

5 June 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
on the occasion of World Environment Day**

Life is a finely designed web in which each species and ecosystem support one another and at the same time depend on each other. The theme for World Environment Day, "Connect with the World Wide Web of Life", is a very pertinent one.

This year's World Environment Day of the United Nations Environment Programme coincides with the Special Session of the General Assembly on the 5-year review of the Habitat Agenda. This coincidence underscores the interdependence of our human habitat with the environment and its living and non-living resources. With increasing urbanization, the land area required for human housing is increasing and is expected to increase in the next decades. Already around half of the world's population live in urban settlements. However, even the most urbanized people have a longing to connect with nature - a manifesto of this basic instinct can be seen in roof top gardens and flower arrangements even in the highest skyscrapers and megacities of the world.

It has long been man's desire to conquer nature and make it work for him. However, we should not forget that for our own survival we need the environment and the resources of nature. Nature does not need us. Ultimately human beings are the most dependent and vulnerable species on earth. We must seek a better understanding of this relationship, and commit ourselves to use our environment in a sustainable manner. We must learn to live with our fellow species on earth in harmony and treat them with respect. I strongly believe this should be our primary survival strategy in the long run.