

11 December 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,
on International Day for Tolerance**

The United Nations, recognizing that promotion of tolerance is closely bound up with issues of peace and security, economic prosperity and human rights, which are central to the work of our Organisation, designated the year 1995 as the United Nations Year for Tolerance and declared November 16th as the International Day for Tolerance.

Unfortunately, however, the ceremony this year for the observance of the International Day for Tolerance had to be changed from 16th November to today because of a general rescheduling occasioned by the terrorist attacks of 11 September. Indeed, the unprecedented magnitude and nature of the terrorist attacks against the United States underscores the importance of tolerance as one of the foundation stones of a civilized international order.

As both the General Assembly and the Security Council have clearly affirmed, terrorism in all its manifestations constitutes an assault on the fundamental principles of the global community and of this Organization. Terrorism is a poisoned fruit that grows out of the soil of intolerance and hatred. Over the long term, the most effective way to eliminate the roots of terrorism is by cultivating tolerance and compassion.

During the course of millennia, humanity has developed and nurtured a wealth of cultures and civilizations, which have interacted with and enriched each other, while contributing to the progress of humankind as a whole.

As globalization accelerates and is driven forward by advanced technologies, the process of cultural interaction and exchange is also accelerating. In our increasingly inter-connected world, diverse cultures can provide a needed source of stability and continuity. As identified in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance adopted by the 50th General Assembly, the challenge ahead of us is to balance this need against the risk of cultural intolerance.

To effectively cope with this challenge, we must move from consensus to commitments for sustained action. And so we call upon you, the representatives of civil society, to join us in global efforts to promote tolerance, human rights, development and democracy.

In this regard, I commend the Friends of the United Nations for their dedicated work in behalf of the principles and values of the United Nations Charter – above all, that of tolerance. I wish the

Friends of the United Nations continued success in advancing the goals and ideals for which the United Nations stands.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the recipients of the Award this year and to express my gratitude for their contributions to promoting tolerance and human rights through the medium of the arts.