

28 July 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,  
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the National Parliament of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste**

President (of the Parliament) "Lu'Olo" Guterres,  
Distinguished Parliamentarians,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address the Parliament, both as a fellow Parliamentarian, and as the current President of the United Nations General Assembly.

I am equally delighted to have the opportunity to comment on the work of the Organization and its agencies - how far we've come in terms of Millennium Development Goals, the distance we need to cover to achieve the objectives set therein, and the role of Timor-Leste in the global mosaic that is the United Nations.

As Timor-Leste enters its rebuilding phase, after an extremely difficult period of destruction, I find that the national parliament, much like the General Assembly, will be an important tool for its transition in becoming a fully functioning, independent, sovereign State.

I recall that a little over a year ago, as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, I had the honour to participate in the independence ceremony of Timor-Leste, to witness the birth of a new nation, as well as the formation of this national parliament. Through this body, in its first session, Timor-Leste expressed its resolve to join the United Nations, and became, in September of that year, a full, participating member of the UN. Much like in a family, the delegates were welcomed with open arms and brought into various circles to engage in the discussions and deliberations of innumerable, and at times, overwhelming agenda items.

What I hope the delegates found at the United Nations is space for reflection, dialogue and consultation on issues as diverse and significant as political rights and freedoms, education and communication, and democracy and the rule of law. And I am happy to see that at the end of their participation in their first UN General Assembly, Timor-Leste reiterated its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights with the ratification of a package of six core international human rights treaties and four optional protocols. I look forward to a sustained participation of Timor-Leste in the work of the United Nations.

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Today, we face many development challenges worldwide, but as we've discovered, it is no good tackling them bit-by-bit. All the world's big problems affect all the others, and thus we need to tackle them all together, with a common strategy, a clear timetable, and measurable targets. Fortunately, we already have them: the Millennium Development Goals -- or MDGs -- adopted by all nations less than three years ago, and confirmed at last year's conferences in Monterrey and Johannesburg as the core agenda of international development cooperation.

To give you an insight on the status of these goals, let me give you some updates:

§ Currently, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has actually increased in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, central and eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

§ Only East Asia and the Pacific are on pace to meet the poverty Goal, while South Asia is making good progress.

§ Africa, South Asia and the Arab States need to greatly accelerate their progress if they are to achieve universal primary education.

§ Progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women has been made in all regions, but sub-Saharan Africa lags behind.

§ Many regions are making progress in upgrading slums, improving access to safe drinking water, and integrating the principles of sustainable development into policies and programmes. But in some places, such as East Asia, efforts to ensure environmental sustainability are far too slow.

As you can see, formidable challenges lie ahead if we are to even come close to meeting the Goals.

I think it is important to keep in mind that sustained growth and development require not only sound national and global economic policies and the absence of conflict nationally and regionally, but also a universal sense of global security. The investments in counter-terrorism need to be complemented by actions at the international level, for example in the area of trade, to restore the relatively optimistic global political mood that prevailed when the Millennium Declaration was adopted. Another important step that needs to take place is to provide developing nations with better access to global markets, which of course means lowering agricultural subsidies and bringing down barriers to imports from poor countries.

I understand that here in Timor-Leste much has been achieved in the past year. Yet, there is still the issue regarding the instability of the security environment, as well as the administrative, military, and policy structures, however I would like to assure you, on behalf of the General Assembly, that UNMISSET will provide continued support in strengthening these institutions.

Timor-Leste, as the first new nation to be born in this millennium, is a model of what can be achieved. And rightly so, the international community looks on with anticipation to see how Timor-Leste will overcome the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. I strongly believe the global family will support its newest member in facing the political, practical, and security

challenges that lie ahead because it sees in its future hope and optimism not just for itself but for nations that will be born after it.

Before I conclude, President 'Lu O'lo', I would like to take this opportunity to pay my personal tribute to your valour and dedication during the long struggle of your people. Your role thereafter as the Speaker of the Constituent Assembly and as the first Speaker of the National Parliament truly epitomizes what can be achieved with courage, far-sightedness and conviction.

As the first legislature of the independent state of Timor-Leste all of you carry a historical responsibility and I wish all of you every success in discharging it in the service of your country.

Thank you for your attention.