



Speech by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser

4th United Nation's Conference of the Least Developed Countries

ISTANBUL May 9, 2011

In The Name of God the Most Merciful the Most Compassionate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to thank the organizers for inviting me to participate in the first plenary session of this conference.

I have stated on many previous occasions that I am not a professional politician. Today I stand before you in the same capacity.

I am happy with this because it gives me more freedom and greater flexibility to express other ideas and suggest other discussions far removed from any preconceived political agendas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all gathered here today because we believe that the issue of human development should be at the forefront of the interests of the international community

This is due to the fact that development, unlike mere growth, increases the ability to achieve peace, justice and the awareness of rights.

Therefore, I do not think that our 4th Conference will stop at merely debating this fact. The problem lies in implementation.

We have before us some thorny issues. They mainly relate to wide-spread abject poverty, ignorance, difficult living conditions and ever-increasing unemployment. This is of course in addition to the difficulty of tackling the blatant violation of the environment.

There are also other consequences of these thorny issues - like causing a wide rift between human beings especially when turned into conflicts which cut across cultural differences which can be a source of good and growth for humanity.

Instead, conditions of inequality and deprivation contribute to creating an environment conducive to the spread of conflicts which consequently produce instability.

These are formidable challenges which, frankly speaking, place us in a critical situation with regards to our future generations. The reason being is that although it was we who set the goals for the Millennium Declaration, we are still stumbling in translating this Declaration into a living reality.

I am not here to belittle or play down what has been achieved so far. It is just that I believe in the capacity of the human mind to face difficulty and I especially believe in its ability to be flexible and find constructive solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

In the time remaining of my speech, I shall endeavor to contribute some ideas which I hope will enrich the debate and help reach a credible answer for the question: What can be done?

There are now four years standing between us and 2015 which we set as the initial deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Since the year 2000, we have come some of the way in this regard, but we are still facing difficulties - like for example the situation of the Least Developed Countries as a result of conflicts and wars.

The Development Goals themselves did not offer answers to such situations.

Therefore, we must raise the ceiling of our challenges and commitments. In the case of development, raising the ceiling of commitment is what makes it more realistic.

By that I mean a more realistic approach is an approach which is based on our joint responsibility to achieve the required change.

In the context of this responsibility, we must be aware that there is no alternative which can compensate for the role of education which should always remain at the top of our priorities.

Education here is not just a means to acquire knowledge. Rather, it is the basis from which awareness and participation in society can be raised higher and from which citizenship can be built.

Eradicating ignorance as a pillar of the Millennium Development Goals and the right to primary education and gender equality are strategic aims for some.

It is my conviction that what is required here is to consider education as the key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Of course education on its own is not enough to achieve this end unless a just socio-political system is in place.

In other words, the availability of an environment which believes in the importance of preparing a citizen who is aware of his rights and duties and appreciates his role in building a society based on good governance. A society saturated with the values of justice, rights and fairness.

I think that such an approach has become a particular necessity in the context of our Arab region in view of current events we are witnessing at the moment. These events confirm the fact that people's longing to live in freedom and dignity transcends borders and cultures.

This new reality reaffirms to us that living societies are those that are rich in the potential of their educated youth and not blessed only with material wealth.

Therefore, it is highly important to involve the youth in decision making, for they have revealed that in the realization of their needs, they showed a tangible awareness, an enormous amount of maturity and also a strong sense of citizenship.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The participation in this conference of the representatives of governments, alongside parliamentarians, civil society and the private sector is a joint commitment on the part of all stakeholders concerned with issue of tackling poverty, ignorance and exclusion. And it is a confirmation of the determination to achieve the required change.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to maintain this constructive and positive spirit which brought us here together and utilize it to launch creative partnerships to follow up and implement the conclusions we may reach.

In our current situation, I think it necessary to enhance the participatory role of civil society organizations and social movements in the implementation of projects. This is aside from the fact that these organizations are closely linked to the socially active individuals in the fields which matter to us.

By the same token, and with an equal degree of interest, we must benefit from the scientific credentials of the private sector and from its experience in finding innovative solutions for the challenges of technology.

Once again, I reiterate that our real success in embodying this constructive spirit will not be achieved except through placing education at the heart of our list of priorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, I would like to stress that there is no way to achieving the Millennium Development Goals if we are not successful in achieving them in the Least Developed Countries.

Our success here is the real criteria of our commitment.

There is no way of talking about peace, stability and recognition of cultural diversity when poverty, wanton need, ignorance and exclusion are on the increase.

Furthermore, these manifestations - which are in fact an affront to what is right and dignified - cannot be eliminated unless education is really available to all.

This is what is really at stake here.

I thank you, and wish your conference every success.

ENDS.