

10 December 2001

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

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, His Excellency Prime Minister Bondevik, His Excellency President of the Storting Kosmo, Distinguished former Nobel Laureates, family members of the U. N., Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, I am wearing 3 hats, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Member of National Assembly and the President of the U. N. General Assembly and I have made many speeches home and abroad. However, I have never recognized such a long list of distinguished guests.

Thank you, Chairman Berge and Vice-chairman Staalsett, for your kind words of introduction and gracious hospitality. It is both a pleasure and an honor for me to join all of you here today, along with Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

On behalf of the United Nations, which I am representing here in Oslo, I would also like to express deep gratitude to the Nobel Committee for its decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001 to the United Nations and its Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan. I think it was a wise decision.

During the past hundred years, the Nobel Peace Prize has been annually awarded to outstanding men, women, and organizations that have advanced the cause of peace.

This recognition has, I believe, done much to encourage millions of others throughout the world to follow in the footsteps of the Nobel Peace laureates.

This recognition will also be especially encouraging to all the UN personnel who have been serving under the extremely difficult conditions, often at grave physical risks to themselves.

I am confident that, as a result of this award, the entire family of 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.

Although the UN has not always been successful in its efforts or fortunate in the tasks it has assumed or that were thrust upon it, I believe that no organization has contributed more to global peace, security, and well-being than has the United Nations over the past 55 years. Moreover, in my opinion, its cumulative record of achievement since 1945 fully justifies the hopes of its founders.

When Alfred Nobel established the Peace Prize a century ago, the United Nations did not exist. Yet the idea of an international organization – a parliament of humankind – dedicated to furthering world peace had long been a cherished vision of far-sighted statesmen, philosophers, and, indeed, philanthropists like Nobel. If he were alive today, Nobel would, I believe, have seen the United Nations as the fulfilment of this vision and a truly worthy recipient of the prize that bears his name.

In this regard, I hasten to mention a distinguished Norwegian statesman who did make a great contribution to the United Nations Organization.

Mr. Trygve Lie, who served as the 1st Secretary General of the United Nations, following the trauma and tragedies of the World War II, made tremendous achievement for the United Nations Organization during its early stage and contributed to the world peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

In a world of accelerating globalizaton, we are facing many challenges, such as international terrorism, poverty, drug abuse, environmental degradation, and HIV/AIDS which no single state can effectively deal with on its own.

Under these circumstances, the United Nations is in a unique position to promote cooperation among states and further the common goals of the world community. During my tenure as President of the General Assembly, I will do my part to guide the organization in fulfilling its universal mission.

Before closing, I would like to join my wife in expressing our personal gratitude for this opportunity to visit the beautiful country of Norway-a beauty manifest in the character of its people no less than in its landscape.

I first came here in 1989 on an official visit when I was Korea's Trade and Industry Minister and had the great honor to meet the late King Olav V. Now, 12 years later, I have the good fortune to revisit Norway twice in three days in two different capacities-as Korea's Foreign Minister accompanying President Kim Dae-jung for the Nobel century celebrations and on this occasion as President of the UN General Assembly.

I hope to keep up with this tradition of wearing a different "hat" on each of my visits to Norway. I look forward to the next visit when it will be that of a leisurely tourist for a longer period.

Now may I ask all of you to join me in a toast to continued peace and prosperity for the Kingdom of Norway and its people and to the health of His Majesty King Harald V and those gathered here this evening.