

United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

10 September 2002

Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan, President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly, on the Opening of the United Nations 57th Session of the General Assembly

Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to assume the Presidency of the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly today. Let me thank you for the trust and confidence you extended to my country and myself. I would like to assure you that I will do my best to perform all my functions and tasks effectively and with full understanding of the concerns of each Member State, as well as for the interests of the United Nations Membership as a whole.

At the outset, let me express sincere gratitude to my most esteemed predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly. Under his able leadership, you have all made the previous Session successful in many areas. I personally highly value the fact that under his guidance an entirely new procedure of transition between General Assembly presidencies was established. The newly adopted rules for election of the President and the General Committee several months ahead is an important achievement that will enable all future General Assembly Presidents to assume their responsibilities in a smoother, more organized and efficient way.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Czech Republic has always emphasized the indispensable role the Organization plays in maintaining international peace and security, enhancing economic, developmental and humanitarian cooperation, and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Over the years, we have served the Organization in many ways, working in various governing bodies in intergovernmental processes and participating in development cooperation and peacekeeping operations all over the world. I therefore assume the General Assembly presidency with a great responsibility and commitment to contribute, in my modest personal capacity, to further strengthening the role of the United Nations.

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to share with you our priorities for the work of the 57th session. As we now commemorate the tragic events of September 11, 2001, we must remain focused on the fight against international terrorism and uphold our international coalition. The strengthening of United Nations instruments, including the set of international treaties combating terrorism, should be central to the efforts of the international community. In this respect, I highly commend the

work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee that greatly contributed to the implementation of the historic Security Council resolution 1373. On the part of the General Assembly, we still have an important task to resolve. We lack the General Convention, including the definition of international terrorism, and I strongly urge Member States to proceed with their work in the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Sixth Committee on this issue. I am ready to take an active part in all UN efforts to combat international terrorism.

It is also crucial to continue our work in the area of conflict prevention. Recent experience suggests that certain conflicts can be prevented through preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament. The far-reaching recommendations of the Secretary-General's Report on Prevention of Armed Conflicts serve as a guide to enhance the United Nations preventive capacity and move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Successful preventive strategies should include accountability and good governance, respect for human rights, promotion of social and economic development, as well as programs aimed at disarmament, education, and gender equality.

The necessity for an effective strategy for conflict prevention is underlined by the number of existing conflicts troubling today's world. One of the most protracted is the Middle East conflict. The international efforts to bring peace to the area, on both a bilateral and an international basis, intensified in the past decade. The United Nations has been actively involved in numerous efforts to resolve the conflict since its establishment, most recently as one of the players in the Quartet initiative. There is a growing hope that the Quartet has a necessary potential to cool down the vicious spiral of violence and to bring new prospects of peaceful settlement to the parties in the conflict. During our deliberations at the General Assembly, I would like to contribute, to the extent possible, to the existing efforts to political resolution of this conflict.

Other issues of great importance I will follow closely are poverty eradication, the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic, and sustainable development in the accelerating process of globalization. The Millennium Summit was a remarkable milestone in our endeavour to explore ways to achieve a more equal distribution of the benefits of globalization. We believe that the 57th session of the General Assembly is the session in which the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development should be duly addressed.

The Millennium Declaration laid out the set of development goals that have been widely accepted as targets for development cooperation. In Monterrey, substantial progress was achieved in the area of financing for development, bringing a number of recommendations to national governments, local authorities and international institutions. The Monterrey Consensus itself gave us guidance on how to change our work in the United Nations in order to achieve better coherence and efficiency. We will also have to improve cooperation between the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Main Committees.

The 57th session of the General Assembly will face the very important and challenging task of preparing for the High-level Dialogue in 2003 as a follow up to the Monterrey Consensus.

Building global partnerships for development is key to its success. During my term of office, I will pay special attention to closer cooperation between the United Nations and major stakeholders, namely the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, as well as other multilateral institutions, representatives of the private sector and civil society.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, Governments reaffirmed their commitments to the achievement of sustainable development. After lengthy and uneasy negotiations, Governments endorsed the Plan of Implementation that contains at least some specific targets, timetables and ways to alleviate poverty and protect the environment. In addition more than 220 partnerships, representing USD 235 million in resources, were introduced at the Summit in Johannesburg to complement the Government commitments.

I am aware that the World Summit did not meet all the expectations of all the people but I am confident that the compromise reached will enable the United Nations to come up with mechanisms that would be instrumental in timely implementation of the commitments made in Johannesburg. As President of the General Assembly, I will support an early follow-up to the World Summit for Sustainable Development. My attention will also be focused on regional initiatives, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Although I am sure that there is no direct causal link between poverty and terrorism, I am at the same time convinced that extreme poverty is one of the important ingredients which combined with some others, such as unresolved long term political conflicts, could produce potentially an explosive cocktail. At the very least it can lead to a feeling of powerlessness, frustration and anger which can create a fertile ground for fundamentalist, radical or even terrorist behavior. We therefore have to implement the Millennium Development Goals and fight poverty not only for moral and humanitarian reasons but also as an integral part of the fight against terrorism and extreme intolerance of all kinds, as part of our struggle for a stable, secure and more just world. I am convinced that for anyone, who truly understands the meaning of international solidarity, and let me stress that we have in mind an ordinary human solidarity, fighting against poverty and for human dignity is a task which has to be tackled. There is no option of doing nothing or even doing less than our utmost.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past two months, I have had the opportunity to consult with some of you on questions of UN reform. I have heard a clear message – we should make the work of the General Assembly more dynamic, lively and efficient. I plan to build on the achievements of my predecessors, President Harri Holkeri and President Han Seung-soo, and continue the work on revitalization of the General Assembly. I intend to hold panel discussions on issues of common interest and informal consultations on items that require more information and interactive dialog. In this regard, I rely on your active involvement.

I want to further improve the working methods of the General Assembly by streamlining its agenda. In this regard, we have already achieved some modest progress. For the first time ever, in a close and effective cooperation with the Secretariat, a draft Programme of Work for the entire main part of the 57th session was provided to the Member States several weeks before the beginning of this Session. In this Programme, items of the agenda have been clustered, allowing for joint or consequent debate on inter-linked issues. The support of Member States for this proposal could help eliminate repetitive speeches and create better pre-conditions for more complex consideration of inter-related and crosscutting issues.

In this connection, I would like to inform you about my strong intention to fully utilize the time allocated for our meetings, including the punctual start of our work. In chairing the meetings, I am determined to adhere to the agreed time limits of speeches. Also in this respect, I hope to gain your support and cooperation.

I look forward to the outcome of the on-going work of the Secretariat on enhancement of its effectiveness as part of the implementation of the Road Map. I am convinced that this initiative combined with the efforts on revitalization of the General Assembly could result in more profound changes that would make the United Nations truly efficient.

As the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform, I will do my utmost to facilitate discussion to bring Member States closer to an agreement. I would like to reiterate that a more representative Security Council reflecting the changed realities of today's world should be in the interest of all Member States.

Mr. Secretary-General, I would like to commend the assistance provided so far to my Office and me from the Secretariat. Let me also express my hope that this kind of constructive cooperation will continue throughout the entire 57th session.

Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, allow me a brief reflection. We all come from different parts of the world, bringing diverse backgrounds, skills, knowledge and approaches. The diversity of our views and cultures makes our discussions rich and powerful, sometimes even dramatic. On the other hand, we all have a lot in common – particularly our desire to live in a peaceful and secure world where the values and the principles expressed in the UN Charter are honored. I would like to plead with all of you to work during the upcoming session in a spirit of partnership and solidarity. Let open discussion, mutual understanding and tolerance as well as constructive cooperation govern our deliberations. I wish all of us a fruitful and productive session.

Thank you for your attention.