

11 July 2002

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

Upon the initiative of the UNDP/UNFPA Governing Council, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 45/216 in which the General Assembly selected 11 July as World Population Day and as a means of publicizing population-related issues.

The population of the poorest countries, which are least able to afford basic services, has continued to grow rapidly in spite of declining fertility in most parts of the world. In the next 50 years, the population of the least developed countries is projected to triple, from 658 million to 1.8 billion people. As population growth is closely linked with development and human right issues, there is a compelling need for population policies of these countries, thus reducing poverty and eventually enhancing basic human rights of the most vulnerable persons such as women, children and aged.

Policies in the national level for protecting and promoting human conditions requires strong political will based on long-term plan of accountable population growth. National governments should provide people with proper education for more choices and for better health. At the same time, we need to address the poverty problem to increase opportunities for poor people to improve their basic humanitarian needs.

Around the world, the last two generations of women have chosen to have smaller families and the next generation will do the same if they have the information and means to do so. The right of individuals and couples to freely determine the number, timing and spacing of births is a basic human right. Yet around the world, an estimated 350 million couples do not have access to adequate and appropriate family planning services. This unmet need is greatest in the poorest segments of the poorest countries.

In this regard, the theme for this year selected by UNFPA, "Action Against Poverty: empower, protect, educate" is timely and relevant. It recognizes poverty as a complex multidimensional problem. As the first step to reduce poverty, UNFPA urged the international community at the World Summit on Food Security in Rome last month to take positive actions to empower community and local groups, especially women, by providing basic education and primary and maternal health care, and advancing the status of women through their full participation in decision making.

As these recommendations depend for their effect upon the political will of the national governments and support of international society, I call upon Member States of the United Nations, the UN agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, and civil society to join in the efforts of UNFPA to implement the theme for this year.