

1 October 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
on World Habitat Day**

At the Millennium Summit held in September 2000, world leaders expressed their strong commitment to eradicating abject and dehumanizing poverty and promoting sustainable development in order to free all mankind from want. They also resolved to improve by the year 2020 the lives of 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the “Cities without Slums” initiative. In this regard, the theme of “Cities without Slums” for World Habitat Day celebrations this year is very timely and appropriate, reflecting the commitments made at the Summit.

With the rapid advance of globalization, urbanization has accelerated to the point where half of the world’s six billion people now live in cities. Cities and towns are obviously focal points of economic and social, cultural and scientific development. However, rapid urbanization has also brought in its wake increased poverty, unemployment, ethnic tensions and violence, crime and social disintegration, especially in developing countries. The emerging mega-cities of the developing countries have far-reaching implications for natural resources and environmental sustainability. The grim reality is that one out of four of the world’s urban population is living below the poverty line without adequate shelter.

Five years ago in Istanbul, world’s leaders declared their firm resolves to work toward ensuring adequate shelter for all and creating more sustainable human settlements. These commitments were reaffirmed at the Special Session of the General Assembly (Istanbul+5) held this year in the “Declaration on Cities and other Human Settlements”.

To achieve the goals set forth in the Habitat agenda, ensuring transparent, effective and accountable governance at city and national level are of vital importance. We need to address in an integrated manner all relevant socio-economic parameters, including poverty, homelessness, unemployment, vulnerable and marginalized groups and the environmental dimension. Forging public-private partnerships is also crucial to translating policies into concrete measures, taking into account the ever-growing global interdependence.

At the dawn of the new Millennium, let us all work together to build a world without slums where everyone can live in housing that provides safety and comfort, while enhancing human dignity.