

14 February 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Intersessional Meeting of Prime Ministers of Caricom on
“United Nations General Assembly Presidency
in the Light of the Caribbean Candidacy”**

Secretary General Carrington, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to address the Intersessional Meeting of Caribbean Community today.

I would like to thank you, especially Your Excellency Secretary General Carrington, for your kind invitation and the Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations Lamuel Stanislaus for all the necessary arrangements connected to my travel. It gives me the invaluable opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts about the work of the UN General Assembly.

I myself come from a relatively small country - the Czech Republic. The first contacts of my homeland with the region came several hundred years ago with the originally Czech Moravian Church settling in many of the Caribbean countries. I can only hope, that in not too distant future we will be able to renew similarly rich cultural interchange.

My origin in a small country in the heart of Europe helps me to understand the problems of small countries face to face with the global competition. I also know that this is exactly the reason why these countries, more than any other, need well functioning international organizations based on mutual understanding and cooperation. The United Nations based on sovereign equality of its members shall always play the principal role in this regard. I am doing my best in the course of my presidency to try to make the General Assembly an equally comfortable home for everybody.

I think, that this role of the UN will be even more strengthened next fall and it will be from many points of view in your hands. It is your region that will have the honor to choose the next General Assembly President. Therefore, let me present you our work at the presidency of the General Assembly.

We considers the substantial autumn part of the 57 UNGA to be a success and to some extent the return to normalcy after the previous session so affected by the horrific events of the 11 September 2001, although issues of Iraq and situation in the Middle East are high, and will remain high for still some time, on the political agenda.

I would like to start with the recollection of priorities of this presidency:

1. Enhancement of peace and security

- strengthening of the international coalition against international terrorism,
- contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

2. Promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development in the accelerating process of globalization

- effective and sustained follow-up to the Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and preparation for the implementation of a number of the development goals of the Millennium Declaration
- support to a broader access to information and communication technologies, namely for education, good governance and health care.

3. Strengthening the role of the United Nations with focus on:

- better policy coherence through enhancing partnerships between the UN, Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and other development partners,
- enhanced cooperation between the General Assembly, the Security Council and ECOSOC, as well as the Secretary-General.

4. Reform of the United Nations

- enhancement of the effectiveness of the work of the United Nations on the basis of the Road map towards the implementation of Millennium Declaration,
- revitalization of the General Assembly,
- facilitation of discussion on the Security Council reform.

In the autumn part of the 57th UNGA session, the activities focussed on arranging debates on the absolute majority of items on the agenda, while in the remaining part of the year they will concentrate above all on the priorities of the Czech presidency as I outlined earlier.

Assessment of the 1st Part of the General Assembly Session

Let me now turn to the assessment of the main session of the General Assembly which ended last December. As to organisational issues, one should note:

- a shorter general debate;
- that time efficiency of meetings has improved due to timely start of meetings and well organised conduct of business;
- that fewer meetings were held (only 78 plenary sessions compared to 92 in 2001) due to for example, holding joint discussions on substance related topics (one for the Report of the SG on the work of the Organisation and follow-up activities to the Millennium Summit and one for Security Council report and SC reform) and thus contributing to a greater effectiveness of the meetings.

Some of the issues may seem to have marginal relevance and low political importance, but in our view they are an important element of improving functionality and cost efficiency of the UN.

Last year the President of the GA was for the first time elected in advance, (two months before taking on the office, this year it should be full three months in advance). I, therefore, had more time to prepare for the office, get acquainted with the work of my predecessor and already consult for example the Secretariat on a number of issues. As a result of these extensive consultations, it became possible, for the first time in its history, for the General Assembly to approve its complex programme of its main work till the end of the year already in early September.

One of the major tasks of the important autumn part of the General Assembly session was the consideration of the report of the UN General-Secretary "The strengthening of the UN: agenda for further change". The text of the resolution setting the further course for the reform processes and strengthening of the organization was worked out under our guidance. The unanimous approval of the resolution was perceived as an unquestionable success, though some elements of the reform proposal of the SG will have to be discussed further.

I also presented a draft resolution on the report of the UN Secretary-General "The Implementation of the Millennium Declaration". This resolution was also adopted by a consensus and it proposes the holding of a summit to deal in whole complexity with the state of implementation of the objectives of the Declaration at the 60th UNGA session in 2005.

The 57th UNGA dealt in detail with problems of the African continent. The high-level plenary session on the New partnership for Africa's development focussed on discussing the possibilities of international support for this initiative, in particular on the part of the UN system.

The General Assembly President also opened a discussion on revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. The discussion focussed on the rationalization of the UN, on greater effectiveness of its work and on revitalizing plenary debates. This discussion will continue for the rest of our mandate and I assume that many of its aspects will be inherited by your Presidency.

A new element in the GA work was the organization of a panel entitled "Afghanistan a year after" attended by representatives of the UN, NGOs and mass information media. The event was a success and the UNGA presidency was asked to organize such panels more often. We will almost certainly organise such a panel on the widest possible aspects of a struggle against terrorism, starting with targeting its roots, which includes extreme poverty, unsolved political problems and other ingredients which lead to the emergence of feelings of frustration, powerlessness, anger and sometimes even more radical, fundamentalist responses preparing ground for terrorism.

Priorities for the upcoming period

First priority of the Czech Presidency will be to continue to seek consensus on a new implementation mechanism in the recently created working group on integrated and coordinated fulfilment and follow-up to the main UN economic and social conferences and summits. Under the leadership of the UNGA president an open-ended working group has been formed to deal with streamlining of existing structures for monitoring the implementation of

major conferences by various UN bodies and organizations. Results of such working group should inter alia contribute to more efficient fulfilment of development goals, rationalization of work of the UNGA, its Committees, functional Commissions and ECOSOC and thus contribute to strengthening the UN role in the area of development cooperation.

In the second part of the mandate, the UNGA presidency will focus on the open-ended working group on prevention of armed conflicts. The newly created group of facilitators under our leadership has now began to concentrate its efforts on the draft resolution reflecting positions and interests of Member States in the field of conflict prevention. It should also enhance mechanisms for conflict prevention. The president will seek consensus or at least a majority agreement on the draft resolution by the end of April.

In the scope of third presidency priority, concerning strengthening the UN role, I plan to continue to conduct high-level meetings with the representatives of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and to prepare a High-level dialog on the implementation of the conclusions by the FfD Conference which should take place in October 2003 already under the new President. Regular contacts and informal information exchange will be continued with the Presidents of ECOSOC and of the Security Council.

Fourthly, under the leadership of the president 57th UNGA the work on the revitalization of the General Assembly will continue. I shall also continue to chair the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform during the spring session and facilitate discussion on the issue of equitable representation and increase in membership of the Security Council but I have no illusion that the working groups will be able to find a consensus despite the fact that the reform of the Security Council is so obviously badly needed. There is a clear lack of political will in many capitals and this effectively blocks a meaningful progress on the main reform. Without a major political breakthrough, which is not on the horizon, there can be no early resolution of this matter which will be also inherited by my successor. At the same time it has to be acknowledged that the working group will also focus on the question of working methods and transparency of work of the Security Council and in this field I believe a progress can be achieved.

In our view, 57th GA has further strengthened the position of its President who is expected to take initiatives on increasing number of topics (be it UN reform, SC reform, revitalisation of the GA, follow-up activities to the Millenium Summit, integration of UN follow-up conferences, prevention of conflicts or the issue of HIV/AIDS, etc.).

In conclusion, let me also mention that our Presidency is in close touch with my country and with our region. I believe that the work of the Presidency is today so complex that it could succeed next year only if the Caribbean Community will be prepared and able to provide the next presidency, your presidency - with cooperation and full support for the implementation of major UN goals in economic, social, and many other areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I look forward to hear your comments and suggestions, which will help me to ascertain better the opinion of member countries and of this region in particular. I am deeply convinced that everybody's ideas can be interesting and inspiring, regardless of the size of the country he or she represents. And I am a strong believer in the concept of an open sincere dialogue. It seems to me that continuous dialogue on crucial issues attempting to reach a consensus while respecting different views best describes my perception of the GA Presidency.

Thank you,