

30 October 2002

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

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

First of all, let me thank the Secretary-General for his introductory statement, in which he touched upon all the essential aspects of his reform proposal, contained in the document entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change". I particularly welcome that the Secretary-General clearly dispelled any anxiety that the reforms could lead to the curtailment of the development agenda in the United Nations.

Today, we have the report before us for our consideration. In my view, the Report of Secretary-General is very good, comprehensive, timely and extremely useful. It was initiated by the Secretary-General and resulted from a thorough review of the work of the Secretariat, its mandates and programmes. The report is widely welcomed by the Membership and certainly deserves great credit.

We all know that the UN has already undergone changes in recent years, its performance has improved and it is now able to respond better to a wide range of new challenges. But UN reform of 1997 has not yet been fully completed. The UN still has many areas, which need to be rationalized with the view to refining its functioning. UN Reform is a continuing process and therefore I see the report as a stepping-stone towards further improvements in the work of both the Secretariat and the General Assembly. That's why many S-G's proposals could bring fresh ideas into the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, which the Presidency fully supports.

The initial informal response to the S-G's proposals has been very positive. The Report suggests a number of diverse improvements and innovative changes that would make the work of the United Nations more productive and efficient. I see the Report as an important impulse, to which we, the Member States, should react in a constructive way. The UN reform is not and cannot be perceived as a unilateral action. It is a process in which a joint effort of the Membership and the Secretariat is absolutely crucial for getting the second phase of reforms started and agreed actions implemented.

As you all know the Report was issued more than a month ago and subsequently many regional briefings and one session of informal consultations were held in order to provide additional information. Given the complexity of the issues, it is not surprising that many proposed actions still require further clarification. On the basis of consultations with Member States, I suggested to

the Secretariat to prepare a Conference Room Paper that would provide written answers and explanations to all major issues, which have been raised by various groups or individual Member States, as well as questions which I expect to arise during this plenary session. We have agreed with the Secretary-General that such a paper will be prepared as a one off exercise soon after the debate so that it could be taken into account during the first round of the informal consultations. We believe that this approach would accommodate the delegations' concerns and create a trusted atmosphere for further deliberations.

I recognize that what the Secretary-General has mapped out is an on-going process. There are some actions within the purview of the Secretary-General for immediate implementation and other actions that might need additional reports and/or further consideration by relevant committees next year. Many of the proposed actions call for measures to be taken by the Secretary-General with the endorsement and/or guidance from the Member States. Our deliberations should result in formulating general directions for achieving agreed actions.

Let me also briefly inform you how I intend to handle the process, which would lead to an adoption of a resolution. Let me stress that it is going to be an open and transparent process in which all interested and concerned delegations will be involved. After the plenary debate, I will launch open-ended informal consultations as soon as possible, preferably on Friday morning on 1 November. I already asked one Vice-president of the General Committee to help me to lead the process and chair the informal consultations in my absence. I have also approached a number of Ambassadors with a request to assist me and the Vice-President in facilitating the process. I shall announce their names before the end of the debate on this item.

I will carefully listen to your views, your proposals and concerns, both at this plenary and during the informal consultations. After the debate and first round of informal consultations during which further clarification will be provided by the Secretariat, I will introduce a draft resolution in which I will reflect those views. I hope I can count on your constructive and active support. I do believe that given good political will, dedicated time and energy of concerned delegations and a bit of luck we will have a workable endorsed resolution before Christmas.

Thank you for your attention.