

8 July 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Adoption of the Resolution on Amendments to  
Rules 30, 31 and 99 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly**

Before we proceed to elect the President and other officers of the 57th session of the General Assembly in accordance with the resolution we have just adopted, I wish to make a few remarks.

Distinguished Delegates,

The decision we have made today is to bring about a change that will have far-reaching implications for the work, not only of the General Assembly, but of the entire UN system. For the first time in the history of our world body, the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees will be elected in sufficient advance, not at the beginning, of a session. This change does not merely represent a procedural modification. It will constitute a major step toward strengthening the General Assembly by enabling its President to play his or her role in a much more consolidated and efficient manner.

As had been the case with my predecessors, my personal experience attested to the need to ensure consistency and smooth transition between Presidencies as well as to better prepare the future President for his or her job. The serious irony was that the most important period in carrying out the duties of the President, which probably is the first few months, is a time when the President is least experienced during his or her one-year term. As for me personally, the events following the September 11 terrorist attacks made it even more challenging for me to get adjusted to the new job while dealing with a number of unexpected and unprecedented happenings in conducting the business of the General Assembly. This experience has come to convince me that we should have a better way of choosing and preparing the President of the General Assembly, especially in this globalizing world where events of a global scale can happen and affect every corner of the world in the matter of hours.

The need to strengthen the role of the President has been long discussed in the context of revitalization of the General Assembly. The issue of revitalization of the General Assembly has been discussed under the agenda item "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly" as well as "Strengthening of the United Nations system". Last year in particular, my predecessor, President Holkeri, conducted a series of informal consultations on this issue, which led to General Assembly resolution 55/285 containing reform measures such as the clustering of agenda items.

Reflecting the wish of Member States to continue this process, I announced last April the plan to start a new round of informal consultations on revitalization of the General Assembly. So far, there have been four meetings of the Open-ended Informal Consultation, at which we have discussed the non-paper by the President and reached agreement on the draft resolution that was adopted this morning. An updated version of the non-paper will be shortly distributed to Member States and also be forwarded to the President of the 57th session for continued discussion. I would like to remind you that the efforts to reform and revitalize the General Assembly is an ongoing, long-term process, in which we need to be steadfast and patient to make progress step by step, building on the past achievements.

As for the implementation of the resolution, I am pleased to report to you that I have wasted no time. In fact, the last Member State I visited was the Czech Republic as recently as at the end of last month, where I met Minister Jan Kavan. To be sure, Minister Kavan and I will make the most of the remaining two months until the end of the 56th session to enable a most smooth and efficient transition between ourselves as well as our staffs. I hope this will set a good precedent not only for the future sessions of the General Assembly but all other institutions of the United Nations system.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest appreciation to the Facilitators for this process, Amb. Jean-David Levitte of France, Amb. Gabriel Valdes of Chile, Amb. Hynek Kmonicek of the Czech Republic, Amb. Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore, and Amb. Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo of South Africa, for their untiring efforts to make progress on this front. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to the Chairmen and members of the Regional Groups for active participation and cooperation in this process, as well as to the Secretariat for their valuable assistance.

Thank you.