There should be a focus, in this respect, on the results and benchmarks achieved, the "best practices" for achieving them should be identified, the major gaps in implementation should be defined and strategies for reducing the number of gaps and eliminating them should be suggested, including through strengthening United Nations capacity for gathering and analysing information and assisting the functional commissions in developing indicators for development;
- (c) Relationships across issues and sectors should be explored and highlighted, in particular with regard to cross-cutting themes on development and peace and security;
- (d) Reports should draw on the work of the entire United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization;
- (e) The reporting system should be appraised with a view to strengthening its coherence and integration;

20. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-sixth session the item entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit".

22 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees**

I would like to begin by thanking you all for attending this luncheon. It is our last lunch in this framework and I for my part would like to express my appreciation and thanks for the tireless work you all have done during this session.

I would also like to thank you for the co-operation that you have extended to my office and me so far. It has been crucial for us in order to be able to follow the work of the committees.

As I have said before, I have sensed a kind of team spirit throughout the session and I am very grateful for that.

Let me now run briefly through some of the current issues on my working programme:

1. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT

As you are aware the follow-up process is on its way. Yesterday we had another good round of discussions based on my elements paper.

I am now preparing a draft resolution to be circulated to the membership in the near future.

I should also like to thank you and through you the Committees for acting upon my request reflect the Millennium Declaration in the work of the Committees.

2. BRAHIMI REPORT

As I have mentioned many times, the Summit called for expeditious consideration of the report's recommendations.

The consideration has been complex and difficult. But it is my understanding that the political will and momentum is there and that progress to reach concrete results has been made.

- I would appreciate if the Vice-Chairperson of the 4th Committee would brief us on this issue.
- I would also like to invite the Chairs of the 5th Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) to brief us on the consideration of the Brahimi report and the implementation report on their side, including the timetable.

3. REFORM OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Last time we briefly discussed the reform of the GA. I would like to inform that I have consulted Member States and there is an eagerness to take further steps.

- I have urged member states to discuss this issue and come up with ideas and suggestions.
- I should also like to note that a statement I made at the Forum of Small States (Nov. 15) on this issue is available on my web site.

4. OUTREACH

As part of my outreach efforts I participated in the General Assembly of CONGO (the coalition of non-governmental organizations in liaison with the United Nations). The Assembly was held in Vienna, where I also met with the Director General of United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and representatives of the host government, Austria.

I also visited Washington, D.C. for meetings at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). I have understood that I was the first GA President ever to visit these institutions in their headquarters. Both visits were positive. In IMF I could, in particular, advance the cause of the Financing for Development process, and hopefully improve the prospects of IMF's full participation in it. I also had the opportunity of introducing the Millennium Summit follow-up process to the management of both institutions. I may inform you that I will participate in the opening of the Fourth Session of the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought, which will be held in Bonn, starting the 11th of December.

5. RIO+10

Of issues which have taken place here in New York, may I mention that we still have the Rio + 10 host issue unsolved. I have therefore made a mediating proposal to Indonesia and South Africa and also liaised with the regional groups of Africa and Asia, as it is these groups, which ultimately must also consider my proposal. I am optimistic and hope to solve this issue before the end of the month.

6. HIV/AIDS SPECIAL SESSION

Preparations of a non-paper on organizational matters and on the form of non-governmental organization (NGO) participation are going on. The first informal consultations of the plenary are foreseen for 15 December 2000 so as to allow delegations the Christmas break to study the proposals. I intend to announce the two co-facilitators no later than the first week of December. We will also distribute the non-paper on organizational matters and on NGO participation at that time.

7. UNITED NATIONS INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON THE OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA (UNICPOLOS)

On the Oceans and the Law of the Sea Informal Process, my office has conducted consultations on the selection of the two co-chairs. I expect to be able to announce the results of these consultations soon.

Now, I'd like to run through the Main Committees one by one. May I once again thank all Chairs for their good work.

1st COMMITTEE

1st Committee has successfully finished its work and we have taken action on the reports of the Committee in the Plenary last Monday.

If there are some points you might want to raise or information you might want to share or lessons learnt at this stage, I invite you to do so.

2nd COMMITTEE

I understand there are delays, which might prevent the Committee from completing its work by December 1st.

I am raising this issue, because there are Member States that have asked me to intervene to expedite matters.

I would invite the Chair of the Committee to brief us on the situation, and give an estimate on the completion of the Committee's work.

This being said, I do understand that there are many difficult issues on the table, not alone Rio+10, but also Financing for Development.

On the latter issue, I have understood that the dates of the final event are being changed to the first quarter of 2002. Still, yesterday the discussions on the resolution were going on.

3rd COMMITTEE

In my count, there were a total of 67 resolutions, 14 of them without a vote. This is a slight decrease as compared with last year.

I would like to welcome an analysis on this session of the Committee from the chair.

4th COMMITTEE

The Committee has practically taken finished its work, except for the consideration of the report it is expecting from the Special Committee on Peacekeeping. I have already invited the Vice Chairperson to brief us on this.

5th COMMITTEE

I have just received a letter from the Committee requesting an extension of its work until 20 December. While I am fully aware of the complexities of the Fifth Committee's work, it might be better to try to finish somewhat earlier, for example by 15 December. This would still allow for some "wiggle room" should things become deadlocked.

I am also somewhat concerned about the lack of results so far in the Committee's work, be it on small or on big issues. I understand the Committee has met for long hours in an informal setting on issues such as procurement reform and pattern of conferences, and that the debate has repeated itself.

I would appreciate the Chairman's appraisal as to when Resolutions on pending issues are expected.

6TH COMMITTEE

I understand that the 6th Committee will be probably finishing its work today, but I would like to invite the chair to brief us on this.

21 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for
the month of November**

The meeting was attended by the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for the month of November: Mauritania (African States), Kyrgyzstan (Asian States), Slovenia (Eastern European States), Brazil (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Germany (Western European and other States).

1. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP

The President noted that the follow-up process for the Millennium Summit is on its way and this afternoon there will be another round of consultations on the basis of his elements paper (A/55/CRP.1).

He also informed the Chairpersons that his office had a meeting on November 10 with coordinators of next year's high-level meetings in order to discuss how best to use these events in the implementation of the Millennium Summit outcome. The meeting proved to be very useful, as the need for co-ordination is evident. It was also noted that a short note on this meeting is posted on President's website.

2. BRAHIMI REPORT

The President reminded that the Millennium Summit called for expeditious consideration of the Report's recommendations. He added that although the consideration has been fairly complex and difficult, it is his understanding that the political will and momentum is there and should be used to reach concrete results.

The President noted that the report is a valuable contribution to the efforts of strengthening the United Nations in one of its core functions; that is, in the maintenance of international peace and security. He added that it is important to maintain the discussion at a high political level and bring the matter back to the General Assembly for decisions.

3. REFORM OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Many decisions have been taken over the years to improve the work of the General Assembly. The President noted that as the President of the General Assembly, that obviously is of great

importance to him. He added that the real challenge is how to implement these decisions so as to make the General Assembly more focused in its work.

The President noted that he has already started with small practical steps, such as punctuality and the recent decision on the starting date of the General Assembly session. He added that he has consulted Member States and there is an eagerness to take further steps. The President has urged Member States to discuss this issue and come up with ideas and suggestions. He noted that he is willing to provide leadership, but that he will need the initiative and support of Member States. It was also noted that a statement made by the President at the Forum of Small States on 15 November on this issue is available on his website.

4. APPOINTMENTS

4.1 Open-Ended Working Group on Africa and Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council reform.

The President told that he is still consulting Member States on the appointment of the two vice-chairmen to these open-ended working groups. His intention is to make the formal announcements no later than early December.

4.2 Oceans and the Law of the Sea; Informal Consultative Process (agenda item 34.a.)

Extensive consultations have been carried out, and will continue until the end of this month with regard to the two co-chairs of the Informal Consultative Process on the Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS).

So far, there has been wide support for the two current chairs to continue; however, some reservations have been expressed about one of them. Announcement on the results of these consultations is expected not later than 1st week of December.

4.3. Consultative Committee on United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (agenda item 17.i.)

There is still one regional group (Asia), which has not nominated its candidate.

The others are: Africa: Namibia, Eastern Europe: Croatia, GRULAC: Jamaica (nomination received after last meeting with regional chairs), WEOG: The Netherlands.

It was noted that the missing nomination should be done expeditiously so that this item can be scheduled for consideration.

5. HIV/AIDS SPECIAL SESSION (Agenda item 179)

Regarding the special session it was noted that a "Non-paper road-map" on the tentative schedule of the preparatory process was distributed to all delegations on 9 November 2000. The first internal planning meeting of all concerned secretariats (UNAIDS and its co-sponsoring organizations, General Assembly Presidency and Secretariat) was held on Monday, 20 November 2000.

Consultations on the selection of the two co-facilitators have been carried out; an announcement on that issue is expected no later than the first week of December. Otherwise work progresses according to the "road-map".

It was further noted that the first general briefing on the HIV/AIDS special session by the President is expected on 15 December 2000 (Friday), from 11.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.; non-papers on organizational matters and on the format of Non-Governmental Organizations participation will be distributed to delegations; informal discussions on these non-papers are expected to start in mid-January 2001.

6. OUTREACH

The President stressed that as indicated in his acceptance speech, one of the goals of this Presidency of the General Assembly is to reach out to other stakeholders of development.

6.1. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)

He noted that he participated as the first General Assembly President in the General Assembly of CONGO (Coalition of NGOs with accreditation to the United Nations), which was held in Vienna on 6 November 2000.

6.2. Bretton Woods Institutions

Last week (14 November 2000), the President visited Washington D.C. This was the first time that the General Assembly President has visited the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The visit must be seen as part of outreach and partnership building. In development, and in particular development financing, the Bretton Woods Institutions are essential partners. Now, the United Nations should ponder how to recognize this partnership in a more visible way.

In the World Bank, the President met briefly with the Board of Directors, and the Millennium Summit was discussed. He noted that there was good interest among the Board members in the United Nations issues.

In the World Bank, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was much in focus. It may be mentioned that one of the two Managing Directors of the World Bank will participate on 13 December 2000 in an informal panel dialogue of the General Assembly Plenary meeting on

"ICT in Development". The President will chair the panel, which is organized in cooperation with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Secretariat and the President of ECOSOC.

In International Monetary Fund (IMF), its participation in the Financing for Development process was the particular focus. The President told that he had held discussions with Mr. Köhler and senior members of his management. The visit was welcomed by IMF and there are hopes for more active participation of IMF to the Financing For Development in the future.

6.3. Conventions

The President also noted that he will open the 4th Conference of the Parties of the Desertification convention in Bonn on 11 December 2000.

7. RIO+10

The issue of the Rio+10 Summit's host (venue) has not yet been solved. The President told that he has consulted various parties and urged the regional groups concerned to find a solution.

Further consultations with regional groups (chairs) and the concerned parties will be carried out soon, to find a suitable solution. It would still be preferable if the G-77, in particular the African and Asian groups could find a solution. The President added that he has also been in contact with the G-77 Chairman on this.

For the sake of the preparatory process, the venue needs to be decided upon during this session of the General Assembly.

15 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Forum of Small States (FOSS) The Role of the General
Assembly President In reforming and revitalizing the United Nations**

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Forum of Small States today. Coming from a relatively small state myself I can well understand the rationale for this Forum in the United Nations context. It is also fitting that I should discuss the revitalization and reform of the UN with this group of countries, given that it is many times the smaller delegations that bear the larger burden if things do not function effectively.

Throughout my Presidency I have emphasized that the Millennium Summit provided a momentum for the strengthening of the United Nations. It generated a high measure of collective political will in support of the central role of the United Nations to tackle the new challenges of the 21st Century. The Millennium Declaration constitutes an authoritative mandate for our work and for my Presidency. The Declaration reaffirmed the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations. Furthermore, at the Summit the Member States resolved to enable the General Assembly to play this role effectively. It is in this context that I would like to share with you some thoughts on how I see the role of the President in revitalizing and reforming the United Nations with particular attention to the work of the General Assembly.

In my acceptance speech I stressed that in order to add value and make a difference, the General Assembly must address, in a focused, meaningful and timely manner, the challenges of rapid change and globalisation. In doing so, it must respond to the current priorities of its Member States. This requires courage, by the Member States, to look back at the original legislative intent of the General Assembly. But it will require more than courage to decide on how this could be best reflected in the practical work of the Organisation today. This will need political will and compromises by all parties. Unless Member States accept that to achieve the so-called common good they need to let go some of their own individual priorities, nothing will move.

In my discussions with Member States and in listening to the statements made so far, I sense that there is a renewed acknowledgement that we need to reinforce our efforts and equip the Organisation with appropriate tools to achieve the goals we have set.

I have from my part tried to give some impetus to this process in my earlier statements. On my web page I have posted a lay out on 'progress so far in the reform of the work of the General Assembly'.

When one goes through the work done so far, it is striking how many decisions have been already taken by the General Assembly to improve the work of the Assembly and that of its main Committees. The real challenge for the Member States is in implementing these decisions.

My office and I have discussed with several delegations the effectiveness of the work of the GA on many occasions. During these discussions some new ideas have been expressed on how the implementation of these decisions could start.

Many have stressed that despite some successes in the rationalization and streamlining of the agenda, the General Assembly has not achieved a reduction of its overall workload. The fact remains that the total number of items on the agenda increased from 164 at the forty-ninth session to 183 at the present session. Furthermore, the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly has increased, from 328 at the forty-ninth session to 341 at the fifty-fourth session.

I am pleased to note that work has already been undertaken by the Main Committees to review their respective agendas, and this should continue. Some have suggested that we should focus now on the review of the agenda of the General Assembly. If the Assembly and the Main Committees are to take further steps to rationalize and streamline their agenda, it has been suggested by many that greater use of clustering, biennialization or triennialization of agenda items should be made. Agenda items of closely related substance could be merged within a single agenda title or be incorporated as sub-items. Items that cover related matters or issues could be considered in clusters.

Furthermore, it has been proposed that to rationalize the agenda we could try to apply a system similar to that of the Security Council, that is 'active and non-active' agenda items. The practice has shown in the Security Council that some items can, indeed, be removed from the agenda through this system (refer S/1996/603* and S/1996/704, latest note A/55/366).

Many have pointed out that the division of labour between the Plenary and the Main Committees has been blurred. Whilst the Plenary should be the place where issues of high importance are debated in the presence of all Member States, it is in fact often discussing issues of a routine character, often with only a half full audience. Surely, this is not what was foreseen as the role of the Plenary.

One of the important issues is the continuity of the work of the General Assembly. Some delegations have suggested a form of 'GA troika' with the present, previous and next Presidents of the General Assembly, or at least representatives of those States from which the President came/comes/would come, to be involved in major issues of reform and of planning the work of the General Assembly. Another suggestion that has been made to the same effect is to arrange joint meetings of successive General Committees.

How to move ahead? It has been suggested that the General Committee could be used as a 'business committee' to oversee the smooth and effective functioning of the General Assembly. This of course is an idea that the Member States need to consider and discuss. I intend to call an

informal 'brain storming' session of the General Committee to discuss this idea with the Committee members.

The experience of the round tables at the Summit has inspired some to suggest that maybe we should make the annual general debate more interactive and focus on issues of particular importance each year rather than cover the whole of the global agenda.

My own experience in life is that it is often the practical and small things which count and ultimately add up to a change in any process. One such small step that I have introduced is to always start the plenary meetings of the Assembly on time. Another small step that I have introduced was the amendment to the Rules of Procedure to allow for certainty as far as the closing and opening dates of the main sessions of the General Assembly are concerned.

So now you might ask, what is the role of the President in this process? As I have said, I see the role of the President, as one of a facilitator, conciliator and consensus-builder. He must lead, but without the Membership on board, that leadership will fail. In the reform and revitalization of the General Assembly this is of utmost importance. It is for this very reason that I have 'thrown the ball' to you as the Member States and I have urged you to engage in discussions to implement decisions taken and make new initiatives to further the reform.

I will in turn be very happy to support and implement initiatives emerging from discussions amongst Member States. It is my firm belief that reform of the United Nations is not an option, but a necessity.

15 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the discussion of the General Assembly on the 2001 special session
of the General Assembly on follow-up to the World Summit for
Children**

It is my pleasure to address this Plenary on agenda item of high importance for the General Assembly: its special session on follow-up to the World Summit of Children.

This special session is of personal interest to me. In September 1990, I had the honor of representing my country at the World Summit for Children. On that occasion, an unprecedented dialogue among 71 world leaders led to a universal appeal to ensure a better future for every child. I had the opportunity of being directly involved in helping galvanise political will at the highest level through an action-oriented agenda devoted to the most fragile component of the social fabric: our children.

Ten years after that unique experience, I share with many the feeling that significant progress has been achieved - and yet many challenges remain in front of us.

As a result of the World Declaration and Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, attention to children has indeed increased. Virtually every country has now ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The needs and rights of children have also been the subject of major United Nations events held during the 1990s, such as the international conferences on population, on women, on social development and on the human settlements.

However, the suffering of millions of children around the world shows that the goals and commitments of the World Summit for Children remain far from fulfilled. More effective policies and programmes in more countries are urgently required to keep the promise made to children in September 1990.

At the beginning of the new Millennium, we are confident that by focusing on our children as the most vulnerable and cherished part of our societies, we can agree on effective actions to ensure their survival, protection, full development and participation.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders renewed the global commitment to children by addressing such specific issues as eradicating poverty, reducing child and maternal mortality, ensuring assistance and protection in cases of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies, as well as the imperative to give all children, including girls, a basic education of good quality.

This Plenary session is an important step towards this global commitment. In considering the process leading to the special session in September 2001, delegations might wish to bear in mind the spirit which prevailed during the Summit in 1990. As world leaders then declared: "There can be no task nobler than giving every child a better future."

14 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at a reception in honor of his visit to Washington DC**

I am honored to be here tonight. I should like to thank Ambassador Laajava of Finland and the United Nations Information Center in Washington for organizing this event.

I have had an interesting day in Washington. I met with representatives of the news media and those of the World Bank and IMF. I have been told that I am the first President of the General Assembly to visit the Bretton Woods Institutions. I believe that the United Nations must reach out to other relevant organizations and society as a whole. My trip to Washington is one step towards this end.

As for the current General Assembly, I may just note that the unprecedented number of world leaders in the Millennium Summit underscores the relevance the United Nations today. The Millennium Declaration as such contains few new elements; it reiterates largely the development agenda of the 1990s. What is new, is the strong expression of political will to support this agenda. The Declaration places the development and political goals into an integrated framework, which is also the perspective that we have taken in the follow-up process, namely utilizing existing mechanisms and scheduled events as the major implementation channels.

I shall use the Millennium spirit, kindled by the Summit, to further strengthen the United Nations and its core functions, including the General Assembly. In this work I want to place the political and development agendas on an equal footing: The United Nations is an important political forum, yet also a strong voice for development. Peace and poverty eradication are overriding goals.

The Brahimi report on peacekeeping operations is one important new initiative. The implementation of the recommendations is now being discussed. Recently, the General Assembly also decided to organize a special session on HIV/AIDS next year in June. My office will be directly responsible for the preparatory process of this session. Other topics that are of particular interest to me, include better utilization of information and communications technologies in development. I also believe that one of the keys to development is girls' education. The Millennium Declaration obliges us to ensure universal access to primary school by 2015.

The agenda of the General Assembly is crowded and new items emerge every year. One may take this increasing trend as an indication of increasing relevance. However, we need to rationalize and use the committees and other subsidiary bodies more efficiently.

I have been told that punctuality has become my "trade-mark". Our reason is that if every meeting starts only 10 minutes late some \$800,000 is wasted on annual conference services. So starting on time is one simple way of a more efficient use of scarce resources of the United Nations.

Thank you again for coming to meet me tonight and please enjoy the remainder of the evening.

10 November 2000

**Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly
55th session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**55th session of the General Assembly
Item 182: Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit
meeting with the Coordinators of the upcoming events**

In order to establish how best to make use of upcoming events within the United Nations system in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit the office of the GA President arranged a meeting with the coordinators of these events on 10 November 2000. The representatives of the respective secretariat departments/units were also invited.

At the beginning of the meeting a short summary of the Summit follow-up process was made with particular attention to the aspect of using the upcoming events in the process of implementing the outcome of the Millennium Summit.

Attention was drawn in particular to the paragraphs 10,11,12 and 22 in the elements paper (A/55/CRP.1) prepared by the President of the GA.

Short presentations on the preparations of different upcoming events were given in a form of a tour the table by co-ordinators and representatives of the Secretariat.

Participants expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to share information concerning the preparations for different events. Many emphasized the importance of co-ordination already prior to the events in order to avoid duplication and to consolidate the efforts so as to ensure that the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration are fully reflected, as appropriate, in upcoming debates and special sessions of the General Assembly as well as in related conferences and events and in their final documents.

It was noted that many of the upcoming events have a direct link to the Millennium Declaration. In addition it would be important to take into account the inter-linkages and the crosscutting themes of the Declaration in order to enhance the integrated approach to the follow up process.

The importance to continue to share information throughout the preparation processes and the final events was stressed. Participants supported the idea of arranging further meetings of similar nature. It was further noted that other possible ways of information sharing should be explored.

United Nations
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 182:

A/55/CRP.1

Elements for a draft resolution on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit submitted by the President of the General Assembly

1. Express satisfaction that for the first time in history so many heads of State and Government gathered in New York and reached a successful conclusion and adopted the Millennium Declaration.
2. Stress the need for maintaining the political will and momentum of the Millennium Summit at the national, regional and international levels.
3. Recognize the necessity to create a framework for the implementation of the Declaration.
4. Stress the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach in implementation and follow-up.
5. Reinforce an integrated and coordinated approach in the implementation of the commitments made.
6. Recognize that Governments bear the main responsibility for action.
7. Call upon the entire United Nations system to assist Member States in every way possible in the implementation of the Declaration.
8. Decide to use existing structures and mechanisms and upcoming events to the maximum extent possible.
9. Invite the Main Committees of the General Assembly to ensure that the outcome of the Summit be reflected in the work of the Committees.
10. Ensure that the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration are fully reflected, as appropriate, in upcoming debates and special sessions of the General Assembly as well as in related conferences and events and in their final documents.
11. To this end, request the President of the General Assembly to follow up the processes leading to these events and conferences.

12. Request that the General Assembly be kept informed about how these events and conferences contribute to the Declaration's implementation.

13. Call upon all relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to be involved in the follow-up to the Summit, and invite specialized agencies and related organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen and adjust their activities, programmes and medium-term strategies, as appropriate, to take into account the follow-up to the Summit.

14. Invite the regional commissions, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and banks to review progress made towards implementing the Millennium Declaration.

15. Request the United Nations system in particular to review and assess the broad range of its engagement in Africa, with a view to intensifying support to processes of conflict prevention, democratization and development.

16. Identify within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) innovative ways of enhancing cooperation and consultations throughout the United Nations system.

17. Recognize that the implementation of the Declaration will require resources at the national and international levels.

18. Request the appropriate bodies to consider how the implementation of the Millennium Declaration should relate to the biennial budget process and the medium-term plan.

19. Invite the Bretton Woods institutions to be actively involved in the implementation of and follow-up to the Summit and to enhance their cooperation with other parts of the United Nations system for this purpose.

20. Invite the World Trade Organization to contribute to the implementation of the Declaration.

21. Request the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization to keep the General Assembly informed on how they contribute to the implementation of the Declaration;

22. Call for strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication and take this into account in the involvement and potential contributions of these actors in the events and processes referred to above.

23. Enhance partnership and cooperation between United Nations, governments and the relevant actors of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector as a whole, including through exploring innovative ways in order to ensure that their contribution to the implementation is possible already at an early stage.

24. Consider the possibility to convene informal discussions, possibly in an open-ended round-table format, to advance the successful implementation of the Declaration.

25. Request the Secretary-General to ensure system-wide coordination within the Secretariat to assist with the implementation of and follow-up to the Summit.

26. Request the Secretary-General to coordinate the preparation of a longer-term "road map" on how best to achieve the main targets and commitments of the Millennium Declaration.

27. reiterate the call to assess on a regular basis progress towards implementing the Millennium Declaration.

28. In this connection request the Secretary-General to issue periodic reports as a basis for further action taking into account the following:

- * Appraise the reporting system with a view to strengthening its coherence and integration;

- * Reflect the broad array of goals and commitments enunciated in the Millennium Declaration, though each annual report could look in greater depth at one or two areas covered in the Declaration;

- * Focus on the results and benchmarks achieved, help identify "best practices" in achieving them, define the major gaps in implementation and suggest strategies for reducing and eliminating these gaps, including through strengthening the United Nations capacity for gathering and analysing information and developing indicators for development;

- * Explore and highlight relationships across issues and sectors, and not merely report on individual subject areas, in particular with regard to cross-cutting themes on development and peace and security;

- * Draw on the work of the entire United Nations family of organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the World Trade Organization.

29. Continue the consideration of this issue under the item entitled "Follow-up of the Outcome of the Millennium Summit".

United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

6 November 2000

Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri, President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly, at the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations (CONGO)

I am honored by this opportunity to address the tri-annual General Assembly of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations. The theme of your conference this time, "The United Nations/NGO Dynamics in the 21st Century: Together for Social Justice, Equality and Peace", is very fitting at the dawn of the new Millennium. We have an historic moment to build a new relationship between civil society and the United Nations.

I would like to share with you, some thoughts on the future dynamics of the relationship between the United Nations and civil society.

We have recently witnessed two events of major importance to our discussions today. At the Millennium Forum last May, over 1300 civil society organizations, with diverse backgrounds and from all over the world, were able to define and agree on common priorities. The Millennium Forum Declaration is the first official United Nations document produced exclusively by civil society. I congratulate the NGO-community for this achievement. It is a concrete illustration of positive results of co-operation reaching beyond geographical and issue-oriented barriers.

In September, the largest gathering ever of Heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit agreed on a set of values, principles and goals for the entire international community in the early 21st century. The spirit of the Millennium Summit inspires and leads our work at the United Nations. Member States recognize the urgency and importance of translating these commitments into concrete action. I have taken steps to set in motion the follow-up process of the Summit.

The substantive goals and commitments of the Millennium Forum and the Millennium Summit are very much connected. This signifies that the activities of governments and civil society cannot be separated, but rather they should complement each other. Globalization itself entails that problems are more complex and interrelated and necessitate a comprehensive approach. On the other hand, globalization means that local action can make a difference also at the global level.

However, we should keep in mind that the Millennium Forum and the Millennium Summit were not the first occasions to deal with questions of peace and development. Both events were more like peak moments, where previous commitments and promises were reinforced. Also, the relationship between the United Nations and civil society started when the UN was established.

We have a long common history and now the new Millennium has intensified the need to strengthen this partnership.

One of my priorities as the President of the Millennium Assembly is to reach out to civil society at large in order to fully benefit from its expertise and to make the United Nations more relevant to the outside world. It is impossible to list all the areas where civil society has played a crucial role, but I would like to mention a few key sectors, such as promoting peace and human rights, enhancing development, fighting for democracy and speaking out for gender equality. All are areas of key concern to the United Nations and Member States.

The United Nations was established as an inter-governmental body to serve the peoples it represents. Now, we must broaden our constituency to achieve sustainable results. Only a few days ago, I proposed to Member States that we need to enhance partnerships and cooperation between the United Nations, governments and civil society to ensure effective overall implementation of the Millennium Declaration. I believe that to do this we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society to contribute to this process at an early stage.

Regarding NGO participation, I recognize that a lot has been accomplished within the United Nations system and in individual conferences. But one has to note that for the moment, the involvement of NGOs in United Nations special sessions and conferences is negotiated case-by-case. It is a time- and resource-consuming exercise. I believe that the diversity of civil society should not stop us from exploring general, system-wide guidelines and harmonizing common practices and models. Various parts of the United Nations, NGO-focal points and Member States should compare and coordinate their experiences to identify best practices. In this context, full use should be made of the recommendations on how to further develop the relationship between NGOs and the United Nations put forward by the Secretary-General in his report two years ago.

To achieve best results it would also be important to hear from NGOs themselves their experiences on what works and what does not. There is a need for a dialogue and an exchange of views and this could take place through informal panels, hearings or the internet.

In order to be successful, partnerships need to be based on shared responsibilities and on mutual respect between all parties. Governments should practice inclusiveness and responsiveness. In return, civil society must interact with the rest of society in a constructive manner. The credibility that thousands of NGOs have created over many years must not be lost because of action by groups whose real aims are not related to enhancing the global agenda, but rather to their own self-promotion.

I encourage the United Nations and governments to organize hearings and start pilot projects with NGOs to find suitable best practices for each society and region to involve civil society. In these projects, representatives of local communities should be invited in at an early stage of planning.

Another issue, which I find particularly important is participation of NGOs from the South. Cooperation between the North and the South, but also between countries of the South, should aim

to strengthen the capacities of civil society and its organizations in developing countries and economies in transition. We should consider how to make these links more institutionalized, but not to an extent which stifles creativity.

The United Nations in the new Millennium needs support from governments, civil society, local communities and individuals. In this regard, the topic of this conference is important and timely. In my capacity as the President of the General Assembly, I pledge my co-operation with and support for initiatives being developed by civil society that are inclusive of all elements: NGOs, academics, religious leaders and the business community, and which are regionally and gender balanced, and cover all levels from the global to the grassroots.

I wish you a successful, forward-looking, and interesting meeting.

23 October 2000

**Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly
55th session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**Non-Paper by H.E. MR. HARRI HOLKERI
President of the General Assembly
on the Implementation of Millennium Declaration**

1. The United Nations Millennium Declaration articulates a set of values, principles and goals for the entire international community in the early decades of the 21st century. It was adopted by acclamation at the highest possible political level, and has been well received by the media and public around the world.

2. A concern that has been widely expressed is that the Declaration not be allowed to drift slowly into collective memory, but that it serve as a platform for concrete actions, stimulating and focusing new as well as existing programs at national and international levels alike.

3. In deciding to add an agenda item on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration the General Assembly has accepted that challenge. The purpose of this "non-paper" is to facilitate a dialogue among Member States about how to move forward. After consultations with and comments by Member States, I will undertake to prepare a draft resolution on the follow up, a 'road map' on how the implementation of the Declaration could take place. It is my intention to schedule the consideration of the new agenda item and the resolution in the plenary towards the end of November.

Framework for implementation

4. The aim should be a comprehensive and balanced approach in the follow up, both in substance and procedure.

I National level

5. Governments bear the main responsibility for action. Cooperation among international, regional and subregional organizations is needed, as is a new partnership and cooperation with the civil society at large, including the private sector.

6. The United Nations system as a whole should take it upon itself to help implement the outcome; the input of the Secretariat is crucial in this respect.

7. I believe that within the United Nations system we should use existing structures and mechanisms and upcoming events to the maximum extent possible.

8. After a careful consideration of existing modalities and identification of possible gaps, the need for resource implications should be considered.

II The work of the main committees and other organs of the GA

9. The main committees of the General Assembly have already been invited to look into how the outcome of the Summit could be reflected in the work of the committees, and to a certain extent this 'mainstreaming' is already happening.

III Upcoming Events

10. The Member States and the Secretariat could ensure that the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration are fully reflected, as appropriate, in upcoming debates and special sessions of the General Assembly as well as in related conferences and events and in their final documents. Numerous such opportunities exist, as illustrated in Table 1.

11. Indeed, the General Assembly could ask that it be kept informed about how the Millennium Declaration features in each of these deliberations, and how each contributes to the Declaration's implementation.

12. The General Assembly could also request the Regional Commissions to take into account the particular commitments and proposals contained in the Declaration that are relevant to their own work programs.

13. A similar request could be made of the Specialized Agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

14. I will also consider convening informal discussions, possibly in a round-table format, on these and other proposals to advance the successful implementation of the Declaration.

IV The role of the United Nations system

15. The entire United Nations system should be prepared to assist Member States in every way possible in the implementation of the Declaration. This might require that some activities, programmes and medium-term strategies, as well as resources for their implementation, may need to be strengthened or adjusted

16. The comprehensive scope of the Millennium Declaration reinforces the need for an integrated and coordinated approach in the implementation of the commitments made.

17. Within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) one might identify innovative ways of enhancing co-operation and consultations towards the implementation of the Declaration.

18. In the implementation process it is important to aim for policy coherence, better co-operation and complementarities between the UN, its agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and other multilateral development institutions

19. The United Nations system would need in particular to review and assess the broad range of its engagement in Africa, with a view to intensifying support to processes of conflict prevention, democratisation and development.

20. The Secretary-General could be asked to coordinate the preparation of a longer-term "road map" on how best to achieve the main targets and commitments of the Millennium Declaration, thereby facilitating the work of individual Member States, the General Assembly and other international bodies.

21. The General Assembly also may wish to give thought to how the implementation of the Millennium Declaration should relate to the biennial budget process and the medium-term plan.

V Role of the civil society

22. The Millennium Declaration calls for strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication. The possible involvement and potential contributions of these social actors should be borne in mind in the events and processes referred to above.

23. To ensure effective overall implementation there is a need for enhanced partnership and cooperation between United Nations, governments and the relevant actors of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector as a whole. Within the United Nations we need to try to find innovative ways to do this in order to ensure that their contribution to the implementation is possible already at an early stage.

VI Review and reporting

24. Paragraph 31 of the Millennium Declaration calls on the General Assembly "to review on a regular basis the progress made in implementing the provisions of this Declaration," and it asks the Secretary-General to issue periodic reports as a basis for further action.

25. The process of reviewing the implementation of the Declaration also gives an opportunity to appraise the reporting system with a view to strengthening its coherence and integration, in particular with regard to crosscutting themes on development and peace and security.

26. There may also be a need to strengthen the United Nations capacity to gather and analyze information and to develop indicators.

27. To be most useful to Member States, the Secretary-General's report should exhibit the

following features:

- It should reflect the broad array of goals and commitments enunciated in the Millennium Declaration, though each annual report could look in greater depth at one or two areas covered in the Declaration;
- It should focus on results achieved, help identify "best practices" in achieving them, define the major gaps in implementation and suggest strategies for reducing and eliminating these gaps;
- It should make every effort to explore and highlight relationships across issues and sectors, and not merely report on individual subject areas;
- It should draw on the work of the entire United Nations family of organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the World Trade Organization.

28. The cooperation and active involvement of all Member States will help achieve these aims.

TABLE 1:

POSSIBLE VENUES FOR IMMEDIATE FOLLOW-UP TO MILLENNIUM SUMMIT DECLARATION, INDICATIVE

DECLARATION THEMES	EVENT / FOLLOW-UP
1. PEACE, SECURITY & DISARMAMENT	
1. Implementation of Brahimi Report	Nov 2000 (1st tranche)
2. Small Arms Conference	Tentatively July/August 2001 (prepcoms 8 -30 Jan, 19 -30 March)

2. POVERTY ERADICATION & DEVELOPMENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Financing for Development | Tentatively Aug 2001 (Resumed prepcom 30.10.00, prepcoms 12 -23 Feb and 30 April - 11 May) |
| 2. LDC's Conference | May 2001 Brussels (EU/UN) (prepcoms Jan, Feb, April) |
| 3. HIV/AIDS GASS | 25 -27 June 2001 |
| 4. IT/ECOSOC | July 2001, World ICT Conference 2003 (ITU) |
| 5. Children GASS | 19 -21 Sept 2001 (prepcom 26 Jan - 2 Feb, 11-15 June) |
| 6. Habitat GASS | 6 -8 June 2001 (prepcom 19 -23 Feb) |
| 7. High level dialogue on Globalization (56th GA) | 17 -18 Sept 2001 |
| 8. 2nd World Assembly of Ageing | 2002, Spain |

3. PROTECTING OUR COMMON ENVIRONMENT

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Conf. of Parties - Conv. on Desertification and drought | COP-4, Bonn, 11 -22 Dec 2000

COP-6, The Hague, 8 -26 April 2002

COP-6, The Hague, 13 -24 Nov 2000 |
| 2. Conference of Parties - Biodiversity | COP-12, Ouagadougou, 11 -14 Dec 2000 |
| 3. Conference of Parties - Climate Change | |
| 4. Conference of Parties - Montreal Ozone Protocol | |

5. Rio + 10 (Summit on Sustainable Development) 2002

4. HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY & GOOD GOVERNANCE

1. Conference for the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 12 -15 Dec 2000, Palermo

2. Conference on Racism & Xenophobia 31 Aug -7 Sept 2000, South Africa (2nd prep com April 2001)

5. PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

1. Cairo Population Conference and the 5-year review On-going

2. Children's GASS3. 19 -21 Sept 2001 (prepcom 26 Jan - 2 Feb,

3. International Strategy for Disaster Prevention (2000) 11 -15 June)

On-going

6. AFRICA

1. Causes of conflict in Africa General Assembly to debate 1 Nov 2000;

2. Implementation of NADAF / UNSIA ECOSOC, July 2001, OEWG

7. STRENGTHENING THE UN

1. Budget

2. Implementation of Brahimi Report Nov 2000 (1st tranche)

3. HRM/Staff Security 30 Oct 2000

4. Partnerships/NGOs

5. Security Council
Reform

6. Revitalizing GA &
Ecosoc Sector

7. Reform of the
Environment and
Human settlement
sector

28 September 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Briefing for the NGO-community**

It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity to join you this morning. On behalf of the chairpersons and from my part, I wish to welcome each and everyone to this briefing.

Yesterday the plenary started to consider the Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. The statements follow the successful Millennium Summit, where the Heads of State and Government expressed their common vision for the new century and affirmed the global development agenda, as set by the global conferences of the 1990s.

In yesterday's statements, there were three themes, which also characterized the Millennium Summit and the General Debate. First of all, the speakers recalled the spirit of the Millennium Summit, saying that we need to build on the momentum and translate the Millennium Declaration into concrete action. To achieve this target, some of the speakers called for civil society to have a role.

Second, globalization was again widely discussed. In this regard, we need to work towards making globalization benefit all through a cross-cutting approach.

The third topic was the link between peace and socio-economic development. Several delegates emphasized the need to prevent conflicts before they erupt, to shift from the culture of reaction to the culture of prevention, because conflicts go hand in hand with poverty and lack of human rights.

This year, we have some 180 items on the agenda of the GA. Most of the items are the same as previously, but among new issues, there are a role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, scale of assessment of peacekeeping operations, as well as reform of the UN peace operations.

The Millennium declaration will guide our work during the current session. This is a challenge, which requires dialogue and co-operation from all of us, both during this session and in upcoming years. The participation of NGOs is important. The UN and governments cannot do the work alone, but need partnerships with the civil society. NGOs do valuable advocacy work among citizens in different parts of the world by disseminating information and assisting with the implementation of targets of global conferences. It is my strong belief, that through co-operation with NGOs the results are more sustainable in all societies, both in the North and in the South.

25 September 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the United Nations Association of the United States
Board of Directors lunch**

First of all, let me thank the Board of Directors for having invited me as a speaker today. It is an honor to be able to share my thoughts with such a distinguished audience. You represent an internationally minded, bi-partisan and well-respected constituency for the United Nations in the United States. Your efforts in support of the Organization are invaluable. They stem from a belief that not only does the United Nations need the United States but also that the United States needs the United Nations and that multilateral solutions can serve the national interests of countries big and small alike. I share this view and wish to emphasize that for the United Nations, the United States is, truly, indispensable.

Let me dwell a little longer on the issue of multilateralism. I come from a small country whose very existence was at stake some sixty years ago, and whose near-demise came after the collapse of the precarious and weak international order between the two World Wars. The League of Nations never matched the expectations for security guarantees that Finland had pinned upon it. Had the United States joined the League after the First World War, the fate of Europe might have been different.

In a Europe increasingly dominated by predators, and in the absence of collective security, other solutions such as a collective Scandinavian defense arrangement could never materialize either. In the end, we were left to our own devices all but alone. Only with great sacrifice and skillful exploitation of the rivalries in the European military and diplomatic theater were we able to survive as a nation. Finland was one of only three warring nations in Europe, whose capitals were never occupied by a foreign power. The other two were Britain and Russia.

Our historical experience is, therefore, that in order to be a means towards national security, multilateralism must be effective and have the widest possible backing. It also comes with hard-nosed realism about the need for vigilance and resolute action in the face of aggression, as well as with a certain sense of self-sufficiency.

Finland joined the United Nations in 1955 in a “package deal” on expanding the Organization’s membership. This deal was made possible by the thaw in East-West relations after Stalin’s death. From the start, we made every effort to be as active a Member State as possible, one example being our participation in UN peacekeeping virtually since its inception in the 1950’s. Not being able to fully participate in European integration, the United Nations – along with Nordic cooperation – became Finland’s window to the world during the early post-war decades.

Today, the concept of national security is fast changing. Even if the hard core of military security remains, other, more amorphous but no less serious issues and potential threats have emerged. I'm talking about issues such as climate change, mass-scale migration, spread of infectious disease, and, in particular, widening rift between the haves and the have-nots. These are global threats where the size of a country will not shield it from the adverse effects.

As with past threats, there must be a multilateral approach to deal with the new ones and that approach must be effective. There already exists such an approach - the Global Agenda as set by the global conferences of the 1990's. Sometimes unfairly mocked as "globaloney", the Global Agenda simply reflects the need to deal multilaterally with the effects, opportunities and challenges of globalization.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders committed themselves to an ambitious programme of action, which reaffirms the key goals of the Global Agenda. The Summit Declaration aims at making the already existing multilateral approach more effective. It is an ambitious and historic document, adopted by consensus. It contains most of the key recommendations of the Secretary-General, as contained in his Report. It may be noted that this has the effect of reinforcing the authority of both the Secretary-General and the General Assembly. The Declaration also commits the world leaders to the concept of good governance - for the first time at such high level and in such unambiguous fashion. This is important because - and as noted by the Millennium Report - economic success depends so considerably on the quality of governance that a country pursues.

The main challenge facing this Millennium General Assembly, then, is to put into action the commitments made by the world's leaders in the Declaration. The Assembly must maintain the very positive "millennium spirit" - which I witnessed at first hand and which was very real - and proceed with a sense of urgency, not with business as usual. As called for by the Secretary-General, it is vital to find the means to make the Summit's promise a reality and to turn the UN into a more effective instrument in pursuing the priorities outlined by the Summit. This is a test of the political will of the Member States.

During the past two weeks, I had the privilege of presiding over the General Debate of the General Assembly. One message that came out loud and clear during the debate had to do with improving the Organization's peacekeeping capacity. The debate reaffirmed the mandate given by the Summit to consider without delay the recommendations by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations - the so-called Brahimi Report. The consideration of the Report is clearly one of my top priorities as the President of the General Assembly. In the context of peacekeeping, we must also close the gap between the tasks we ask the UN to carry out, and the resources we make available to it.

Another important issue that the Summit Declaration called for was the comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. There were several calls - both in the Summit and during the General Debate - for the Council's composition to reflect the realities of today, in order to make it "more representative and more legitimate". I hope that the statements made indicate a willingness by the membership to move forward on this issue.

Implementing the Summit Declaration is not a one-year affair, nor can it be done by the United Nations alone. In several respects, the onus is on the Member States themselves. In the end, it is they who must work towards the implementation of the goals every day. To give an example, without a Member State's commitment to reducing poverty there is very little the UN can do. However, if the commitment is there, the UN can help, it can give advice, it can encourage the Member State to improve its governance and fight corruption, and it can monitor.

Even this requires enhanced international co-operation. International and multilateral actors, such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations are becoming increasingly important in harnessing the positive powers of globalization. It is my intention to try and build bridges with the international financial institutions (IFI's) on such important issues as financing for development. This issue should be the topic of a high-level meeting next year and in my view, the best way for the event to be a success is through participation by the IFI's and also by the national finance ministries of the donor countries.

Another topic that will be close to my heart during the next twelve months has to do with information and communication technology. In my view, it has an important role as a vehicle for development. Helping to bridge the digital divide by making information and communication technology a servant of development is one of the challenges ahead. No one should be denied access to knowledge. In an increasingly knowledge-based global economy, those countries, where a maximum amount of knowledge is available to a maximum amount of people at a minimum cost, will experience the fastest growth rates.

Let me now turn to a subject, which I consider extremely important for the United Nations. The issue is about outreach. In recent years, the Secretary-General has called for better participation of civil society – in the broadest sense, including the private sector - in the work of the Organization. Better governance requires better and wider participation. It is my belief that in the era of globalization, the UN and national governments cannot do their work alone.

The UN and its specialized agencies liaise with NGOs and other international organizations on issues of shared interest and potential for joint activities. NGO's provide information, which is crucial for our work in many fields such as human rights. They do advocacy work among the citizens and help implement the Global Agenda. I would also like to note that information technology has an impact on our work with civil society. In this regard, I welcome the UN Information Technology Service – UNITes - where high-tech volunteers train people in developing countries to use information technology.

Another commendable initiative of the Secretary-General is the Global Compact. Businesses are called to observe such core values as human rights, labor standards and environmental standards. Implementing these values is not only good policy – it is also increasingly good business.

Finally, let me touch very briefly on the one thing, which has unfortunately complicated the UN-US relationship for a good many years. United States arrears to the UN continue to compromise the US agenda in the Organization. They obscure the fact that the US remains the largest contributor to the Organization. The conditionality of arrears payment helps anti-reform activists in the UN argue against the reform benchmarks.

It would be an immense boost to US prestige in the UN if this issue were finally laid to rest. It is very hard to envisage any other durable solution but an unconditional payment of all arrears. In the meantime, it remains to be seen whether the Helms-Biden benchmarks, first and foremost a lower maximum assessment rate, will be met. On my part, I consider reaching a negotiated settlement on both the regular budget and peacekeeping scales one of my top priorities during this fall.

22 September 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Conclusion of the General Debate of the 55th General Assembly**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by again emphasizing the uniqueness of this Millennium General Assembly, coming as it does after the historic Millennium Summit attended by 147 heads of State or Government, the largest gathering ever of world leaders.

The challenge facing this Millennium General Assembly is to put into action the commitments made by the world's leaders in the Summit Declaration. The Assembly must maintain the "millennium spirit" and proceed with a sense of urgency, not with business as usual.

The Secretary-General reinforced this in his statement opening the General Debate where he set the tone for the two-week discussion. He said it was vital to find the means to make the Summit's promise a reality and to turn the UN into a more effective instrument in pursuing the priorities outlined by the heads of State and Government.

Let me now turn to some of the themes of the past two weeks:

The most critical issue facing the international community – the maintenance of peace and security and the role of the UN in it - was the focus of many speakers. The need for improving the Organization's peace-keeping capacity was emphasized. In this regard, the debate reaffirmed the mandate given by the Summit to consider expeditiously the recommendations by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations.

It was noted that today, peace operations are often comprehensive and complex, involving disarming and demobilizing of combatants, supervising elections, monitoring human rights and training local police forces. Some speakers referred to the need to develop a "culture of prevention" in order to combat conflict. In the context of peace-keeping, reference was also made to the need to "close the gap between the tasks we ask the UN to carry out, and the resources we make available to it".

The importance of promoting and respecting human rights as a prerequisite to international security was also emphasized.

The issue of Security Council reform and the need for its composition to reflect the realities of today, in order to make the Council "more representative and more legitimate", was a theme

repeated by many. Work for the comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects was also called for in the Summit Declaration. The statements made, indicate, I hope, that there is willingness by the membership to move forward on this issue.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A strong call was made in the Debate to implement the goals and commitments of the development agenda of the 1990's. This agenda was reinforced in the Millennium Declaration, expressing the commitment of our Heads of State and Government. Many statements rightly pointed out that we are far away from the mutually agreed global development targets: still today, almost one half of the world's population live on less than two US dollars per day. There were several calls to bring to fruition the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration to reduce poverty levels by the year 2015.

It was also reiterated that conflicts and poverty go hand in hand. Sustainable development not only addresses the economic and social needs of people, but also contributes towards a lasting peace. The same goes for tolerance and respect for diversity within societies. I strongly share the view expressed that respect for human rights is one of the cornerstones of development.

Many statements referred to the unsustainable debt burden of the poorest countries and to the unfavorable terms of trade for many developing countries. The need to address the debt burden of heavily indebted poor countries was reiterated. The current General Assembly needs to address development financing and the roles of various forums and institutions in the forthcoming financing for development event. In my view, decisions on the format, timing and venue of this event must be made without delay.

The discussion touched upon many other aspects of human life, which require our common attention - the situation of the children of the world, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, racism and racial discrimination, deterioration of our environment, pollution of soil, water and atmosphere and lack of food security. Many of these issues will be addressed during the on-going General Assembly.

To mention one of the most acute ones, there is a need for an early decision on the HIV/AIDS special session. I have sensed from the floor the urgency to address this particular issue. To put this plea into perspective, we should remember that every minute several people, mostly young, very often girls and young women, are infected with HIV. The pandemic also underscores the need to include health issues in national educational and literacy programmes.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Globalization and its impacts, both positive and negative, was one of the overriding themes of the discussion. Globalization provides both opportunities and challenges. Positive impacts have been identified, such as increased economic growth and an improved standard of living. The major

challenge, however, remains. That is how to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor within and among countries, and how to share the benefits of globalization in a more equitable way.

In the course of the debate it was reiterated that to address globalization we have to think in a multidimensional way. Globalization encompasses not only economic but also political, social, environmental, technological and cultural dimensions. That is why the responsibility for shaping globalization cannot be left to market forces alone. There is a need to guide the process of globalization with political decisions. This is where the General Assembly has a role to play.

As mentioned during the general debate, all this requires enhanced international co-operation, building bridges between societies and also improved global governance. International and multilateral actors, such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations are becoming increasingly important in harnessing the positive powers of globalization.

Information and communication technology has an important role in managing globalization and as a vehicle for development. Helping to bridge the digital divide by making information and communication technology a servant of development is one of the challenges ahead. No one should be denied access to knowledge.

Many spoke of the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development issues, pointing ahead to the Rio plus ten-review conference to be held in 2002. In this context, global warming, climate change and water were among the specific issues referred to. The special concerns of small island states were also raised.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another important theme of the debate related to disarmament issues. It was noted by many that lasting peace will not be secured until weapons of mass destruction have been eradicated and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has been addressed. Concerns about trade in “diamonds of conflict” were also raised.

Some speakers stressed that in the face of massive human rights violations the UN must not remain paralyzed. Others felt that the principle of State sovereignty and non-intervention in their internal affairs was a basic principle of the UN Charter.

A number of speakers referred to the need to look afresh at the application of economic sanctions: although they could be used as a tool for peace, sometimes they were counter-productive and penalized the population rather than the targeted rulers. Some said that time had shown that economic sanctions had been unable to achieve their objective. Others pointed to their burden on third parties. There were calls for a review of the sanctions regimes to make them more effective and better targeted.

Finally, let me say that I was pleased to listen to the statements appreciating the need for civil society - in the broadest sense - to participate in the work of the United Nations. I believe that the significance and relevance of the United Nations in the future will depend on our ability to involve civil society in our work. It has played a pivotal role in setting our global agenda. We must let them also participate, as our valued partners, in its implementation.

Overall, to quote one distinguished speaker, the Debate reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to the validity and importance of multilateral action as being “the most realistic approach to transnational problems in an increasingly globalized world”. I echo this sentiment and look forward to this being a most productive 55th Session of the General Assembly.

Thank you.

5 September 2000

**Acceptance Speech of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President-elect of the 55th Session of the General Assembly**

Mr. Secretary-General, Permanent Representatives, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence in my country and myself that this election represents. I will do my best to live up to the honour of having been elected President of the Fifty-fifth General Assembly. Let me assure each and everyone of you that as of today, I am the President of the Membership as a whole.

The fact that this Session of the General Assembly has been designated as the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations makes this privilege of serving the Member States particularly momentous. This week's Millennium Summit will bring together a record number of Heads of State and Government. Co-chaired by Presidents Tarja Halonen of Finland and Sam Nujoma of Namibia, the Summit is a unique symbolic moment. The Summit Declaration will capture the common vision of the Member States at that moment. It will guide our work not only during the Millennium Assembly but for years to come.

I am profoundly grateful to my most esteemed predecessor, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the Fifty-fourth Session of the General Assembly, for his tireless work to pave the way for a successful Millennium Summit and Assembly. I wish him well in all his endeavours as he continues to serve his people as the Foreign Minister of Namibia.

I also wish to salute the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for having once again shown leadership, courage and vision. His report - "We the peoples" - laid an indispensable foundation for the work of the Summit. It has also set for us new standards in clarity of purpose, relevance and readability.

As I thank all Member States for their confidence and trust, I am particularly thankful for the endorsement from the Western European and Other States' Group. For Finland, this Presidency comes after almost forty-five years of Membership in the United Nations. Over the past decades, Finland and Finns have been given the opportunity to serve the UN in a number of ways. Now it is my turn to serve the Organisation and its General Assembly, the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations.

The Organisation has been – and still is – one of the cornerstones of Finnish foreign policy. Finland is committed to multilateralism in the advancement of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as enshrined in the Charter.

For my country, multilateralism is therefore a means to promote greater social equality, democracy and human rights, and in particular, rights of women and girls. It is these goals and the overall goals of sustainable human development, alleviation of poverty and combating global environmental threats that are also central to Finnish development co-operation.

In the spirit of multilateralism, Finland has also participated actively in UN peacekeeping from the Suez to South Lebanon to the Balkans. Since the 1950's, thousands of Finnish men and women have served with devotion to support the UN maintain peace and security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This week's Millennium Summit and its Declaration will provide an enormous momentum which will reinforce the implementation of the global agenda and its development targets, as defined in the global conferences of the 1990's. The Declaration will constitute an authoritative mandate for our work and for my Presidency. On the agenda before us, there is one issue which is close to my heart. It is primary and secondary education, particularly for girls. Education is a key element in the global economy and we should implement our commitments in this regard.

It will be the responsibility of this General Assembly to heed the moment and put into practice the political commitment of our Heads of State and Government. The General Assembly and its main Committees must show leadership to the rest of the UN system and reflect the results of the Summit in their work. We need to avoid a "business-as-usual" mentality.

It is also vital that we start without delay the consideration of the recommendations of the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations.

We must make every effort to make new technology available to all at a low cost. I believe that information and communication technology is a true opportunity for development, be it for reducing poverty, improving education or combating HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. It can help us better understand climate change and other environmental challenges, and even plan better neighbourhoods in place of slums. In other words, it facilitates reaching the concrete goals which are part of the upcoming Summit Declaration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the General Assembly, all this is an immense task. Let me now dwell on how we can accomplish it. It involves reaching out to the wider world for co-operation, increasing the transparency of the General Assembly and improving its effectiveness.

As for the Organisation's outreach towards wider civil society, it is closely related to the overall relevance of the United Nations. This is a challenge the UN can either accept and grow with or shy away from and stop growing. The norm should be dialogue and inclusion. The emergence of a strong and viable global network of non-governmental organisations is a fact. We all know that their work is indispensable and complements the role of the United Nations in many fields. This

was evidenced most recently in the Millennium Forum and I hope that Governments take time to reflect on the outcome of the Forum.

The private sector is part of civil society. The UN is currently exploring new ways to co-operate with the private sector, so as to assure that it takes due note of our work and standards for mutual benefit. In this regard, I would like to express my support for the recent initiatives of the Secretary-General.

Furthermore, our goal must be to enhance understanding, collaboration and complementarity of activities between the UN and the international financial institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To be effective, and to get due credit, the General Assembly must work in a transparent and understandable manner. In order not to become a hermit kingdom, understood only by UN experts, the General Assembly must be able to explain why its work is relevant to the outside world. As President, my aim is to work in an open way. That will also be one of my requests to the Chairpersons of the Main Committees and to the Secretariat.

I strongly believe that in order to add value and make a difference, the General Assembly must address, in a focused, meaningful and timely manner, the challenges of rapid change and globalization. In doing so, it must respond to the current priorities of its Member States. This requires courage to look back at the original legislative intent of the General Assembly and how that can be best reflected in the practical work of the Organisation today.

Yet the General Assembly is not only about specific mandates and accomplishments. To engage in a dialogue on an equal basis, the global community needs the General Assembly. Between nations, even the most expensive dialogue is immeasurably cheaper than the cheapest armed conflict. The power of dialogue in the service of development is well demonstrated by the goals agreed upon by the global conferences of the 1990's.

As in any parliament, there is bound to be a certain degree of partisanship and political manoeuvring in the General Assembly. After all, there are genuine differences in Member States' interests and worldviews. However, the General Assembly can lose its effectiveness if this turns into a stifling block mentality and an "us-versus-them" mindset. During this Millennium Assembly, I plead to Member States to work in the spirit of partnership and solidarity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I see the role of the President of the General Assembly, it is one of a facilitator, conciliator and consensus-builder. He must lead - and I will do so - but without the Membership on board, that leadership will ultimately fail. During this General Assembly, we will have to make hard and at times unpleasant decisions. These decisions require a spirit of dialogue and inclusion from all of us.

I will make every effort to guide the work of the Assembly in an effective manner. I harbour no illusions about quick solutions. I believe it is often the practical and small things which count and ultimately add up to a change. One such step will be to always start the plenary meetings of the Assembly on time. I trust that the Chairpersons of the Main Committees will commit themselves to the same practice at the committee level. This is not only about sensible use of our common resources; it is the least we can do to show respect and courtesy towards one another.

I will also seek close and regular dialogue with the Chairpersons and bureaux of the Main Committees, as well as with the Secretariat. The six Chairpersons that we are about to elect are very much the backbone of the daily work of the General Assembly. I also intend to maintain regular contacts with the Presidents of the Security Council and ECOSOC.

As for the Secretariat, it provides an indispensable partner without which our work would stall. I salute the staff members of the Organisation - at Headquarters as well as in the field - for their dedication, commitment and hard work. I would like to pay special tribute to those staff members who, even at this moment, put their lives in danger in the service of this Organisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe in people and I believe in the United Nations. I am convinced that we can live in peace and harmony, because the power of our common values and goals exceeds our differences. Our strength lies in the diversity of humankind, and in our different backgrounds, skills, and knowledge. As a father and grandfather, I dream of a better world for my children and theirs.

During my tenure, I will do my best to serve the UN and all its Member States. In this task, I need your support and assistance. I would like to invite everyone to work together during this Millennium Assembly. Let us not be afraid of the difficulties and uncertainties ahead. Instead, let us build on co-operation, mutual understanding, and trust.

I thank you for your attention.