

1 October 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Plenary Meetings
on “Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism”**

I would first like to make a brief statement of my own.

We meet today almost three weeks after the worst terrorist assault in the history of the world. I know I speak for all of us in conveying once again my deepest sympathy and condolences to the families and loved ones of the more than 6,000 innocent victims.

As stated in Security Council resolution 1368 of 12 September and reaffirmed by its resolution 1373 of 28 September, these vicious attacks, unprecedented in scale and brutality, pose a direct threat to international peace and security. More than that, these actions were aimed not just at physical targets, but indeed at the very structure of civilized values – peace, freedom, tolerance, and human rights – around which the international community is organized.

The General Assembly responded to this challenge with clarity and spoke in strong, unmistakable tones. On the very first day of the session, 12 September, the Assembly unanimously passed resolution 56/1, condemning the most heinous terrorist attacks and calling for greater international cooperation to prevent and eventually eradicate international terrorism. I am confident that our meetings during the next few days will provide a timely impetus for achieving the objectives set forth in resolution 56/1.

In fact, the issue of international terrorism has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for many years. An important step was taken in 1994 when the Assembly adopted the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism. In 1996, the Assembly adopted a Declaration to Supplement the 1994 Declaration and established an Ad Hoc Committee to address the issue. This Ad Hoc Committee, along with a working group of the Sixth Committee, was given a mandate to elaborate draft conventions against international terrorism.

In recent years, the Assembly has contributed to the development of a comprehensive legal framework of anti-terrorism conventions by adopting two key instruments. They are: the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, adopted by Assembly resolution 52/156, which entered into force on 23 May this year, and the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, adopted by Assembly resolution 54/109, which so far has gained 45 signatories and four ratifications, requiring 18 additional ratifications before its entry into force.

Based on such progress in building an effective international framework for combating terrorism, the Member States are now discussing a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. This convention, once finalized, along with the existing 12 anti-terrorist conventions dealing with various aspects of terrorism, will greatly enhance the ability of the international community to combat terrorism in all its forms. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to urge the Member States to strengthen their efforts to achieve an early conclusion of the comprehensive convention. At the same time, I wish to encourage those Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the existing conventions as soon as possible.

Last but not least, I want to emphasize that the fight against terrorism is an issue that transcends cultural and religious differences, while threatening people of all cultures and religious faiths. We must never forget that terrorism is not a weapon wielded by one civilization against another, but rather an instrument of destruction through which small bands of criminals seek to undermine civilization itself.

The UN has designated this year as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Terrorism is one of the gravest and most urgent of many international issues that can be effectively addressed only in the spirit of inter-cultural dialogue. Through such dialogue, the peoples of the world can unite around their common interests and shared values – so many of which are directly menaced by international terrorism.

Nothing can make amends for the senseless loss of life on 11 September. But I hope that unspeakable tragedy will serve to strengthen our resolve to one day eliminate the threat of international terrorism once and for all.

Thank you.