

10 November 2001

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

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Mr. Secretary-General, and Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to welcome the Heads of State and Government as well as other Heads of Delegation who have assembled here for the general debate at this important and challenging time. I am particularly heartened by such high-level participation from all Member States despite the rescheduling of the general debate. Let me also express my gratitude for the special arrangements that our host country, the United States, and the host city, New York, have made to ensure the maximum convenience and security of all participants.

The heinous terrorist attacks of 11 September were an unspeakable tragedy not just for the United States, but for the entire international community. They deeply affected the work of the United Nations, forcing us to postpone and reschedule various events, including the start of the 56th Session of the General Assembly. The General Debate has had to be postponed for seven weeks, and the Special Session on Children for an even longer period. Thus, the opening of the general debate today carries with it both a special meaning and a renewed sense of responsibility.

The actions of the United Nations in the past two months give proof of our united response to the challenge. Beginning with the unanimous resolution by the General Assembly on 12 September and the two important resolutions of the Security Council, we have moved quickly and decisively to address the overriding issue of terrorism. Also, progress has been made by the Sixth Committee toward finalizing a comprehensive convention on terrorism. Taking this opportunity, I would like to appeal to all Member States to further strengthen cooperation for an early conclusion of the convention.

But our work has by no means been limited to the issue of terrorism. In view of the time constraints imposed after 11 September, the Member States have acted with increased harmony and expeditiousness to deal with wide-ranging issues of global concern. I congratulate the Delegations on what they have achieved thus far and urge them to carry on in the same spirit.

For the United Nations, the last two months were also marked by a uniquely reassuring and encouraging development. We were all delighted and honoured to learn that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001 had been awarded to the United Nations as such, jointly with its Secretary-General Kofi Annan. I believe the award should be seen as both a recognition of past achievements and a summons to even greater efforts in the future. It is this heavy responsibility that will be

uppermost in my mind when I travel to Oslo in December along with our Secretary-General to accept the prize on behalf of the United Nations.

The issues that we are going to address during the next week in this hall bear a heightened importance and urgency in view of the current international circumstances. Therefore, I would like to solicit the full cooperation of all participants to ensure a productive outcome worthy of our high expectations and of the ideals for which the United Nations stand.

Thank you.