

19 November 2002

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,  
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the UN-IPU Meeting of Parliamentarians**

Mr. President of the Inter-parliamentary Council, Mr. Secretary General of the Inter-parliamentarian Union, Distinguished Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and privilege to welcome you here in New York at the traditional UN-IPU Meeting of parliamentarians attending the session of the UN General Assembly. I am especially pleased to welcome many of you as my colleagues, being myself not only the President of the 57th United Nations General Assembly, but also a member of the Parliament in my own country, the Czech Republic.

The formal cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-parliamentarian Union has a relatively short history. It was only in 1996 when the Inter-parliamentarian Union and the United Nations signed a cooperation agreement. However, the informal cooperation of our two organisations has certainly much deeper roots. Both, the IPU and the predecessor to the United Nations, the League of Nations, were, from their inception, based on the same principles stemming out of the pacifist movement at the end of the 19th century. Peaceful settlement of international disputes was their primary objective. The same principles have guided the work of both our organisations though the range of other issues and objectives has substantially increased.

Consequently, a much broader level of cooperation between the UN and the IPU has been achieved only in the recent decade. The end of the Cold War, substantial improvement of modern means of communication and transport and generally speaking, globalisation - all these positive factors contributed to a much higher and more fruitful level of international cooperation including, the cooperation between the UN and the IPU. The Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments at the UN Headquarters here in New York, in the year 2000 gave an important impetus to the increased cooperation between the UN and the IPU. It was subsequently well reflected in article 30 of the Millennium Declaration. The signatories to the Declaration expressed their wish "to strengthen further cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organisation, the Inter-parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues."

I am very pleased that the cooperation between our organisations has been, since, flourishing. The report of the United Nations Secretary General regarding this cooperation, prepared for the 57th General Assembly, enumerates nearly 30 fields of activities. I especially appreciate the valuable contribution of the IPU to all the recent major UN conferences, namely the Special

Session of the General Assembly on Children, the World Food Summit+5 in Rome, the UN Conference on the Financing for Development in Monterrey and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. I cannot mention here all the common activities. Nevertheless, I would like especially to recognize and praise the invaluable work of the IPU in the field of human rights and gender issues, particularly the important actions targeted to combat violence against women.

The 57th session of the General Assembly should be a new milestone in the cooperation between the UN and the IPU. Though this process has not been finalized yet, I expect that the General Assembly will grant to the IPU observer status, which will allow even greater involvement of the IPU and parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations and its agencies and subsidiary bodies. I congratulate the President of the Inter-parliamentary Council, Senator Sergio Páez Verdugo of Chile, on his recent election. I am sure his personal qualities and rich experience will not only wisely guide the work of the Inter-parliamentary Council but will also ensure future mutually rewarding collaboration of the IPU with the UN system.

We all know that the world is still far from the goal of lasting peace, which was the main objective of the IPU founders more than a hundred years ago and which inspired also the founders of the United Nations. The world is, moreover, still struggling against poverty and underdevelopment, diseases, environmental degradation, unequal distribution of resources, human rights abuses and several other problems. None of these problems has a simple solution but all require the cooperation of the people of good will who might contribute to tackle them. The role of parliamentarians in this endeavour is crucial.

I wish to all, who have come to New York at this occasion a rich and fruitful discussion. This should deepen the parliamentary dimension in the work of the UN, contribute to solve at least some of the problems the world is facing and thus bring us and our constituencies in our countries closer to the world of our dreams!

Thank you.