

10 May 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Closing of the Special Session of the General Assembly on  
Children**

Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to congratulate all of you for the quality of debate over the last three days, your commitment and, above all, for the adoption of a new agenda for children: a framework for action to ensure the well-being of every child, in every country.

This Special Session would not have been so highly productive without the invaluable contributions of Member States, many of whom were represented by heads of state or government, and the full commitment of civil society and, above all, children and young people themselves.

A record number of side events have taken place, where Member States, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, religious leaders, parliamentarians, NGOs and the private sector met together with children to share their experience, vision and, above all, to discuss how to translate words into action at all levels. The discussions were lively and interactive, which enriched this Special Session in a most profound way. I wish to thank all the participants.

Building on the lessons learned since the World Summit for Children in 1990, and taking into account the emerging challenges and opportunities of today's world, we have adopted a Plan of Action that establishes new goals for children, key actions to be taken to meet those goals and strategies to monitor our progress.

The Plan of Action sets out specific targets to achieve in the fields of health, education, protection against abuse, exploitation and violence, as well as combating HIV/AIDS among children.

In this regard, the Special Session should not be seen as an end in itself. It is a milestone in a long journey that began in 1990 with the World Summit for Children, that gathered momentum during the 1990s and that has brought us all here to plan our course for the future.

And what have we agreed? To build a world fit for children. To make it a better place for them to grow up in, a place where their basic needs will be met, where their rights will be respected and promoted.

This sounds ambitious, but we have adopted a Declaration that describes, very clearly, the steps we must take to build a new world fit for children. It does so in a clear, concise and robust manner. It is a practical and achievable checklist, not only for a better future, but also for immediate action that will improve child well-being today.

Significant national efforts, including the mobilization of human, financial and material resources, are essential for achieving the targets in the outcome document. The leadership of each Member State should show its commitment to this end.

At this juncture, it is crucially important to recognize that chronic poverty remains the biggest obstacle to promoting the welfare of children in many developing countries. The international development goals and strategies agreed upon at major United Nations conferences, in particular the Millennium Summit, should be continuously pursued by the international community in order to assist developing countries in eradicating poverty and promoting the well-being of children.

In closing, I wish to give special recognition and thanks to Her Excellency Ambassador Patricia Durrant, of Jamaica, who served as the chairperson of the Committee of the Whole, and the other members of the bureau for their excellent work that has contributed to the success of this Special Session.

I should also like to thank Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF and her staff for their tireless efforts and wholehearted dedication to ensure the success of this historic meeting.

Last but not least, I wish to thank the Secretariat, General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and all other departments who devoted exemplary service to this Special Session.

The real work of creating a world fit for children has only just begun. But our achievements thus far should give us confidence to face the arduous challenges ahead. On behalf of the world's children, I call upon all of you to commit yourselves fully to this most imperative of tasks.

Thank you.