

12 November 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
at the NGO Committee for the Status of Women**

Chairperson Wright, Mrs. Annan, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This morning we heard the sad news that a commercial airliner has crashed in the Rockaways, Queens. I would like to express my deepest condolences to the passengers, crews and their bereaved families. Right now, we do not know exactly what caused this incident. Under these circumstances, I believe we all need to remain calm and united as firmly as ever to see us through these difficult times.

Madame Chairperson,

I am greatly honoured to be invited to this luncheon honouring women ambassadors to the United Nations. First of all, I wish to thank the NGO Committee on the Status of Women for their invitation. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the six outstanding diplomats who are this year's recipients of the "Women Who Make a Difference" Award.

The women we honour today, and indeed many others present here, have truly distinguished themselves as leaders and role models in their chosen professions. I know that they have made important contributions to gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women.

We know, however, that there are millions of other women who continue to be held back, to be denied their full human rights, and who even suffer violence simply on the basis of their sex. Progress toward full gender equality has been uneven throughout the world. Some countries have moved faster and farther than others. Nevertheless gender inequality remains a widespread form of injustice that is not restricted to particular countries, regions, or religions. We must work hard to end all forms of this injustice, including violence against women, poverty, low participation of women in decision-making, and inequality in terms of access to productive resources and particularly to new information and communication technology.

The United Nations has placed itself at the forefront of promoting gender equality. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing and the Beijing+5 conference are major milestones in this regard. The Millennium Declaration adopted last year made a strong call for gender equality and the empowerment of women as the central elements of an effective poverty eradication strategy. Recognizing that meaningful change begins at home, the United Nations is

pressing forward toward its goal of 50% representation of women throughout the UN system, including at the highest levels.

In achieving the goals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action, I want to underscore the importance of forging partnerships between the UN and Member States, on the one hand, and civil society, on the other. In the 21st century, such partnerships will become an increasingly important instrument of social and economic progress – surely not least in the struggle for gender equality. The NGOs represented on your Committee provide an excellent example of what can be achieved when governments, international bodies, and civil society groups work in harmony toward common goals.

I believe that full gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women would have a profoundly humanizing influence in our increasingly globalized world, and that is a vision that should inspire our very best efforts.

Thank you.