

28 November 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals 2001 launch**

I should like to congratulate the organizers of this year's Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals event for its very timely and acute theme "Women and War". War and conflict affect millions of women and children, and their suffering must be acknowledged and addressed. I am proud to participate in the launch of the 2001 Consolidated Appeals. I also welcome the widening of the scope of the Appeals launch so that this year they take place in several capitals around the world. The Appeals provide opportunities for the international community to join forces and contribute to resolving problems of a purely humanitarian character.

The objectives of the Appeals are directly relevant to the United Nations "Millennium Declaration" adopted by the heads of State and Government attending the Summit held in New York in September this year. The world leaders committed themselves to spare no effort to ensure that "all civilian populations that suffer disproportionately the consequences of natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies are given every assistance and protection so that they can resume normal life as soon as possible." The world leaders further resolved to strengthen coordination of humanitarian assistance "to help all refugees and displaced persons to return voluntarily to their homes, in safety and dignity and to be smoothly reintegrated into their societies."

The Consolidated Appeals implement these objectives. They are critical in alleviating the suffering of civilians while facilitating rehabilitation, recovery and peace building efforts. They also help strengthen the overall coordination of humanitarian response. I call upon all Member States to heed these appeals to meet the needs of the victims of conflict and natural disasters and to contribute generously to the requirements of the Appeals. This is an opportunity to show our commitment to help those who need help and who have scarce resources for their sustenance. I also request Member States to pay special attention to the appeals for specific countries that have received poor response in recent years.

My words are also addressed to those Member States which experience armed conflict, to support the efforts of the humanitarian community by facilitating safe, unimpeded and unrestricted access for humanitarian personnel and supplies. Full cooperation of the governments of these countries is a prerequisite for ensuring that relief assistance is safely delivered to civilian beneficiaries. Humanitarian assistance should be given safe passage under any regime. I encourage Member States to set aside all political differences in favour of the needs of the victims. This should be self-explanatory under the provisions of international humanitarian law, but clearly, it needs to be repeated and reaffirmed and by all Member States in various UN fora.

I wish you every success for this year's Consolidated Appeals Process.