

7 May 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Reception hosted by the NGO Committee on UNICEF**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests:

Let me first thank the Steering Group of the NGO Committee on UNICEF for hosting this reception. I would also take this occasion to acknowledge the outstanding work of UNICEF in behalf of the world's children under the current leadership of Executive Director Carol Bellamy.

Tomorrow marks the start of what is undoubtedly the most important event to be held at the UN's New York headquarters during the current session of the General Assembly. Its importance is two-fold. First, it is one of the largest gatherings of world leaders ever held at the UN. Second, and above all, its subject is perhaps the single most important that the UN has ever addressed – namely, the future of the world's children.

Certainly, we expect much of the 70 or so world leaders who are attending this historic event. It is up to them to mobilize the political will necessary to achieve the ambitious goals that the Special Session will endorse.

Yet their role is necessarily limited by their various other responsibilities and by the very constraints that reality places on political leadership. In practical terms, the goals of the Special Session will ultimately be met through the dedicated efforts of innumerable men, women, and children, many of whom have joined together in non-governmental organizations.

And so it is very fitting indeed that we honor these NGOs and the people who work in and through them. I am, therefore, especially pleased to see so many of them represented here this evening. I am no less pleased that we have with us a large number of the youth representatives who will be participating in the Special Session. Their insights and input will be critical to the Session's outcome and to all of its follow-up activities.

Let me conclude by asking all of you to do your utmost in the next few days to help ensure that the UN Special Session on Children lives up to the high expectations we all have of it. Surely, few challenges are so worthy of your best efforts as this.

Thank you.