

20 March 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the First Meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group
on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace
and Sustainable Development in Africa
Organizational session**

The President welcomed all delegations to the first meeting and said that he was pleased to see that Member States have responded to the Bureau's appeal with regard to active participation in these meetings. He noted that their input is vital in order to make the work of the working group a success.

The President welcomed the presence here of the two Vice-Chairpersons, His Excellency Mr. Shamshad AHMAD, Permanent Representative of Pakistan and His Excellency Mr. Inocencio ARIAS, Permanent Representative of Spain.

The President also acknowledged and welcomed the presence of Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary General and Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa, who has been requested to assume the responsibility as the main co-ordinator for this Working Group. Mr. Gambari ensured full co-operation and support from the secretariat to the Working Group.

After the agenda for the organizational session was adopted the President turned into the programme of work and referred to his letter to the Member States of February 23, in which he had informed them of 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:

That is
20 March 2001
29 May through 1 June 2001;
and 30 July through 3 August 2001.

The President noted that the intention is to meet in the mornings, but if needed the meetings can be adjusted to the afternoons.

The question of the substance of work was then brought up. The President recalled that the General Assembly requested the Working Group, in resolution 55/217, in devising the modalities of its work, to consider the need for a comprehensive follow-up to the recommendations of the Secretary-General and the necessity of ensuring efficiency by focusing on selected thematic areas.

The Bureau having conducted extensive consultations on this issue suggested that the Working Group would focus on the following two themes:

- conflict prevention and post-conflict peace- building
- education.

The Group adopted these two themes to focus its discussions.

The Bureau proposed that in order to discuss these themes in an effective manner and in order to fulfill the mandate of the Working Group, which is to monitor implementation of all recommendations made by the Secretary General in his report, the Working Group would adopt a programme of work as contained in CRP.2.

In this regard the President noted that the mandate of the Working Group, as decided by the General Assembly, had been reproduced in the first part of CRP.2 for information. It was also noted that the intention of the Bureau is that during the meeting from 29 May through 1 June 2001 the group would focus on monitoring the two themes agreed upon.

The President noted that as last year the secretariat would provide the Working Group with necessary CRP's to facilitate their work. In addition and in order to facilitate the monitoring and to make the work operative the Bureau intends to invite presentations of relevant

- Regional organisations
- UN agencies
- Secretariat
- Members States.

The President informed the Group that at the meeting of the Heads of Regional Organizations on February 5, he had invited the Regional Organisations to enhance their input to the work of the Working Group, and the Bureau, together with the secretariat would follow up on this.

The President also informed the Group that the Bureau is exploring on how an informal non-governmental organizations (NGO) hearing could be arranged so that they could come and present their work in the field as an input in implementing the Secretary-General's report. The President noted that similar modalities as those used for NGO hearings in connection with the preparations for the Financing for Development could be looked at in this connection. The intention is to try to organise this during our first the same week, if not one afternoon/morning in June. The Bureau will continue to consult Member States on this issue.

The President then moved on to the issues to be taken up during the second substantive meeting 30 July through 3 August 2001.

The Bureau suggested that the Group would monitor what were the major outcomes - as far as Africa is concerned - in the major events this year that have taken place until that time: that is LDC conference, HIV/AIDS Special Session, Habitat II Conference, ECOSOC High Level and

Small Arms Conference. This exercise would be based mainly on the inputs from the secretariat. The President noted that this would, in his opinion, be also in line with the special attention that was paid to the needs of Africa in the Millennium Declaration as well as the reference to the Declaration in resolution 55/217.

It was further noted that During that session the draft report to be submitted to the 56th GA will have to be prepared and adopted.