

3 April 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at a Luncheon at the United Nations University**

It is a pleasure to join you at this luncheon and to share some thoughts and observations about the UN and its work from the head quarter's perspective.

We have just opened the United Nations Gallery at the United Nations House. For me that was a very symbolic event of opening the doors of the UN to the outside world. One of my priorities as President of the Assembly has been to reach out to civil society in order to fully benefit from its expertise and to ensure its involvement in the work of the UN. I consider it is also to be a necessary means to strengthening the Organization. In this era of globalization, the UN and national governments cannot do their work alone.

As part of the implementation of the Summit Declaration, a call was made for enhanced partnership and co-operation with civil society, including the private sector. I myself have emphasized that we need to explore innovative ways to enable civil society to contribute to the work of the UN system. The input from the academic community and research institutions is of particular importance. In this respect the United Nations University provides the UN with a great opportunity to build new linkages and broaden the old ones. It is important that the whole UN system takes full benefit from the work and research activities of the University. And I welcome the University's efforts to strengthen its working links with the UN organizations. It is crucial to further intensify this cooperation, by all parties, so that the University can implement its role as a think-tank for the UN system.

The Summit last September gave the UN family a huge task. Although the main responsibility to implement the commitments made rests with governments, the UN has a key role to play in assisting Member States in this process. Declaration. It is important that in its research activities the University contributes to the implementation of these recommendations.

Since I have this unique opportunity to meet representatives from so many different UN organizations and programmes I feel compelled to say a few words about the role of the UN system in general. Let me start by saluting UN personnel in the field - for your dedication, commitment and hard work. You provide the backbone of the work of the Organisation.

The Millennium Summit laid the agenda for our work. The main challenge now is 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.

Your contribution to the follow-up and implementation of the Summit Declaration will be vital. The implementation mechanism within the UN system lies basically on the existing structures. This requires that the whole UN system will have to make an extra effort and work together towards the common goals set in the Declaration. Co-ordination is needed not only amongst the different players in the field, but also between the field offices and headquarters.

International and multilateral actors, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations, are becoming increasingly important in harnessing the positive powers of globalization. I have tried myself to further strengthen the bridges with the international financial institutions to foster co-operation and coherent policies on such important issues as financing for development.

Throughout my tenure as President 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. Consultation on this issue will continue when I return to New York.

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

Let me conclude by expressing a word of thanks to the United Nations University for organizing this luncheon. This a sign of the good co-operation that will help us achieve the goals set in the Declaration. I trust that the spirit of teamwork will help us resolve the challenges ahead.

I would like to wish you all a very happy Sakura season and I hope that you will also have the opportunity to take some time and celebrate this time of the year with OHANAMI.