

29 May 2001

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

The President declared open the 2nd meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of the Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. As decided in the organizational session held on 20 March 2001, the Working Group would focus on the themes of "education" and "conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building" during this substantive session. In this connection, the President draw the attention to document A/AC.258/4 containing the provisional agenda of this session which was then adopted.

The President noted that in accordance with decisions adopted at the organizational session we will hear two panels on the respective themes in the following manner: The first panel will be held today on education (item 4 (b) of the agenda) to be continued tomorrow; and the second panel will be held on Thursday on the theme of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building (item 4 (a) of the agenda) to be continued on Friday. After the presentations by all panelists, there will be an interactive debate and exchange of views, including questions and answers and possible presentation of additional information from Member States.

The President said that it is his hope that this inter-active dialogue format will give us a chance to consider the issue at hand in a comprehensive manner and to enable us to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report on The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318).

Since the presentations are not intended as lectures or monologues, he reminded the distinguished panelists that their presentations should not exceed twenty minutes to the key speaker and fifteen minutes to the panelists to allow maximum possible time for ensuing discussions.

The President then referred delegations to the updated matrix prepared by the Secretariat on the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendation as contained in document A/AC.258/2001/CRP.3. Regional Organizations, UN agencies and programs, UN Secretariat have been invited to provide the Working Group with information on the progress made in implementing the specific proposals of the Secretary General contained in his report. This document is a compilation of actions and measures undertaken by the Secretariat and UN programmes and specialized agencies. It reflects the progress made and outlines some of the obstacles in pursuance of the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report.

The President draw the attention to the two thematic papers that will serve as background material and thus enrich the discussions. He thanked all the UN funds and programmes and specialized agencies and regional organisations for their contributions.

Delegations will have noticed in the Journal that in connection with the meetings of the Working Group two side events will be organized together and with the participation of non-governmental organizations. The President wanted at the outset to mention that this is the first time such events are organized within the framework of the Ad Hoc Group's deliberations. This initiative is in line with the Millennium Summit Declaration which called for enhanced co-operation and partnerships with the civil society.

It was noted that during the first days of each thematic discussion an informal NGO session will be organized during the lunch hour in this same Conference room 3, so that NGOs can present their activities and initiatives to implementing the Secretary General's report in these important areas. These informal NGO sessions will be chaired by two Vice-chairs respectively. H.E. Mr. Inocencio F. Arias, Permanent Representative of Spain will chair the NGO session today on Education and H.E. Mr. Shamshad Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan will be chairing the NGO session on Thursday on Conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building. The vice-chairpersons will give a briefing to the Working Group on Wednesday and Friday mornings respectively about the discussions in the NGO sessions. These informal sessions will be open to Member States and the UN system and NGOs and media.

The President then turned to agenda item 4 (b). As an introduction to discussion he invited Ms. Yvette Stevens, Special Coordinator for Africa to present the issues paper on the theme of Education.

Before the President gave the floor to the key speaker, he thanked the distinguished key speaker and panelists for accepting our invitation and give their views and experiences on the subject of education in Africa, on behalf of the Vice-Chairpersons as well as members of the Working Group. Then the President invited the keynote speaker, Professor George Eshiwani, Vice-Chancellor of Kenyatta University and the President of the Association of African Universities to lead in the discussion on this important subject.

After the presentation the President gave the floor to the panelists: the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Tidjani-Serpos, the Sector Director for Human Development of the World Bank, Mr. Birger Fredriksen and the Senior Education Adviser of UNICEF, Ms. Mary Pigozzi. The panel discussion was followed by open debate.

After the debate it was noted that tomorrow's meeting will take place at 10:00 a.m. in this same conference room to continue the discussion on education. Before concluding the meeting, the President reminded delegations of that the informal NGO session on Education will take place in this room starting 1.15 sharp.