

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Sultanate of Oman*



سلطنة عمان

**Statement**

**Of**

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**Minister of Heritage and Culture**  
**of the Sultanate of Oman**

**at the**

**High-level Plenary Meeting**  
**Of the General Assembly**

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Majesties, Excellencies, Highnesses,  
His Excellency, President of the General Assembly,  
His Excellency the Secretary General of the United Nations,  
Distinguished Delegates

I have the honor to convey to you the greetings of his Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman, and his best wishes of success in your endeavours to achieve the desirable purposes and objectives. I would also seize this opportunity to assure you of my country's delegation's readiness to co-operate with you, and all the delegates of member States, for the success of the work of the Summit in a manner that would fulfill the hopes and aspirations of all our peoples.

Allow me by the same token to pay tribute to the work of his Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations and the efforts he makes to improve the Organization, its subsidiary Organs and their performance. We highly appreciate these efforts and thank him for the useful recommendations he submitted to this Summit.

I sincerely hope that this High Level Summit would agree on implementable, practical, collective recommendations on the financing of development, and the implementation of the programs and strategies approved by United Nations Conferences in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Distinguished Delegates,

This Summit acquires a special importance, as a historical opportunity to consider a number of questions that are important to continued international co-operation, and in particular the realization of the MDGs. There is no doubt that the achievement of comprehensive sustainable development has been and still is the highest goal of all big meetings of world leaders.

We accept the vision of the Secretary General of the United Nations, which states that there can be no security without development, and no development without security. Development and security are

complementary. Hence the importance of this Summit which rests on four principal pillars determined by the Millennium Summit, namely:

- 1 – Economic development
- 2 - Social development
- 3 - Conservation of natural resources
- 4 - Protection of the environment

Of course these main themes overlap with other no-less important questions such as awareness, education, institutional building, integration of women and youth, in addition to training and information.

Although my government agree with the recommendations provided by the Secretary General on the sustainable development, but we would like to mention here the importance of giving more freedom to developing countries to promote their development programmes, according to their national priorities and especially circumstances of each country, which getting along with the international strategies of development.

Because my country's government is keen on making people the focus of development, it has placed the Millennium Development Goals at the head of its national policies and is doing its best to connect the social and economic dimensions of these Goals through the use of monitoring indicators which have proven that the Sultanate has already gone a long way towards the achievement of these goals and purposes, and, with the help of God, will manage to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on schedule.

Distinguished Delegates,

This year, we will carry out the first review of the Millennium Declaration. We should seize the opportunity of our meeting today to review our commitment to implement that declaration as soon as possible. We must stand shoulder to shoulder and summon our political will to do what we can to make people everywhere safer and more prosperous.

The Sultanate of Oman has always believed in the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which it has placed at the head of its national policies and has been keen on connecting social and economic

dimensions of development. Allow me to briefly share with you some aspects of the progress made by the Sultanate in achieving the MDGs. Through monitoring indicators that we were able to measure, the Sultanate realized a number of these goals and will be able to complete most of them ahead of schedule. As an example, when it comes to gender equality and empowerment of women, the Sultanate managed to end the gender disparity at all education levels. This has enhanced the status and power of woman. The Sultanate has achieved this both in secondary schools and colleges in 2002.

The Sultanate has also taken measures to spread literacy among youth and provide more learning opportunities to young girls. Omani women have proven their ability to continue with education once they are given the opportunity. The ratio of literacy continued to rise at an annual rate of 1.44% since 1993. At this rate the disparity between the two genders is expected to fully disappear by the end of 2005.

In order to achieve gender equality, the Government of the Sultanate has shown great interest in women's rights. Omani women now hold posts as Ministers, under-secretaries and members in the Shoura (Consultative) Council and the State Council. This shows that Omani women now enjoy a lot of rights.

As for the mortality rate of children under five, the Sultanate has managed to reduce it by 4.96% annually, which exceeds the required annual reduction of 4.39%.

Distinguished Delegates,

This coming November, my country will celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the blessed renaissance launched by his Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said in 1970. During this march, the country witnessed great achievements in all aspects of life all over the Sultanate. During this period, all structures and institutions of the modern state, be they legislative, executive or judicial, have been completed. The State Constitution provides all guarantees to the Omani citizen, man or woman, so that they can enjoy their rights, and perform their duties in a context of equality, justice, the rule of law and participation in decision-making and development efforts.

Oman has its own special experience in the field of democratic practice and the participation of citizens in making national decisions. This process is continuing gradually on solid basis anchored in Omani life and the realities of our time. This has been reflected in the gradual steps taken in this respect, the latest of which has been the granting of the right of election to all eligible citizens, be they men or women. Women have been the focus of attention since the start of the blessed renaissance. They have been given all opportunities for education, training and rehabilitation. Now women enjoy their political rights including membership of the State Council and the right to vote and to stand as a candidate for the Shoura Council, in addition to holding various posts in the administrative apparatus of the State including appointment to the Council of ministers. Moreover, Omani women perform a pioneering role through their effective work in large institutions working in the field of economic and social development.

My country has also witnessed an important development in the size and quality of services provided to disabled persons over the last three decades, including social and medical care and education. The services provided are based on understanding and dealing with various levels of disabilities, how they happen and their effects on the individual, the family and the society. The services include prevention, early detection and rehabilitation, with a view to the realization of equal opportunities to persons with disabilities. The Sultanate gives the needs of the disabled special attention, taking into consideration world directions calling for the need to grant this group all civil and political rights and integrating them in society. The Ministry of social development, in co-operation with other competent governmental and non-governmental organizations has devised a special strategy for the disabled that conforms with the universal spirit of support for the disabled. Currently the Sultanate is considering a draft law for the care of the disabled.

Also my country is among those countries that are interested in social welfare. It guarantees the citizen and his family assistance in the case of emergencies, sickness, disability and old age, in accordance with the system of social security, which has been lately amended, to raise the financial aid earmarked for this group of people to enable them to lead a dignified life.

Distinguished Delegates,

As regards environmental sustainability, the Sultanate has increased the land area placed under protection for the purpose of conserving biological

diversity, from 8% in 1995 to 10% in 2002. This is an indication of the Sultanate's positive stand on protection of the environment.

Also, in the environmental field, the institutional and legislative structure in this respect, has witnessed a marked development that enabled the Sultanate to establish the necessary political, administrative, institutional and legal regulations to protect the environment and deal with the main environmental problems, such as water scarcity, desertification, air pollution, good management of radio-active material, chemicals, the re-use of treated sewage water, management of waste, combating marine pollution, and good management of coastal areas in addition to protecting natural fungi and their habitats and the maintenance of biological diversity and other vital questions.

The achievements of the Sultanate in environmental management have earned her the 2<sup>nd</sup> place among Arab countries and the 83<sup>rd</sup> place among 146 countries at the international level according to the "Report on environmental sustainability indicator for the year 2005" prepared by the Davos Economic Forum. Besides the Sultanate strictly adheres to the principles of full commitment to the path and the basic principles approved by the international community and are contained in regional and international conventions to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

Distinguished Delegates,

At the international level, my country has followed with concern, the situation of many peoples and regions all over the world that are working very hard to reach the required level of development that would enable them to overcome the spread of epidemics, poverty and the consequences of natural disasters. We believe that humanitarian responsibility dictates that developed countries should give them the opportunity to share in the fruits of the world economy, by reviewing their policies in order to cancel their debts and offer them all sorts of economic support, including the permission for poor and developing countries to manufacture medicine and provide it in affordable prices for Aids, Malaria, Tuberculosis patients.

Distinguished Delegates,

My government has followed the improvement in the rate of development of the world economy. And despite good expectations that this boom will continue, this still requires more financial, monetary and trade reform to meet the challenges of development, the creation of a trade, investment and information climate conducive to raising the rates of balanced development, and the realization of stability in the world economic order.

The continued good performance of the world economy is conditional on the improvement of the world economic environment. The Sultanate has followed with interest the on-going efforts of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization in this respect and hopes for better co-operation and co-ordination among various organizations so that they may be able to face the challenges still facing the countries of the world, in the field of achieving sustainable economic growth, sustainable development, financial balance and stability. This may be achieved through complementarity in the work of the international institutions in the field of trade, development, investment and the provision of technical assistance.

That is why we believe it is high time for the international community to take practical, concrete steps to assist these countries and regions, especially those on the African continent to enable them to benefit from the opportunities of globalization, within the concept of world partnership. This can never be achieved through promises alone, but through an implementable clear international strategy based on debt cancellation, provision of development assistance and giving the exports of developing and least developed countries a chance to have access to world markets without tariff barriers and restrictions.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Sultanate would like to pay tribute to the agreement reached by finance ministers of the States of the Group of 8 to immediately write off the debts of 18 countries which amount to 40 billion dollars that represent 100% of their debts to major international financial institutions. This important step would undoubtedly help with development and poverty reduction.

The Sultanate looks forward to the implementation of the second phase decided upon by the Group of 8 to write off the debts of other developing countries; an act that would help the world economic stability and development and the improvement of the fields of trade, development and investment.

It is meaningless to urge poor countries to improve their economies and compete with other countries, when they are deprived of the means that could help them enter the field of competition. Also, in order to work for achieving the desirable goals, we should re-define debt sustainability.

Distinguished Delegates,

At the regional level, the Sultanate continued its co-operation with its friends and sister countries, through regional economic groupings to promote the climate for trade liberalization, the economy and investment. In the Gulf Co-operation Council, since the establishment of the Customs Union at the start of 2002, most obstacles to the flow and growth of intra-trade have been removed. There has also been an effective contribution to the expansion of Gulf investments, in addition to enhancing economic co-operation among the States members of the Gulf Co-operation Council and their trading partners from various countries of the world. Within the framework of the League of Arab States, the Greater Arab Free Trade Organization Agreement has become effective in January 2005, with a view to achieving full liberalization and opening the doors for promoting Arab products on the road to the creation of the Arab Common Market.

Distinguished Delegates,

My country's foreign policy has been governed by clear constant principles laid down by his Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, may God protect him, since he took over the rule of the country. These were confirmed by the basic Constitution of the State in Article 10 which lays down the principles that govern the State's foreign policy and determine the relations with others. It refers in one of its paragraphs "to the strengthening of co-operation and enhancing friendship with all countries and peoples on the basis of mutual respect, common interests, non- interference in internal affairs, observance of international and regional conventions and treaties, and

universally recognized norms of international law, in a manner that would lead to the spread of peace and security among countries and peoples". Our foreign policy has applied these principles through clear policies and positions that are wise, rational and far-sighted. This policy has enabled the Sultanate to perform a positive role within its region, be it in the Gulf or with other Arab countries, or internationally and contribute to the strengthening of peace, security and stability in the world.

Distinguished Delegates,

As regards the situation in the Middle East, the latest developments on the Palestinian front, represented in the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is a first step in the right direction towards the implementation of resolutions of international legality embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of "land for peace". We look forward to seeing Israel, in co-operation with the Palestinian Authority and neighboring countries take similar steps towards withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories. We urge all concerned parties to return to the negotiating table, to implement the road map, since peaceful dialogue is the best way to reach a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East based on right, justice, co-existence and the establishment of a Palestinian State, with full sovereignty over all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, in accordance with the international commitment embodied in the road map, which calls for the existence of two States, a Palestinian State and an Israeli State, living side by side within internationally recognized boundaries.

Distinguished Delegates,

Although we agree with the contention of the Secretary General of the United Nations that the absence of a comprehensive international convention to combat terrorism, based on a clear definition and a good knowledge of the causes and roots of this phenomenon has weakened international efforts to fight terrorism, we, on the other hand, believe that it is high time to implement an international strategy to fight terrorism based on co-operation

and exchange of information among countries and the need to distinguish between the legitimate right to self-defense and resist aggression and terrorist acts carried out by outlaw individuals or groups that lead to the killing and terrorizing of civilians as a means and an end.

We in the Sultanate of Oman believe that Man, whom God has honoured and raised over all his creatures, is worthy of care and protection from any harm and should live in dignity. Based on this, my country's government has supported all good efforts whose aim is to protect human beings and safeguard their dignity and the rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In addition, my country's government has acceded to ten of the international conventions relevant to combating terrorism.

In this context we renew our call for the convening of an international conference on terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to adopting an international code of conduct to fight terrorism to which all parties should be committed. The results of such a conference may contribute to the defeat of terrorism.

Distinguished Delegates,

Accession of States to disarmament treaties and conventions and abiding by them, would enhance and maintain regional and international peace and security. That is why my country calls for the need to take practical steps to make the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. In this respect, we call on countries of the region, that have not done so, to accede to all relevant treaties, and in particular the NPT, and to place all their nuclear facilities under supervision, in accordance with the IAEA safeguard regime. This could create a positive atmosphere and stop armament in the region.

Distinguished Delegates,

Everybody believes that road accidents are one of the growing public health concerns the world over. They have been a source of worry for the international community and health sectors for four decades in view of the rising number of victims of road accidents to over one million victims

annually, let alone the number of the injured which exceeds fifty million people of various productive ages in their societies. Out of my country's belief that this is a serious problem and in order to make more efforts aimed at giving road safety the commensurate importance, regionally and internationally, the Sultanate has submitted to the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the Forum of Asian Co-operation held in Islamabad, last April, an idea to approve a complete scheme to improve safety on the roads. This scheme includes the establishment of strong co-operation among the member States of the Forum, to have safety on the roads and reduce the disastrous accidents. Last May, my country hosted a regional expert consultation symposium on prevention of traffic injuries. The participants included governmental and civil sectors and the regional offices of the World Health Organization. The aim of the meeting has been to spread awareness regarding road safety, and the magnitude of the injuries and how to prevent them and their harmful effects and reduce their consequences.

Distinguished Delegates,

There is no doubt that the United Nations and all its subsidiary bodies and related international institutions need development and modernization to enable them to better serve the interests of States and adapt to the new developments on the international arena. In light of this, we believe that the development and modernization process should exceed the mere expansion or reduction of the membership of certain councils and committees. They should be based on a new concept that focuses on giving a strong new impetus to all these bodies and councils to enable them to perform the functions entrusted to them in the service of security, stability and the comprehensive development in the world.

As for the process of developing and improving the performance of the United Nations, we would like to affirm that for this process to succeed, it must be continuous and comprehensive, without time frames or deadlines. Moreover, it should include all bodies of the United Nations, and take into consideration the new developments on the international scene, in a manner that would help improve the performance of collective international action and the prompt response to the challenges faced by our contemporary world.

In view of all of the above, it has become essential to create the right balance between the functions and mandates of the principal organs of the United

Nations, improve procedures, and reduce the items on the agendas of some of these organs to better reflect the current challenges facing the international community. These measures should not negatively affect the ability of these organs to deal with the important substantive matters. The United Nations should have a decisive and central role in designing international economic policies. The role of ECOSOC should not be limited to reviewing programs approved by the United Nations. The Economic and Social Council must develop its dialogue and solidarity with the Bretton Woods institutions, and the WTO, especially in the field of deciding world economic policies.

It would also be useful to co-ordinate efforts among international and regional organizations to realize complementarity among them.

Majesties, Excellencies, Highnesses  
Mr. President of the General Assembly  
Mr. Secretary General  
Distinguished Delegates

The Sultanate of Oman would like to reaffirm its support of the United Nations and all efforts aimed at the enhancement of the level of performance of this organization and its subsidiary organs. This would require political will and co-operation by all member States.

Thank you.