

9 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at a Fundraising Luncheon honoring the twelve female Ambassadors
organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women**

It is a great pleasure for me to join you at this fundraising luncheon. I would like to thank the NGO Committee on the Status of Women for organizing this event honoring the female Ambassadors at the United Nations.

We have recently completed the five-year review and appraisal of the Fourth World Conference on Women. It was an occasion to assess the progress achieved in the context of the Beijing Platform on Action. It was also an opportunity to reaffirm our goals and objectives for gender equality and the economic and political advancement and empowerment of women.

As targets of one global conference cannot be implemented in isolation, we need to remember that a gender perspective must be incorporated into all policies and operations of the United Nations. Gender equality is essential in all areas of our work, such as housing, employment opportunities, social development and human rights. I was very pleased to see that the issue of gender mainstreaming was taken up by the Secretary-General also in the recent report on the implementation of the Brahimi report.

I have repeatedly stated that one of the issues I personally consider particularly important is education of girls. Education is a significant investment in social capital. It helps to build local self-reliance and provides assets for meaningful participation in economic and political life. I welcome the interagency initiative to promote girls' education launched this year at the World Education Forum in Dakar.

At the dawn of the new Millennium, we have an opportunity to strengthen our relationship between the UN and civil society. I strongly believe that the activities of governments and civil society can complement each other. This was well illustrated also during the Beijing conference. Enhanced partnership with civil society at large is necessary to implement the development agenda of the global conferences and the commitments of the Millennium Declaration.

Further action, initiatives, and dialogue are needed to fulfil the targets defined in Beijing. We also need to ensure that women participate equally in all bodies and processes at the United Nations. This requires joint efforts from all of us. Governments have their responsibility to create an enabling environment for gender equality, but NGOs have a valuable role in implementation and collecting information on trends and factors, which are useful for policy-making. Thus, it is important to have the female ambassadors and the NGO-Committee on the Status of Women join

together at this luncheon. I would like to thank and encourage you in your efforts towards a more equal and just world.