

9 December 2001

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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me begin by saying that it is, of course, a great honour for me to accept the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the United Nations Organisation. On behalf of the entire family of the UN, I would like to thank the Nobel Committee and the people of Norway for choosing the UN as this year's Nobel Peace Prize Winner.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who shares this year's prize with the UN, for his many devoted contributions to promoting world peace and to improving and strengthening our organisation.

Various UN bodies have received the Nobel Peace Prize in the past, but never the United Nations as such in the 55 years of its existence. Perhaps, by its very nature, the UN is the kind of organisation whose achievements are cumulative, becoming increasingly apparent over time.

In the work of our organisation, there are often long fallow periods before the seeds that are planted bring forth a bountiful harvest. Also, much of our most productive work takes place far from the media spotlight. Except in the case of some peace-keeping operations, it is rare that an UN-related story would make the front page or lead a news broadcast.

Yet I believe that in the past five-and-a-half decades the United Nations has had a more profound effect on the lives of hundreds of millions of human beings than even the most dramatic news stories. It is this long-term achievement that is being recognized this year by the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

At the same time, I have no doubt that the award is meant to offer encouragement to the men and women of the United Nations in carrying out their work. Such encouragement will be especially welcome to the thousands of UN personnel who serve under extremely difficult conditions, often at grave physical risk to themselves.

The most famous of these was, of course, the second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, who was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961. But there have been many others who preceded and followed him.

As a result of this award, the United Nations will be further encouraged to serve as a beacon illuminating the way forward for the international community as it rises to confront new challenges in the 21st century.

As you know, this year's General Assembly session has been a quite extraordinary one as a result of the tragic event of 11 September. Nevertheless, I believe we have successfully managed the work of the session through the dedication and perseverance of all concerned. In particular, the General Debate, although delayed from September to November, was successfully completed with the participation of a total of 188 speakers, including 42 Heads of State and Government, 9 Deputy Prime Ministers and 96 Foreign Ministers.

However, our mission in this Session is not yet finished. In response to the unprecedented nature and magnitude of the terrorist attacks against the US in September, the United Nations is playing a central role in addressing this challenge. Most importantly, the General Assembly and the Security Council have worked hard to coordinate their efforts in combating international terrorism. And we will continue to do so until the very end of the Session.

Lastly, I would like to thank our Norwegian hosts for their gracious hospitality. And thank you for your time and attention. Now let me respond to your questions.