

20 September 2002

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the General Debate**

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

Before closing this year's General Debate, I would like to make a few concluding remarks.

At the outset, allow me to express my sincere appreciation for the kind words of support and assurances of co-operation that you extended to me and the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly. We will do our utmost to fulfill your expectations.

The high level of participation at this year's Debate underscored the importance of our gathering. Among the 188 speakers, we have heard 33 Heads of State, 14 Heads of Government, 14 Deputy Prime Ministers and 110 Foreign Ministers. The important statement of the Secretary-General emphasizing the fundamental necessity and continuing relevance of multilateralism as the guiding principle of our Organization and world affairs generated a sound base for our deliberations.

Our debate during the past 10 days was rich and colourful touching upon crucial issues approached from different perspectives. Yet again, the annual debate at the General Assembly proved to be a unique platform for exchange of opinions that will guide our activities during the whole session.

The opening of the General Debate followed the day of mourning in commemoration of the attacks of September 11th. Throughout the entire debate we reminded ourselves of the need to uphold the unprecedented unity of the anti-terrorist coalition and continue our common fight against international terrorism. I do not recall a statement that would not place the fight against terrorism and the importance of addressing related issues as a top priority.

This year's debate has had a major impact on the state of international affairs, as clearly demonstrated by the development of the situation in Iraq. Time and concrete actions will show if the Iraqi offer is credible. I hope, however, that the call for both multilateralism and compliance with the United Nations resolutions, so eloquently expressed in this Assembly, will shape future policies towards Iraq.

The urgency to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is ever more pressing and represented a major concern for most speakers. The latest Quartet negotiations introduced a plan outlining a three-phase roadmap to achieve the shared vision of two States - Israel and Palestine - living side

by side in peace and security. The recognition of security, political, economic, humanitarian, and institutional dimensions is an integral part of the plan. There is no need to stress that support for the endeavours of the diplomatic Quartet and compliance by both parties are essential for further progress and that much more detailed work still has to be done.

At the time of last year's General Debate, Afghanistan was a war-torn country with leadership that oppressed its own citizens and harbored the most despicable terrorist organization in the world. The changes that Afghanistan has experienced since then are unprecedented. On the first day of our debate, a democratically elected president of a completely different country addressed this Assembly. Despite all the progress achieved to date Afghanistan faces major security challenges and is in dire need of continued humanitarian and developmental assistance. The international community and major donors have played - and must continue to play - a decisive role in the positive changes in Afghanistan.

I have listened very carefully to the statements of the distinguished representatives concerning the economic development and prosperity of their countries and regions. The message was apparent and clear - there is no development and prosperity without peace and stability. We have to dedicate our time during the 57th Session of the General Assembly to further addressing and confronting the issues of poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, equitable distribution of the benefits of globalization and preservation of the environment.

To address these issues, many of you stressed the need to concentrate our efforts on meeting the targets and timeframes laid out in the Millennium Development Goals. The time has come to translate the outcomes of Monterrey and Johannesburg into achievable policies and concrete actions.

A very special attention during this year's General Debate was given to the issues of Africa's development and its future, including UN support to the emerging New Partnership for Africa's Development initiative. I appreciate the conclusions of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on NEPAD and I believe that question of Africa and its development will remain high on our agenda.

Throughout the debate, supportive references have been made to the continuous process of reforming the United Nations. Many of you expect that the role and function of the General Assembly will be revitalized and rationalized, and that discussions on ensuring more equitable representation in the Security Council will continue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for your active participation that made our debate fruitful and successful. I appreciate that many speakers, though not all, have kept - more or less - to the agreed time limit of 15 minutes. I am convinced that shorter and comprehensive statements have greater and more unequivocal impact than long surveys of numerous issues, national and international, and they make our work more efficient. I also greatly appreciate the support and

assistance provided to our deliberations by the UN Secretariat. My gratitude also goes to the City of New York and our host country for their hospitality and security arrangements.

My brief remarks could not reflect on all the diverse views, ideas and initiatives expressed during the debate. Your concerns will be addressed in the upcoming meetings of the Plenary and Main Committees. Let me express my belief that our work will continue in a constructive and productive way.

Thank you.