

24 October 2001

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

United Nations Day 2001 takes on an added and dual significance, on the one hand celebratory and, on the other, solemn.

The occasion for celebration is the award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize jointly to the United Nations and to its Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

I believe that this award is a well-deserved acknowledgement by the world community of the UN's impressive achievements as well as its ongoing efforts to promote peace, security, and well-being for all humankind. Therefore, we have good reason to celebrate this United Nations Day as the most significant and memorable one ever.

At the same time, however, our feelings on this joyful occasion are tinged with a profound sadness. We cannot help but cast our thoughts back to the horrific events of 11 September, which took place on the very day that the General Assembly was scheduled to begin its 56th session.

As we learned so painfully in the 20th century and now again in the 21st, the moral advancement of mankind can never be taken for granted. It is always a work in progress, never a final accomplishment. Even as the great majority of human beings seek to improve the conditions of life on this planet, there remains a small minority intent on sabotaging and, if possible, reversing our slow but steady progress. We saw them in action on 11 September. But let us always remember that their capacity for evil is infinitesimally smaller than humanity's collective capacity for good.

It is the mission of the United Nations to help mobilize and channel humanity's capacity for good, which is our strongest defence against the triumph of evil. On this most memorable of United Nations Day, let us rededicate ourselves to that task even as we pause to both mourn and celebrate the extraordinary events of the past two months.