

26 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the monthly meeting between the Office of the President of the
General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for
the month of February**

The meeting was attended by the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups for the month of February: Mali (African States), Nepal (Asian States), Albania (Eastern European States), Costa Rica (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Austria (Western European and other States).

1. IMPROVING THE WORKING METHODS OF THE ASSEMBLY

The President noted that he has addressed the question of improving the working methods of the Assembly several times at these meetings with regional chairs. The membership had a very good exchange of views on 13 and 14 February at the open-ended brainstorming session of the General Committee. He added that he intends to arrange an informal informal of the Plenary some time in March.

In the meantime, together with Ambassador Valdes, the President will continue to consult Member States and major groups in order to prepare for that meeting. He will also, with the assistance of Ambassador Valdes, prepare a non-paper to facilitate discussions at the meeting. The President told that his goal, which he believes is shared by all, is to enable the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the UN to play its role effectively. He added that the focus is on implementing existing decisions.

2. SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

The responsibility to bring this process forward lies with the Member States. The President assured that he will do his best to facilitate the process.

The first substantive meeting will be from March 12 to 16 and the President said that he hopes to be able to focus the discussion so that progress can be made. All issues, including the veto, need to be discussed. It is important that Member States speak out in the working group and that capitals are linked to this process so as to engage the vital political will to move ahead - after 7 years.

3. AFRICA WORKING GROUP

Concerning the work of the Working Group, the President noted that he has just today sent a letter to inform Member States about the dates scheduled for the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa:

20 March 2001 (organisational session)
 29 May through 1 June 2001; and
 30 July through 3 August 2001.

The President added that it is his hope that all delegations will take an active part in these meetings in order to make the work of the Working Group a success. At the moment the bureau is consulting on the forthcoming work, including the possible themes to be monitored by the group. The need to try to focus the discussion on themes that have not been dealt sufficiently in the Working Group was noted. The question of conflict prevention and peace building has been mentioned, and the President said that he agrees that it is indeed important.

The President told that he looks forward co-operating also with the President of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Ambassador Belinga Eboutou, to follow up the recommendation of establishing an ad hoc advisory group on countries emerging from conflict. At the meeting of the Heads of Regional Organizations (February 5), the President had invited them to enhance their input to the work of the group, and he added that he hopes they take act upon his invitation.

4. MILLENNIUM SUMMIT FOLLOW UP

The President said that he continues to follow up the implementation of Resolution 162/55. There is a need to clarify the ideas about how and when the road map should come out and what is the procedure for the annual reports. In that context, the President noted that he recently hosted a luncheon for major groupings where the Secretariat briefed about the progress in preparing the road map and about cooperation within the Secretariat on the follow up. The Secretariat's intentions are to produce the road map, after considerable joint efforts (including through the ACC) within the Secretariat, not before this coming summer.

It was also noted that the President has attended systematically the preparations for major upcoming events to ensure follow up aspect in these processes. Furthermore, the monthly meetings with coordinators of these upcoming events have continued, during which reporting requirements and non-governmental organisation (NGO) participation have been discussed.

5. HIV/AIDS SPECIAL SESSION

The President reminded the Chairpersons of his letter of 20 February 2001, in which he requested their assistance in nominating the chairs of the roundtables in the special session on HIV/AIDS, which will be held on 25 to 27 June. The President added that he trusts that they will communicate to him the nominations from their groups soon.

In the same connection, the President also noted that the WEOG group would not need to react, as the Presidency of the session is with this group. Identification of the chairs of the roundtables - of which the President said that he is sure about - will facilitate further organizational issues, including participation of Member States in the round tables.