

5 October 2002

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
on World Teachers' Day**

The right to education is a fundamental human right guaranteed to all people as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today we celebrate the tenth anniversary of World Teachers' Day, to pay homage to some 28 million teachers in 161 countries for their dedication to preparing future citizens in an increasingly linked and complex world. This year's theme: Teachers Create Dialogue Every Day, recognizes the concept that all learning takes place through dialogue. Access to education is not only a basic developmental goal as stated in the Millennium Declaration; it is also a fundamental condition for development per se.

The central role played by teachers in the process of education is widely recognized. Despite great technical progress in communication technologies, as a tool for learning, nothing can replace the human contact. Professionally trained teachers ensure all-rounded development of the human personality that takes into account the spiritual, moral and social aspects. Awareness of values relating to tolerance of diversity, environment, peace, health, love for learning, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are indispensable to individual development and progress of societies. Teachers play a pivotal role to inculcate such values in their pupils. Dialogue is the main tool of education. We recognize the challenging and demanding task of teachers to provoke dialogue, to teach children and young students to express their thoughts as well as listen to each other. We are also aware of the demand placed on teachers, in a world of mass media, to access information as well as its critical assessment.

On this special day, all Member States have the opportunity to undertake an evaluation of the access to education for everyone and the provision of appropriate conditions for teachers enumerated in the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers adopted on 5 October 1966 and the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel adopted on 11 November 1997. Teachers need and merit support of the whole society. Teachers serve the society in a very special way; they essentially contribute to building a more tolerant and friendly world based on mutual respect. The great diversity of the laws and practices in different countries impact on the planning of education. All States should ensure that the preparation and employment of teachers is free from any form of discrimination on grounds of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, or economic condition. Their academic freedom, conditions of work, employment security, facilities to improve their pedagogical skills and upgrade their academic credentials and promotion of their access to appropriate training should be given priority in national educational planning. Gender sensitivity is important to encourage women, through creating appropriate opportunities and conditions for their inclusion

into this profession. United Nations organizations will continue to promote and support the cause of teachers.

I take this opportunity to express my great appreciation and gratitude to all teachers for their untiring dedication to training children around the world.