

20 June 2002

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

Today we celebrate the second World Refugee Day, which this year is dedicated to refugee women. There are approximately 50 million uprooted people around the world seeking safety in another country or displaced within their own country. About 80 percent of them are women and children. Refugee women are particularly burdened in two ways: they should hold their families together in the most adverse situations; they are vulnerable to all kinds of sexual and gender based violence, including human trafficking. Yet, refugee women overcome difficulties and contribute to reconciliation and peace.

I should like to emphasize that, as enshrined in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations, the human rights of all men, women and children, refugees and other persons of concern, should be fully respected. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. Primary responsibility for protecting and assisting refugees lies with states, particularly the countries of asylum to which refugees flee. I urge all Member States of the United Nations and UN agencies to foster a culture of protection for refugees and other persons of concern through the application of international humanitarian law.

In this regard, I would like to highly commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other UN agencies for their tireless efforts to provide international protection and assistance to refugees and other persons of concern, including asylum seekers, to implement the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and to promote durable solutions to their problems since the establishment of the Office.

Refugees are people who overcome immense hardship. They survive with courage and strength; they endure with dignity and hope. World Refugee Day is a day on which we honour these remarkable qualities. Let us join our efforts, in the form of partnership among governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society, to help refugees realize their full potential in building a future for themselves and their children.