

25 November 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against
Women**

Today, we commemorate the second anniversary of the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women. It is also today that the "16 days activism against gender violence" begins. And so this is an especially fitting and appropriate occasion on which to reaffirm our commitment to abolishing violence in women's lives.

Around the world, women and girls continue to be victims of countless acts of violence. It is indeed a grim reality that the range of gender-based violence is devastating, occurring quite literally from womb to tomb. We have repeatedly seen that sexual abuse and rape have become systematic means of intimidation in times of war and conflict. But the situation is not much better in times of peace: Depending on the country, 25% to 75 % of women are regularly beaten at home. A quarter of all women in the world are raped during their lifetime. Each year, 2 million girls between ages 5-15 are introduced into the commercial sex market. Violence against women continues to devastate millions of women worldwide, destroying families and impeding development.

Violence against women constitutes a crime against humanity, be it in times of peace or in times of war. Through a number of international conferences for last 20 years, the international community has acknowledged the seriousness of gender-based violence and redefined how these acts of violence are dealt with. At the Millennium Summit held last year, the world leaders, reaffirming their efforts to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, resolved to eliminate all forms of violence against women. We marked another milestone in this direction when the Security Council adopted its 18-point resolution on women and peace and security, calling on the United Nations to carry out a global study on the impact of armed conflicts on women and girls.

Fortunately, we are equipped with rigorous international legal instruments to protect human rights, prevent all forms of violence and discrimination against women and to promote gender mainstreaming. We also have commitment at the highest political level. What needs to be done now is to translate our commitments to concrete actions. I wish to commend the UN system for its untiring efforts to address the issue of violence against women and girls. At the national level, political leadership is imperative in implementing national plans against such violence. Partnership is also crucial in making this process inclusive and participatory. NGOs, civil society organizations and mass media have vitally important roles to play in enhancing public awareness and mobilizing resources, expertise and information to support women's advocacy. In commemorating International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women, I urge all of you to work together to end gender-based violence, including domestic violence, rape, traditional

practices that are harmful to women and economic violence such as trafficking in women and girls.