

26 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the General Assembly's discussion devoted to the report
of the Secretary-General on HIV/AIDS**

It is my great pleasure to open this discussion devoted to the report of the Secretary-General on HIV/AIDS. I should like to extend a warm welcome to all of you, distinguished delegates of the member states and observers, representatives of the members of the United Nations family, and representatives of the civil society actors. I am sure that sharing this preparatory process will help in the end share also the commitment and determination to break the spread of this deadly disease, the HIV/AIDS.

Let me now say a word to thanks and appreciation to all of you for the hard work done so far in this process. We are not through yet, but I am happy to say that we are ahead of our schedule: we adopted already last Thursday the resolution on the organizational arrangements of the special session and its preparatory process, and on the form of participation of the civil society actors.

I should like to extend my words of thanks to all of those who contributed to the successful completion of this piece of work, which enables us now to devote more time to the discussion on the report of the Secretary-general on the important issues. I should particularly like to thank all delegations, who worked hard and in cooperative spirit to reach consensus on the difficult issues. I should specifically like to acknowledge the skillful work and wisdom of the two co-facilitators, Her Excellency, Ambassador Penny Wensley of Australia, and His Excellency Ambassador Ka of Senegal for steering the discussions to successful outcome.

I should also like to express my appreciation to the substantive secretariat, UNAIDS and the secretariat of the General Assembly Affairs, the two secretariats which have tirelessly supported this process.

In many respects this preparatory process is unique - I am convinced that with the help of all of you here - it will be a successful one.