

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.