

8 April 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
to the 46th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

Madame Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

Welcome

It gives me great pleasure to address the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. This is a unique occasion which is marked by the first ministerial-level meeting to renew progress related to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly. International drug control is clearly a priority issue for the General Assembly. Since the 1998 special session, the Assembly has adopted annually the resolution on International cooperation against the world drug problem, providing guidance to the United Nations system and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme.

The Commission - a unique entity in the UN system

This Commission was established among the first functional commissions to be established by the United Nations to pursue the drug control functions inherited from the League of Nations. From there the Commission has grown to become the central policy-making organ of the United Nations system on the world-drug problem. It's an organ with treaty mandates and, unique in the system, serves as the governing body of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme.

The Commission continues to play a central role as an instrument of Member States in the progressive development of international drug control policies.

The special session, its achievements and the role of the Commission

The Commission served as the preparatory body for the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem. It provided leadership, foresight and acted as a catalyst for action by Governments in the Political Declaration, the Action Plans and other measures to enhance international cooperation.

You rose to meet the challenges which the General Assembly set for the Commission in the Political Declaration: to monitor the implementation by Governments of the Action Plans and measures adopted by the special session of the Assembly and assessing their action to meet their commitments.

The significance of UNGASS and its follow-up

This session and the ministerial segment is a historical landmark in the work of the Commission and that of the General Assembly in the field of drug control. Historical because at this juncture we have to assess what action we have taken to implement the action plans we adopted at the special session in 1998.

What did we achieve in 1998?

First, the special session provided a political momentum for the international community to further action in the implementation of the drug control treaties which now enjoy almost universal adherence.

Second, the action plans and measures adopted served as a beacon for international cooperation in the field of drug control, serving as a point of reference for new initiatives at the national, regional and international levels. This was particularly evident in the field of demand reduction.

Third, it provided all States with a sense of shared responsibility and common purpose. It symbolized the global response in addressing a shared problem. It enabled those States most affected by the drug problem to see their considerable efforts as part of an integrated global strategy which success depend on the commitment and support of all countries.

Fourth, a recognition for the first time of the need to pursue a balanced and integrated approach. Balanced, because the strategy to counter supply, particularly drug trafficking, has to be pursued in conjunction with the strategy to counter the demand for illicit drugs by initiatives in the field of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

Integrated, because of the recognition that we have to move on several fronts at the same time. This is reflected by the inter-connected action plans and measures to counter money-laundering; to control chemical precursors; to eliminate the illicit manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of ATS; measures to enhance judicial cooperation; eradicate illicit drug crops; and of course the broad spectrum of activities required to curtail demand for illicit drugs.

Fifth, the special session provided an opportunity for the affirmation of the political determination and commitment of the international community to confront collectively the world drug problem. Some forty heads of States and heads of governments addressed the General Assembly on that occasion.

I am pleased to note that over one hundred ministers will be participating in the ministerial segment of the Commission. The drug control regime, based on the solid foundations of the international drug control treaties, continue to enjoy the strong support of Governments. This is also reflected in the Joint Ministerial Statement you will be adopting. This demonstration of political will and commitment is the best argument to counter those sceptics that believe that drug

control is no longer a priority for Member States and that the conventions, the very heart of international cooperation in this field, should be nullified.

The significance of the ministerial segment

You have a special responsibility assessing the action of Governments in implementing the strategy adopted at the special session, which the Commission will submit to the General Assembly this year. Your assessment should be candid, objective, focused and forward looking with clear recommendations for the future. In particular, you should review the difficulties Member States are encountering and identify additional measures and action to enable the international community to move towards meeting all the objectives by 2008. You already have a starting point in the assessment contained in the reports which the Executive Director of UNDCP, at your request, has presented to the Commission.

We have a difficult task. We have a global challenge which we can only meet if we work collectively in a spirit of shared responsibility. We have the political responsibility to strive for a world free of illicit drugs. We owe this to the next generation.