

30 April 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,  
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Security Council's wrap-up Session "The Role of the United  
Nations in Post-Conflict Situations"**

Mr. President,

Let me at the outset express my great appreciation for your initiative and for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important topic.

Although never quite fulfilling the mandate of the international trusteeship as described in the United Nations Charter, the United Nations has engaged in governance of post-conflict societies, particularly in the post-Cold War era. The Organization has an extensive experience in governance through setting up the UN administrations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and East Timor, or in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone and most recently in Afghanistan. Currently, the most outstanding challenge with respect to the post-conflict reconstruction before the Security Council is the situation in Iraq.

Since the end of the Cold War, the traditional UN involvement in post-conflict situations, focusing on the political dimensions, has evolved into a more comprehensive operation undertaking a variety of roles. The four basic pillars of post-conflict reconstruction - security; social and economic well-being; justice and reconciliation; and governance and participation - are all closely linked, and a positive outcome in each field depends on successful implementation of the others.

The international community possesses major capabilities to influence the security situation in the post-conflict states and regions. It is the military authorities in charge of a territory that is responsible for building on and sustaining the security situation. However, returning the maintenance of security tasks to the host country should be regarded as a priority. Forming multiethnic police force in Bosnia and Kosovo, or the training of the Afghani army has been a step in this direction.

When considering the socio-economic aspects of post-conflict initiatives, the main emphasis has typically been on economic rebuilding and development. But war affects society in a very profound way, and tends to disrupt social relations - from national political to very basic human interactions. Only healthy society where social relations are restored, life in dignity, i.e. free of oppression or hunger, is fully respected, and gender perspective is taken into account, can promote and sustain durable peace and development.

Through establishing a process of addressing past and present grievances, the objective to create a fair, transparent and effective judicial system is closely linked to the issues of reconciliation. Prosecution of crimes against humanity and gross violations of human rights is often hindered by the existence of political and legal obstacles. The UN war crime tribunals prosecuting these crimes committed in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda or Sierra Leone, and efforts to establish extraordinary chambers within the existing court structure of Cambodia for prosecution of crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge, play a crucial role in reconciliation efforts of post-conflict societies.

Although inherent tensions between democracy promotion and previous power structures exist, strengthening of good governance and promoting democracy is crucial for preventing the recurrence of conflicts in crisis-ridden countries. The collapse of civil administrations, for example in Kosovo or East Timor, required the UN to assume large-scale government functions. However, a long-term process of good governance and democratization must be driven by citizens of the given country, and must reflect the specific historical, cultural, political and religious conditions of that country.

In post-conflict situations, more is needed than efforts by states to restore law and order. Taking historical background into account - whether it is represented by ethnic relations in the Balkans or tribal ones in Afghanistan - is crucial to any successful peace-building efforts. It is not only about bringing peace or humanitarian aid into a society emerging from conflict - any external involvement in the society's affairs must be conducted in most respectful manner to the various specific features of that society of that society, and towards its rich diversity.

Mr. President,

The latest conflict in Iraq is an example of the complex and unique challenges facing the UN in a post-conflict situation. I have no doubt, that this crisis will become a new important source of knowledge and experience for the United Nations. The UN should use this knowledge to refine its methods and improve ways of addressing future conflict situations better and more effectively than before - to be an organization which can select the appropriate strategies and tools for preventing or de-escalating conflict, and facilitating peaceful solutions.

Iraq's post-conflict society is confronted with various problems of instability. These include unresolved issues relating to years of political and religious oppression, violence amongst different clans, dangers stemming from the past totalitarian structures, looting, or abundance of arms in the absence of an effective new local police or security forces. Recent UN experiences elsewhere, for example in Kosovo and East Timor, have clearly demonstrated that a comprehensive strategy to tackle these issues in the immediate post-conflict phase is critical. Furthermore, it has become evident that a strategy for political and economic reforms should be crafted in conjunction with an overall vision for democratisation of the Iraqi society.

The role of the UN in Iraq should not be confined only to an advisory role or reduced to the provision of humanitarian or economic aid, but broader responsibilities aimed at promoting

democracy in Iraq should be part of any planning process. For all its shortcomings, real or perceived, the United Nations is still the only forum which has the grass roots experience and personnel to deal with a wide range of crises, whether in the field of humanitarian relief or helping people to rebuild their lives and countries, promoting human rights and the rule of law, in conflict management and post-conflict peace-building. I am confident that the UN needs to play a decisive role in both the economic reconstruction and political transformation of the post-conflict Iraq.

I do believe that it is in clear interest of both the United Nations and the US authorities to reach soon an agreement on the exact nature of this mutually complimentary cooperation in that country. Such cooperation will undoubtedly help to bring about the common aim - a democratic, free and independent Iraq.

Thank you.