

1 October 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
on the International Day for Older Persons**

Coming from a country with a long tradition of respect for the aged, I am particularly pleased that the United Nations General Assembly has designated 1 October as “International Day for Older Persons.”

The aging process is as much a social and cultural, as a biological, phenomenon. Cultures and societies vary greatly in the way they define older persons and in how they treat them. However, there is a growing recognition throughout the world of the important contributions older persons can make in many spheres of life if they are given appropriate opportunities. To fully realize this enormous potential requires, inter alia, the abolition of all forms of age-related discrimination.

We should also recognize that older persons have particular needs, especially with regard to health care and income maintenance, that require special attention. Meeting these needs is primarily the responsibility of individual countries. But the United Nations can do much to help coordinate international efforts on behalf of older persons, mobilize resources, and focus attention on issues directly affecting older persons.

In this regard, we commit ourselves to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be hosted by the Government of Spain next April, 2002. The Assembly, under the auspices of the United Nations, is going to adopt an International Strategy of Action on Ageing, which will facilitate transforming the qualities of life of men and women as they age, and ensuring its sustainability, thereby establishing the foundation for all ages. I strongly urge all interested stakeholders of the international community to become actively involved in the preparatory process of the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

Finally, on behalf of the United Nations, I wish to thank all those who are devoting themselves to making the lives of older persons ever more healthy, productive, and fulfilling. I also would like to offer my best wishes and congratulations to all the world’s older persons on this day that is dedicated to them.