

3 December 2001

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

With the theme of "Full participation and equality: the call for new approaches to assess progress and evaluate outcomes", our 2001 observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons reflects a number of priorities for action to be taken by the international community to further equalization of opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities and a society for all in the twenty-first century.

During the past two decades, much has been accomplished in recognition of disabled persons. In particular, the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons of 1981 and the Standard Rules on Equalization of opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of 1994, both of which were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, has facilitated the integration of disabled persons into social life and development.

There are more than 600 million disabled people in the world. In many places, they have become disabled as a result of malnutrition, landmine explosions or the acts of ruthless terrorism, all of which are beyond control of those affected persons. The society should provide disabled persons with opportunities to fully participate in all aspects of socio-economic life and development.

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies (ICT) can promote new and non-traditional opportunities for participation of persons with disabilities. We should promote access to ICT by the disabled, together with education, health, employment and social services.

We also have to ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system. Special attention should be given to the educational needs of young children with disabilities in particular. Laws and regulations in the employment field must be enacted to facilitate the employment of the disabled persons. Moreover, we must continue to promote public awareness campaigns designed to overcome prejudices concerning persons with disabilities.

I urge all governments, organizations and agencies of the United Nations System, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to support the full participation and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Let this Day be a celebration of accomplishments and an inspiration for further efforts by and on behalf of persons with disabilities.