

23 March 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
to the World Meteorological Organization on World Meteorological
Day - "Volunteers for Weather, Climate and Water"**

Voluntary cooperation is the corner stone of meteorological and hydrological information flow worldwide. Long before we uttered the word "globalization", the services of meteorological and hydrological observers and their networks were globalized. Voluntarism involves the voluntary cooperation of individuals and also of the 185 members of the World Meteorological Organization, which contribute to the global observation networks and programmes.

The World Weather Watch (WWW) programme, now nearly 40 years old, is one significant fruit of this cooperation. It coordinates data collection, processing, and dissemination of meteorological and oceanographic information delivered from every corner of the world. The magnitude of this voluntary effort is vast - 10,000 land-based and 1,000 upper air observation stations, 7,300 ships, 900 buoys out at sea, and 3,000 aircrafts, for a total of over 15 million data characters, and 2,000 weather charts, collected, processed, and transmitted nearly in real-time. - We take weather forecasts for granted - we rarely think about the immense global voluntary effort supporting these services. Yet they affect all sectors of life: agriculture, water-resources, civil aviation and maritime transport, tourism and many other areas in individual countries and regions.

At a time of high technology and satellite communication, the voluntary "storm spotters", radio amateurs, and rescue workers are still important - they are on the spot when earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes hit. These people save lives and mitigate economic losses with their willingness to serve and to share.

I should like to congratulate the World Meteorological Organization for a very timely theme of this World Meteorological Day. It shows how different sectors of society can work together in a mutually complementary manner, thus reinforcing the message of the International Year of Volunteers 2001.