

1 October 2002

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
on International Day of Older persons**

As we celebrate the twelfth International Day of Older persons, we have to recognize that the life spans of individuals and populations are steadily increasing. This changing demographic picture of the older generations around the world has consequences, which need to be managed by governments and civil society. In 1991, United Nations promulgated the Principals for Older Persons, "to add life to the years that have been added to life." The first day of October was designated as the International Day of Older Persons. Governments were encouraged to assess the situations in their countries and to include the participation of the older generations to formulate appropriate policies in the context of their cultures and traditions, to enhance their well-being and promote their positive contributions in society.

Ageing is common to all of us and if we are fortunate to live to an old age, we will need the support and special attention of our society. There is no doubt that older persons can contribute in many spheres of activities if they have access to appropriate opportunities. To tackle this demanding but important task, we must ensure that there will be no discrimination or prejudice against older persons and that the dignity of their person is respected. Our goal must be a wholesome society characterised by intergenerational interdependence and solidarity.

Problems brought about by ageing must be addressed and analysed carefully. It is primarily the responsibility of individual countries to address these problems. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, which was convened in April of this year in Madrid, served as a truly global forum on ageing. Representatives from 159 countries participated. I would like to stress the importance of partnerships between governments, all parts of civil society and the private sector, in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, which emphasizes the necessity of mainstreaming ageing in the global development agenda. It is in our common interest to collaborate in support for the attainment of the objectives stated in the Plan of Action.

Finally, on behalf of the United Nations, let me express my deep gratitude to all those who are participating in improving the lives of older persons around the world and I would like to wish all the best to all of them on this special occasion.