

18 November 2002

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,  
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,  
on "Afghanistan: One Year Later"**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The idea of organizing a panel discussion on Afghanistan emerged as a result of my personal efforts to seek ways for revitalization of the meetings of the General Assembly, and at the same time to promote live interactive discussion of important international questions which are on the General Assembly's agenda. On my view this panel perfectly suits both of these intentions. Firstly, I strongly believe that this panel discussion could lead to specific conclusions from post conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan, thereby providing new recommendations for future UN activities in this domain and secondly I believe that if we succeed to achieve these goals, we will have proof that our revitalizing efforts work.

The proposal to organize an interactive dialogue with interested Member States has received overwhelming support from the very beginning from all the major countries concerned, including the Security Council members, the neighbouring countries and many other influential states.

Now after several weeks of intensive consultations with Member States, NGOs and the Secretariat, I am pleased to welcome all of you here today and the panelists: H.E. Mr. Amin Farhang, Minister of Reconstruction in Afghanistan; Mr. Jean Arnaud, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan; Mr. Ahmed Rashid, internationally renowned journalist and highly respected expert on Afghanistan; and Mr. Barnett Rubin, professor at New York University and author of several books on Afghanistan. I am deeply grateful to all of them and also to Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who kindly agreed to moderate this political session.

Summarising my consultations with Member Countries, I can disclose that many countries consider it very important that this panel will attempt to find out what were the lessons learned by the UN in Afghanistan; give the Member States the opportunity to discuss the consequences of the decisions adopted by the UN and find out if these decisions were implemented properly; specify what results these decisions helped us to achieve and decide if and how we need to modify our humanitarian activities and economic assistance in Afghanistan and clarify what else needs to be done so that we can achieve the UN goals in Afghanistan sooner and more effectively.

I fully agree with these suggestions and I ask you to help me and Under-Secretary-General Mr. Prendergast to lead our discussion in this direction so that we will be able to achieve our goals. For the purpose of strengthening the interactive character of our panel, I decided not to accept speeches or declarations except those prepared by panelists for their introductory remarks. On the other hand I would like to encourage lively interactive dialogue from all of you - the delegates and panelists.

Thank you.