

4 September 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jan Kavan,
President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Meeting on the Role of Civil Society in Conflict Prevention**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all here today to discuss the role of civil society in conflict prevention.

The General Assembly, by adopting the resolution on the prevention of armed conflict recognized the important supporting role of civil society in the prevention of armed conflict and invited civil society to continue to support efforts for the prevention of armed conflict and to pursue practices that foster a climate of peace, help prevent or mitigate crisis situations and contribute to reconciliation. These are very concrete tasks specified and agreed upon consensually during our discussion which led to the adoption of the resolution on the prevention of armed conflict.

My intention in organizing our open meeting today was to give Member States an opportunity to concentrate on this important issue once more, to use the momentum from the success of the General Assembly's resolution on the prevention of armed conflict and to explore interactively the future role of civil society in conflict prevention trying to define how best to link the work of civil society in preventing armed conflict with the work of governments and the UN. I hope that the views presented during this discussion will help us to understand better our possibilities and concretize future tasks.

To achieve these goals, I asked you in my invitation letter to be prepared for the discussion. We all agree that there are a lot of questions which could be asked. Among them are the following:

- What are the results and experience of civil society in conflict prevention so far?
- Should civil society modify its activities in conflict prevention and how?
- What else needs to be done so that we can achieve the UN goals declared in the resolution on the prevention of armed conflict sooner and more effectively?
- How do Member States react to the Secretary-General's initiative and the 2005 conference?
- What issues of concern for Member States need to be addressed in this process and at the final 2005 conference?

I am well aware of the fact, that there can be different views on the role of civil society in armed conflict prevention but I believe also that we are here not to blame each other but to try to find solutions in order to help ourselves become more effective in our important task as delegates of the Member States of the UN obliged by the Charter to prevent conflicts.

This is one of my last initiatives as President of the Fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I am very pleased that you have responded positively to my invitation, and I hope that our discussion will provide us with new interesting ideas and recommendations which will enable us to fulfill expectations and become more effective in preventing armed conflict.

I am pleased to welcome here today our distinguished guests:

Mr. Jan Egeland Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

Mr. Danilo Türk Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Mr. Paul van Tongeren Executive Director of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention

Dr. Andres Serbin from the Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Economicas y Sociales (CRIES) in Argentina

Mrs. Raya Kadyrova from the Foundation for Tolerance International in Kyrgyzstan

Mr. Emmanuel Bombande from the West Africa Network for Peace-building (WANEP) in Ghana

Dr. Mary B. Anderson President of the Collaborative for Development Action

All of you have received a printed programme of our open meeting with the list of speakers, short annotations of speeches and expected goals. Concerning the programme I suggest one small change that is necessary due to a time limitation of H.E. Mr. Jan Egeland so that we will start our interactive discussion immediately after the first part of the programme approximately at 11:00 a.m. We will have a coffee break at 11:30 a.m. when Mr. Egeland needs to leave. This will give us an opportunity to ask Mr. Egeland a few questions before he leaves and to continue in our interactive discussion after the coffee break.

Thank you and I give the floor now to Mr. Danilo Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.