

11 March 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
at the symposium "In search of Consolidation of Peace in Africa"**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be before you today to open the important discussions concerning the complex and intricate issue of the consolidation of peace in Africa. I am sure that your deliberations will help serve to further deepen the understanding and appreciation of this issue.

In my short intervention, I would like to focus on two important, and to a great extent interlinked, issues. One is the role of the United Nations relating to this issue, second is the ongoing negotiations on the resolution of the General Assembly on the prevention of armed conflicts, which in broader terms, considers both roots and causes of the conflicts together with appropriate strategies on how to help the countries after the conflicts are settled.

It was widely thought that with the creation of the United Nations, war and conflict would simply become easily manageable. In fact, it was believed that such conflicts could be nipped in the bud through open dialogue and diplomacy. Many still feel that the United Nations should play the premier role of mediator and keeper of peace. Nowhere has this role been more challenging and important than in the African continent, where conflict and war continue to ravage its landscape.

While at times the United Nations has been a slow vehicle for progress, it has proven to be an effective and instrumental body for addressing the needs of states in conflict by providing and generating support for African initiatives to resolve disputes, protecting civilians in situations of conflict, addressing the blatant refugee dilemma, establishing post-conflict peace-building support structures, as well as creating the conditions for reconstruction and development. The United Nations' presence can be especially felt in the latter area, which also encompasses the promotion of good governance and accountability in public administration, and the restructuring of international aid allotted to States, as well as its administration.

Additionally, the United Nations' work in the post-conflict context is especially poignant, given its record in promoting a positive environment for economic growth. UN agencies, such as UNCTAD and UNDP, have the necessary capacity and resources to assist nations in conflict to transform their already badly damaged and frail economic structures to ones that can bear and produce sustainable markets.

Many of the activities outlined above are commenced and or implemented at the times when conflict is already in progress or in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. The United Nations,

particularly through the efforts of the Secretary-General, began to pay increased attention to developing workable mechanisms for preventing armed conflict in the last several years. With the painfully lingering shadows of Rwanda and Srebrenica, the Secretary-General declared his aim to replace the culture of reaction with a culture of prevention. In his Millennium Report, a document which defines priorities for the Organization for the coming years, the Secretary-General devoted a separate chapter to preventing deadly conflict. Here he observed, *inter alia*, that culture of prevention could be built on governments' protection of physical security and rights of its citizens, on short-term and long-term capacity building, and on regional efforts of cooperation.

The Secretary-General's 2001 report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa echoed the international community's concern with some of Africa's war torn states, whose economic and political situations pose severe consequences for its citizens. Member States have since addressed the importance between linking the issue of conflict prevention and resolution, and relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development for peace building in Africa. In these complex interconnected processes, Member States have appreciated the fact that the establishment of a stable and enduring peace has required a concerted effort from governments, civil society, and the international community, in a number of areas, among them the promotion of democracy, and human rights.

The Secretary-General suggested to the General Assembly to consider making further recommendations on the use of mechanisms for peaceful settlement of dispute and in this context observed that a more systematic attention by the General Assembly to conflict prevention would be instrumental in creating a truly global culture of conflict prevention. Thus setting standards for accountability of Member States and contributing to the establishment of prevention practices at the local, national, regional and global levels are concepts worth promoting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Conflict prevention is one of the most important priorities of the Czech Presidency for the 57th session of the General Assembly. The work on drafting of the resolution on prevention of armed conflict was launched by the General Assembly already during its previous session. It was, however, for a variety of reasons, not concluded and thus the General Assembly took over the initiative during the current session.

It is my prime intention to lead the negotiations to a successful conclusion during my presidency. I believe that by adopting a resolution on Prevention of Armed Conflict, the General Assembly could improve the Organization's ability to prevent conflict or its re-occurrence. The resolution should identify and develop mechanisms for peaceful resolution of disputes, or, in other words, assemble a comprehensive compilation of elements for conflict prevention capacity to which the Member States and the UN system could refer to. Valuable proposals are already contained in an extensive and comprehensive report on prevention of armed conflict put forward by the Secretary-General in 2001. The resolution should recognize and confirm their importance by incorporating them in the resolution..

The resolution should, inter alia, include identification of the root causes of conflict, such as lack of democracy, extreme poverty and social inequalities, violations of human rights and international law and others. It should recognize that the preventive strategy needs to encompass both short-term measures, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and long-term measures, like socio-economic development, building of democratic institutions, or sustainable development. The resolution should also state the role various United Nations organs, as well as its programs and agencies in contributing to preventing armed conflict and thus giving an impetus for their greater coordination amongst themselves in this area.

The negotiations are challenging, as they reflect a multitude of different priorities, perspectives, and of course interests. As prevention of conflict is one of the priorities of my presidency, I hope that the General Assembly will adopt, by consensus, a pragmatic resolution that would once again enhance the importance and legitimacy of the United Nations and another step in fulfilling one of its main principles, upon which the Organization was founded - namely maintenance of international peace and security.

In this respect I wish to underline the fact that as all 191 Member States of the United Nations will agree to abide by the provisions of the resolution, they will therefore become the players in our mutual efforts in preventing conflicts from arising and spreading.

Thank you.