

12 September 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
before the Press Conference**

Thank you very much, Mr. Tharoor. Before the interview, I would like to say a few words. Mere words cannot express the outrage for the terrorist acts yesterday. I condemn in the strongest possible terms these heinous acts of terrorism. I pray for those who lost their lives and offer my deepest condolences to the families of the innocent victims.

As this is my first meeting with the UN press corps, I would like to say that I very much look forward to working with all of you in an open and transparent manner. Today, I will be brief but I intend to make myself available to you on a regular basis, when I am in New York.

I do not intend to repeat my opening address to the General Assembly here but would just like to emphasize a couple of the points that I consider particularly important.

I understand that during his first meeting with you a year ago, my predecessor, President Harri Holkeri, spoke about the need to keep “the Millennium spirit” alive. Since then, the historic Millennium Summit produced the Millennium Declaration, which will be followed by the forthcoming Road Map Report of the Secretary-General. In the current session of the General Assembly, therefore, a large part of our work will involve implementing the commitments set out in the Declaration. This will require dedication and far-sighted vision to enable the United Nations to meet the challenges of the future.

Previous Presidents of the General Assembly have already devoted considerable effort to strengthening the United Nations, and I assure you that I will endeavor to be no less diligent. Important issues in this regard include revitalization of the General Assembly and reform of the Security Council.

There are many other challenges waiting to be addressed by the General Assembly: improving peacekeeping operations, furthering economic and social development - particularly in Africa through such efforts as the New African Initiative (NAI), ensuring that globalization will benefit all the world's peoples, bridging the digital divide, curbing the spread of AIDS and other diseases and, not least, promoting democracy and human rights. With regard to the last of these, I hope that we can take a big step forward through the holding of the Special Session on Children in the near future.

This is a broad and ambitious agenda, but not an unrealistic one. With the support and cooperation of the Member States, I will do my best to make this 56th session one of the most successful in the illustrious history of the General Assembly.

Let me stop at this point and invite you to begin the question-and-answer session.