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THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

18 June 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the luncheon hosted by the government of Switzerland**

Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to thank State Secretary Furrer for his gracious hospitality this afternoon. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Switzerland on its decision to join the United Nations. I only regret that the accession process will be completed after my term of office as GA President.

We owe a debt of gratitude to both Switzerland and Tunisia for undertaking to host the two World Summits on Information Society in 2003 and 2005, respectively. At the start of my GA Presidency September 12 last year, I listed the digital divide as one of the priority issues during my presidency of the 56th session of the General Assembly. The special meeting of the General Assembly currently underway demonstrates the strong commitment that the UN brings to this task.

I remain convinced that the digital divide is one of the most critical issues that the international community needs to address - for so much depends on it. Above all, our success in dealing with it will critically affect our ability to eliminate global poverty and underdevelopment in the 21st century. Though I will no longer be the President of the General Assembly by that time, I will be following the WSIS meetings with my personal keen interest.

Finally, let me ask you all to join me in a toast to the success of the World Summit on the Information Society and to the health of all those present here.

Thank you.