

5 December 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
on the occasion of the Finnish Food Festival luncheon**

Let me welcome you all warmly to this luncheon marking the start of the Finnish Food Festival in the United Nations. During the next two weeks, you will find Finnish delicacies served in the dining room, prepared by a team of chefs from Helsinki's finest restaurants. Good food can unite people, and in that regard the United Nations is no exception.

When I was a child and didn't want to eat something, my grandmother used a Finnish proverb, which roughly translated means "You can't lift up your heels merely with potatoes". And as you can see from the menu of the food festival, there is a lot more to food in Finland than just potatoes. We combine the finest ingredients with Scandinavian flair and Finnish high-tech gastronomy.

One of my favorite foods is fish. Perhaps this is because my both names are names of fishes. Harri is the Finnish word for grayling. Holkeri, on the other hand, is the name of a man-eating shark found in the Arctic Ocean. I've never eaten this particular fish. But I've certainly eaten lots of other typically Finnish fish: Baltic herring, lavaret, trout and salmon. Over the years, I've discovered there are hundreds of ways to spoil fish through cooking it the wrong way. I can, however, guarantee you that the team of chefs here from Finland will not spoil fish.

Today's main course, venison, is another typically Finnish dish. Let me in this connection guarantee you that despite our rather heavy consumption of venison this afternoon, Santa Claus - who, by the way, lives in Finland - will be able to find transportation in three weeks' time. I have been personally involved to ensure that Rudolf is safe and sound and at Santa's disposal. Being the President of the General Assembly does indeed make a difference!

Finally, let me thank all of you for your support and cooperation over the past three months. This main part of the 55th - or Millennium - session of the General Assembly will soon be over. The session has been productive and marked by good spirits. In that sense, we have been able to maintain the momentum and atmosphere of the Millennium Summit. I am confident that we can continue in the same spirit next year, as the work of the General Assembly continues.