

13 March 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Assassination of Zoran Djindjic, Prime Minister of Serbia**

Colleagues, I would like to express my deep shock and sadness at learning of the assassination of His Excellency Zoran Djindjic, Prime Minister of Serbia. I would like to extend my deepest sympathies to the government and people of Serbia, and to Mr. Djindjic's family, in their loss.

I feel personally very strongly about this and share the pain caused by this cruel act as Zoran was a friend of mine and a former fellow human rights dissident. I have worked with him when we were both dissidents as well as when he continued in his opposition to Milosevic regime and I was a Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic and lastly when we were both in top government positions and endeavoured to work for democratic Central Europe as our contribution to better conditions in Europe and the world.

A violent act, deplorable as it is in itself, is particularly so when perpetrated against a democratically elected head of government. I firmly believe that this act of political violence should in no way stop the progress that Serbia and Montenegro has made in the process of democratization, of reform, and international cooperation. I perceive it also as a challenge to us all and as a reminder that we have to continue to help to consolidate democratic forces throughout the world.