

20 November 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
on Universal Children's Day**

All of us once were children. Children are the origin of any society. Children have equal status with adults as members of the human family. All of us are under the duty to recognize the full spectrum of human rights for all children. Children are special but vulnerable because they start life as totally dependent beings.

The heads of State and Government of the world promised to protect children and to diminish their suffering in September 1990 at the World Summit for Children. Pursuit of the Summit goals has let to many tangible results for children: polio has been brought to the brink of eradication; and, through saltiodization, 90 million newborns are protected every year from a significant loss of learning ability.

However, we have much more to do. Some 160 million children under the age of five are still malnourished. 110 million children do not attend primary school, of whom two thirds are girls. 600 million children live in families earning less than \$1 a day. 13 million children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children to be held next May will be an opportunity to tackle current problems by agreeing to measures to promote healthy lives of children, to provide quality education to children and to protect children against abuse, exploitation and violence such as protection from armed conflict, elimination of child labour, elimination of sexual exploitation of children and combating HIV/AIDS.

Who should be responsible for protecting children? Everyone in each society should work within partnerships, where families, schools, communities and government, both at regional and national levels, should participate. Let us work together to build a world fit for children. They are our hope as well as our future.