

12 August 2003

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

On 17 December 1999, in its resolution 54/120, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth that 12 August be declared International Youth Day.

The world's youth population is defined by the United Nations as the age group between 15 and 24 years and is estimated at over one billion. The majority of these young men and women live in developing countries, and their numbers are expected to increase during the twenty-first century. Young people are usually full of hope, energy, and great expectations. They have their pristine ideals and do not hesitate to openly express their attitudes and opinions. Their fertile and imaginative minds have been the engine for innovations that have often times led to enormous economic and political changes. They need our nurturing and protection.

Even though young people are the future of mankind, they are one of the most vulnerable and insecure social groups in our society. The ILO estimates that 74 million young men and women are unemployed throughout the world. Unemployment in such large numbers inevitably breeds many social problems. If youth are occupied in constructive endeavors there will be less despair and despondency with consequent positive outcomes.

This year's celebration is dedicated to the theme of youth employment. This issue was stressed in United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/165 on promoting youth employment, which was adopted under my presidency in January 2003. On this special occasion, I would like to urge governments to comply with the resolution and prepare National Reviews and Action Plans on youth employment by March 2004.

United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has established the Youth Employment Network that was created under the impetus of the Millennium Declaration. Under this Network, the UN, together with the World Bank and ILO in cooperation with other agencies, leaders in industry, youth, policymakers and civil society representatives cooperate to find new approaches to the challenge of youth unemployment at global, national and local levels and to assist governments. The Network includes a High Level Panel of experts who have made recommendations and guidelines for countries to prepare their National Reviews and Action Plans as well as take concrete action to increase youth employment.

On this special day, I would like to pay tribute to all those taking part in the struggle to combat youth unemployment. Employment for youth around the world should be perceived and

promoted in the context of intergenerational support. The hopes and aspirations of young people to create and partake of a better and more secure world is of great importance to all of us.