

17 April 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Informal Meeting with representative of NGOs for the Working
Group on the Integrated and Coordinated Follow-up**

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you at this informal meeting, which is being held at a crucial juncture in the work of the open-ended working group. Next week, we shall turn our attention to concrete proposals submitted by the Member States. The forthcoming discussion on the concrete proposals should bring us to a set of recommendations on how to achieve more coordinated, coherent and integrated approach towards implementation and follow-up of the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. We have, so far, heard extensive views of governments and the UN system on the integrated follow up of conferences and it is opportune, at this stage, to hear the views of the partners, who in an important sense, made the UN conferences/summits, since the 90s, so successful.

A notable feature of these conferences has been the unprecedented, and ever growing, engagement of civil society and NGOs. Besides their participation in shaping the conferences, NGOs are key players in the implementation of conference outcomes. As we mobilize to translate commitments into concrete actions, we have to think how the UN can continue to benefit from the ideas and experiences of NGOs and to sustain their implementation efforts.

Moving to an implementation mode is at the heart of the work of this open-ended ad hoc working group. I would like to use today's meeting to update you briefly on our work. I have with me the two vice-chairmen, Ambassador Jean de Ruyt of Belgium and Ambassador Nana Effah-Apenteng of Ghana. We will then move into a dialogue session where we would welcome to hear more about your key concerns and ideas on how the UN can most efficiently help to follow-up and implementation of conference outcomes.

Our working group has been, in essence, considering ways to ensure that the UN work at all levels supports the implementation of conference outcomes. It is expected to conclude its work and to produce concrete recommendations to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up and implementation of UN conferences and summits by the end of May.

The working group has held three sessions so far. The first one led to adopting a four-point agenda. The subsequent ones have clarified the broad directions that Member States want to pursue under each point of the agenda and enabled a brainstorming on concrete proposals. These four points are closely interrelated and their key overarching goal is effective implementation of conference goals.

The first item is the integrated implementation of conference outcomes at all levels. Under this item, we have discussed the role of Governments, of the UN system and of other partners in implementing conference outcomes. We had a dialogue with the Administrator of UNDP and with representatives of the CEB and of UNDG. We also had an interesting discussion on how to review progress in the implementation of the outcomes of conferences. The focus of action on implementation is at the country-level and governments, while they have the primary responsibility, need the cooperation of a range of actors including the NGOs and the private sector. It is under this first item that we will address the role of NGOs in implementing conference outcomes. A key thrust of our debate was the important responsibilities of NGOs and how the UN could best help to sustain it. Our debate has highlighted this key role of NGOs and the private sector in resource mobilization, technology access, sharing management expertise and providing support to programmes.

The second issue is the work of UN intergovernmental bodies. Our key concern there is how to reinforce the work of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its functional commissions so that it has greater impact and relevance, particularly in the new areas of emphasis on implementation. How can they help carry forward the spirit, new approaches and energy of conferences? How can we reinforce their impact on actions and operations? How can our UN bodies best complement and reinforce each other? These are some of the questions we are addressing.

The third issue is the work of the General Assembly and of its Second and Third committees. Delegations are approaching this item with the intention of reinvigorating political energy and focus into the work of the Assembly on economic and social issues. We have looked at ways to ensure more interactive debates with greater impact on outcomes. We have discussed cooperation and coherence between the two committees, and how to best prepare their work and adjust their working methods to the new imperatives.

The fourth issue is the review of the implementation of conferences, the "plus five and plus tens". Delegations have been approaching this issue with a positive mindset and it has appeared clearly that there can be no single principle to guide the format and periodicity of future conferences and summits and the review of past ones. These have to be approached in a flexible manner, as well as consideration of the political, economic and social developments warranting such engagements.

Member States have been asked to provide proposals in written form during this week. This will be the basis of the work of our next session on 22 April. The working group will hold two more sessions in May to finalize the discussions and our outcome document. This document will be subsequently submitted for adoption by the General Assembly and could be later used as a valuable input to the ECOSOC meeting in July.

We welcome your ideas and views today. They will help us as we proceed with our work at our next session on 22 April.

Now, the floor is open for your remarks, comments, proposals or questions.