

14 September 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Peace Bell Ceremony**

Dear colleagues,

Today we participate in an annual commemoration of the ringing of the Peace Bell. But this year's event is unlike those of previous years, for it takes place in the wake of the unspeakable horror that occurred three days ago. Before then, I could never have imagined that my first act as President of the General Assembly would be to preside over the passage of a resolution condemning the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history. This was a painful duty for all of us, though I am sure that no other action we may take during my presidency could be more heartfelt and sincere.

In attacking the United States – what President Bush has called “an act of war” – the terrorists were, in effect, striking at the whole edifice of civilized values that upholds the international community. More than three hundred years ago, the English poet John Donne wrote “No man is an island entire unto itself... every man's death diminishes me.” Rarely have we seen this profound truth brought home so tragically as in the past few days.

Now the time of healing and rebuilding has begun. What the UN and the international community can do to help, it will do. But the heaviest burden necessarily falls on the federal, state, and city authorities and the numerous citizen volunteers. Our best wishes and hopes for success go out to them in this time of great anguish.

And so today we ring the peace bell with deeply mixed feelings. Despite what has happened, we can at least give thanks that in the past year the world has been spared a major war and that important progress has been made in reducing tensions and bringing lasting peace to troubled areas.

I think, finally, of the children of many lands who donated their coins to be melted down into the Peace Bell. By now, most of them have children of their own and probably even grandchildren. May the spirit of the Peace Bell touch the hearts of all those who bear responsibility for the future of the world's children.

Thank you.