

16 October 2002

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

Since 1945, 18 October has been observed as World Food Day to commemorate the founding of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. World Food Day gives us the opportunity to recall the fact that in this 21st. century there are still nearly a billion people suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

Food is a basic human necessity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that everyone has a right to adequate food and freedom from hunger. However, the number of people suffering from hunger today remains alarming.

As human society considers fighting hunger, malnutrition and poverty as the most fundamental challenge, eradication of extreme poverty and hunger was recognized as one of the main Millennium Development Goals. The Monterrey Declaration and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg took further steps forward by specifying resources and setting specific targets, timetables and commitments.

Extreme poverty is one of the important ingredients that, combined with some others such as unresolved long term-political conflicts, have lead and will continue to lead to a feeling of powerlessness, frustration and anger which offers 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. This must be part of our ongoing struggle for a stable, secure and more just world. There is no option of doing less than our utmost.

The theme for this year's observance of World Food Day is "Water: source of Food Security." Unfortunately, the lack of access to water is expected, in the coming decades, to be one of the key constraints to achieving food security for all. But it is not because the world lacks water. The world water crisis is a crisis of governance - not one of scarcity. At the global scale, there is enough water to provide water security for all, but only if we change the way we manage and develop it. Improvement of policies and strategies to guide agricultural water use are needed at the international, national and local levels.

I should like to take this opportunity to extend my warm congratulations to the Food and Agriculture Organization for their persistent and tireless efforts to promote and bring awareness

to the problem of hunger, to call attention to the humiliation and indignity endured by destitute persons, and to attain long-term answers to guarantee adequate water and food for all. I hope that World Food Day activities around the world will help deliver this important message.