

2 September 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
at the World Summit on Sustainable Development**

Mr. President, Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very pleased and honoured to address this historic World Summit on Sustainable Development. On behalf of the United Nations General Assembly, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the government and people of South Africa for hosting this event.

I hope that, under your able leadership, Mr. President, this meeting will produce fruitful results, laying another important milestone in our common endeavors to achieve well-being and prosperity for all humankind.

Ten years ago the international community wholeheartedly welcomed the adoption of the Rio Principles and Agenda 21 at the Rio Summit, which provided the road map for achieving sustainable development.

Today we gather here in Johannesburg to reaffirm our commitments made in Rio and to take further steps to ensure their implementation. Despite the notable progress during the last ten years, we have to admit that we are still far short of realizing what we agreed to achieve.

In some cases, on the contrary, the situation has even deteriorated. The number of people living in extreme poverty has increased over the last decade. Environmental degradation continues to pose serious and alarming threats to the safety of our planet. I believe that as important as promoting sustainable development is how to stop the reversal process of development, which one might term as "de-development." There could be several different causes of "de-development," but whatever they are, we should closely cooperate on a global level to deter "de-development."

In this context, the five areas- water, energy, health, agriculture, and biodiversity- suggested by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as areas where progress should be made at this meeting merit the full support and active cooperation of all of us. And there are also some other formidable challenges in the field of development that need to be addressed at a global level.

The eradication of poverty is at the forefront of our efforts in achieving sustainable development. No less important is the protection of our environment. Over the last two years, the United Nations particularly has made serious efforts to provide the necessary impetus in these areas.

The historic Millennium Summit was instrumental in bringing greater focus and attention to a number of international development goals. It is satisfying to note that the momentum gathered by the Millennium Summit significantly contributed to the successes of major efforts of the international community, particularly the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization, held in Doha last November, and the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey in March this year.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development now provides us with a timely opportunity to explore ways to build on the progress to be made in implementing the Doha Development Agenda and the Monterrey Consensus. This Summit is also important for ensuring the active involvement of all stakeholders and actors, including not only states but also NGOs, in the implementation process through true partnership.

I sincerely hope that the Plan of Implementation, which we adopt at this meeting, will be concrete and practicable with a suitable timeframe and a set of means so as to facilitate the implementation without fail.

With regard to the follow-up of this meeting, I, on behalf of the United Nations General Assembly, earnestly believe that the UN system has a critical role to play.

I also view that there is an urgent need to integrate follow-up actions to the Millennium Declaration, the Doha Development Agenda, the Monterrey Consensus, and the outcome of this meeting. And as such, the United Nations General Assembly would provide a most appropriate forum to serve this purpose. I strongly propose to use the high-level dialogue of the General Assembly for deliberating effective ways and means to achieve the various international development goals and sustainable development in a more mutually reinforcing manner.

Mr. President,

The world is facing immense and daunting challenges. We are trying to set ambitious goals. Therefore it is only fitting that we should cooperate, we should combine our efforts to determine how we will achieve them. The Plan of Implementation should guide us towards making a sustainable global community a reality.

Let me stress that the tasks before us are not just for us but for our future generations. Let us work together to preserve our home, the Earth. And let us forge a global partnership to bring sustainable development forward.

Thank you.