

5 December 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Closing of the International Year of Volunteers 2001**

Today marks the closing of the International Year of Volunteers 2001, which provided a valuable opportunity to heighten public awareness and support for volunteerism at a global level. During this period, more than 120 national committees of UN member states hosted various activities in some 200 cities including seminars, exhibitions and campaigns in celebration of volunteers.

We are in need of volunteers more than ever. These days we face growing problems of a national as well as trans-national nature: environmental degradation, poverty, HIV/AIDS, drug trafficking and terrorism, to name a few. Volunteers all over the world can make significant contributions to solving these problems through their activities in the fields of social and economic development, humanitarian aid, the promotion of peace, democracy and, in particular, respect for human rights.

Volunteering is different from other types of human activity because, among other reasons, volunteers usually bring a distinctive enthusiasm and exuberance to their works. Moreover, volunteer work is enriching for the individual volunteer. People who volunteer are better able to develop their potentialities, share knowledge and skills and gain opportunities for career advancement.

Volunteering also enhances the self-esteem of participants, helps people learn from each other and widens social, economic and cultural networks around the world. In this regard, I would like to highly commend the United Nations Volunteers Programme and its Executive Coordinator, Ms. Sharon Capeling-Alakija, for their devoted efforts to assist developing countries by sending out about 4000 UN volunteers each year.

Let us renew our commitment individually and collectively to supporting the volunteer movement. Above all, it is the fundamental human desire to help each other that we need to mobilize and channel in order to build a harmonious and peaceful world. Volunteerism is thus at the heart of the ideals of the United Nations and should be the future for all of us.