

23 March 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
on World Meteorological Day**

Today we celebrate World Meteorological Day and this year the special theme is: "Our Future Climate." Weather forecasting has come a long way in recent decades. It has evolved from guesswork based on human observations to scientific predictions based on observations in space, on the sea and on land. Advances in complex mathematical weather prediction techniques, through computerized collection, processing, and dissemination of meteorological and oceanographic information, have allowed for better precision in the immediate and medium term forecasts. The weatherman of today has the tools to predict the climate in the short run and also the ability to model future climate scenarios. Meteorological data, collected for centuries, are now the fundamental base for predictions regarding our future global climate.

The great importance of monitoring, and managing our climatic conditions is understandable when we consider that natural disasters claim about 250,000 lives annually and cause between 50 to 100 billion dollars in property damage with multifarious direct and indirect consequences. Weather forecasts play an important role in early warning and contribute to disaster mitigation. The World Weather Research Programme, under the aegis of the very successful World Meteorological Organization, continues to expand and deepen its knowledge, thus contributing to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The dedicated work of generations of meteorologists has also produced strong scientific evidence linking the increasing number of certain natural disasters to global climate change.

Although the different aspects of global climate change are questioned and debated at all levels throughout the international community, there is, without any doubt, evidence that the acceleration in climate change patterns is attributable to human activity. Member States, as well as the international community, now have to deal more and more with extreme weather patterns. Sometimes these events are short-lived, extremely violent and very visible such as floods, extreme winds, heat waves and droughts. But we need to focus our attention also on long-term consequences including the increase in temperature, rise in sea levels and melting of glaciers. So how will our future climate evolve and how will it affect us, if now tens of millions of persons are affected each year by hydro-meteorological disasters and extreme climatic changes, with catastrophic effects in environmental, economic and social terms? And these trends are increasing.

It is true that so far one answer to this concern lies in adaptation and in decreasing vulnerability of affected societies. But it is also evident that States have to take definitive steps to reverse the negative trends. In this regard I would like to refer to the positive achievement of reversing the

damage to the ozone layer. This demonstrates that the international community can be successful indeed when working together. International collaboration to manage the damaging emissions of greenhouse gases on our planet will be essential in tackling the question of how our future climate will evolve. We have to seek the active participation of all the 185 Members of the World Meteorological Organization. There is the need to find strategies regarding promising ways of reducing carbon dioxide and other damaging emissions and to develop and adopt renewable energy sources. Because we all know that this issue cannot be left indefinitely blowing in the wind.