

5 June 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
on World Environment Day**

World Environment Day 2002 marks the tenth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit and the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This year the World Summit on Sustainable Development will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, which provides us with the unique opportunity to accelerate international cooperation toward an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable world.

Over the last decade, much progress has been made in implementing Agenda 21. However, much more remains to be done for achieving sustainable development at the global level. Despite an increased level of knowledge about the state of the planet and a multitude of environmental treaties and agreements, we still remain environmentally vulnerable.

Massive poverty in the developing countries constitutes one of the most important causes of environmental degradation. As long as hundreds of millions of people remain poor, sustainable development will be an unachievable ideal. Eradication of poverty will lead to better environmental protection and sustainable development. Therefore, the various development targets in the United Nations Millennium Declaration should be vigorously pursued by the whole international community.

The theme of this year's World Environment Day is Give Earth a Chance, an urgent summons to each and every one of us to contribute to the healing of our ailing planet. To Give Earth a Chance, the World Summit in Johannesburg must summon up the political will to implement the promises of Rio by reaching an agreement to take concrete actions with reasonable timetables.

On this World Environment Day, let us carefully consider the actions which each of us has to take and then address ourselves to our common task of preserving the earth with a firm and sober resolution. I strongly believe that by doing so, we will be able to bequeath a clean and green earth to future generations - one of the highest goals to which humanity can aspire.