

23 December 2000

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the conclusion of the first part of the 55th Session**

It has been a very busy three and half months for all of us and I believe we should be quite satisfied with the results achieved. The Assembly has taken action on many important issues. I do not intend to go through them all of them here. I will post a short summary on the work of the Committees and the plenary on my web page for this purpose.

For now, I would like to share some observations on the work done so far and thoughts on how we might want to go about the business next year.

The Millennium Summit was the seminal event of this General Assembly and laid the agenda for our work. The main challenge for the Millennium Assembly was how to implement the Summit Declaration.

In my view, the Declaration is one of the most important documents of recent time. If we are able to achieve its targets, it will have an enormous impact globally.

I am therefore very pleased that with the co-operation and support of all Delegations we managed to establish a follow-up mechanism to the Millennium Summit as an integral part of the on-going work of the United Nations in resolution 55/162.

It is also clear to me that in order to implement these goals the United Nations needs to open up. We need to enhance international co-operation, build bridges between societies and improve global governance. We need to reach out to other international and multilateral actors, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations as well as civil society as a whole. As I have stressed many times, the significance and relevance of the United Nations in the future will depend on our ability to involve our partners and civil society in our work.

In the past few weeks two major items on the Assembly's agenda have dominated our discussions: what will the Assembly decide concerning the implementation of the Brahimi report and will it agree to a new scale of assessments.

As far as the Brahimi report is concerned, the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a high-level panel and the report presented by this panel was welcome and timely. The report is a valuable contribution to the efforts to strengthen one of the UN's core functions - the maintenance of international peace and security.

As the President of the General Assembly I encouraged the Assembly to consider this extensive report in a speedy manner and together with Member States we managed to reach agreement in the very short time of one month. Given the complexity of this issue and the time pressure, I think we can be quite satisfied with the results. Much-needed additional resources will be made available to the Secretariat. However, work will have to continue in the New Year and I trust that the political will is there to complete the effort.

During the past couple of weeks we had extremely difficult and complex negotiations on the scale of assessments. I made several appeals myself to Delegations to come up with a substantive negotiated agreement - by consensus - on the two scales of assessments. That a compromise was finally reached shows that Delegations put the interests of the Organization above everything else and understood the seriousness of the consequences to the Organization of a failure to reach consensus on this critical issue. I commend the Delegations for the outcome reached today.

Throughout this session an important concern of mine has been to find ways to improve the functioning of the General Assembly itself. I have tried to work in an open and transparent way with my colleagues and to foster a collaborative spirit. I have instituted some changes such as amending the rules to establish the dates for the opening of the Assembly's session each year. I am looking at ways to streamline the Assembly's huge agenda and I will be working on this and other proposals next year.

In order to guide this process and to give it some focus I intend to convene an informal 'brainstorming' session of the General Committee sometime in February. I will also prepare a non-paper in connection with the above-mentioned brainstorming session. I believe that several small steps can actually have a big impact together.

Looking ahead to next year, we will have a full calendar of meetings and conferences. For my part, I will keep the momentum going through the special sessions of the General Assembly on human settlements and HIV/AIDS and the other activities of the General Assembly. Concerning the special session on HIV/AIDS, my office and I, with the help of two able facilitators, will have a central role in the preparatory process. I will also chair two working groups that will start meeting next year: on Security Council reform and concerning Africa's special needs.

One observation that I have made during my tenure - having come to the UN from the outside - has to do with the resources of the Organization. The United Nations is clearly underfunded and in desperate need of more adequate resources. Years of zero-nominal growth have taken their toll. It is a policy that has clearly come to the end of its usefulness.

All in all, we have all worked hard and I am sure you are looking forward to a well-deserved break. Before we take that break, let me express a word of thanks. First of all I should like to thank all Ambassadors and delegates for their co-operation. Special thanks go to the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, as well as to the Chairpersons and bureaus of the Main Committees and working groups, not least to Ambassador Gert Rosenthal who chaired a historic

session of the Fifth Committee, for their valuable co-operation and leadership in bringing our work to conclusion. You have shown that the Millennium Summit has indeed created a Momentum and a new spirit of political will that will help us achieve the goals set in the Declaration. I trust that this kind of consensus building and teamwork will help us resolve the challenges ahead.

I should also like to extend my thanks to the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan and to the Secretariat as a whole. In particular, I wish to thank the hard-working staff of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services under the able leadership of Under-Secretary-General Yongjian Jin. Special thanks go to the teams of Mr. Vadim Perfiliev and Mr. Özdinch Mustafa, as well as to our interpreters, conference room officers and documentation officers. Without them, our meetings would not have been possible. My team and I are deeply grateful to all of them.

Finally, I wish to thank the media, which has followed our agenda this session. Through them, I hope, we have been able to convey a more open and more easily understandable picture of the work of the General Assembly to the general public.

I would like to wish you a very happy holiday and I look forward to working with you in the New Year.