

8 June 2006

**Acceptance Speech of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President-Elect of the 61st Session of the General Assembly**

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Dear Friends,

I am delighted and honoured to have been elected President of the General Assembly for its sixty-first session.

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all Member States, in particular the Asian Group, for their endorsement of my election and for the trust they have bestowed on me. My election to this high post is an honour for my country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, which has witnessed real and comprehensive political and economic reforms. Though small in size, Bahrain has registered tremendous achievements.

I will work with you all, in cooperation with you, to continue on the path that my colleagues, the presidents of the General Assembly at its previous sessions, have paved, in particular my colleague His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly at the current session. He has made great efforts to advance United Nations reform, and his achievements in the areas of international peace and security and of human rights are indeed noteworthy.

I cannot fail to commend the tireless efforts made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, during his tenure, to promote the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to enhance respect for human dignity around the world. I commend the continuous manner in which he is working with Member States to liberate peoples from fear, want and disease, as well as to lay the foundations for the reform of the United Nations.

Allow me to congratulate you all on your efforts during this session, which were crowned by the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the creation of the Human Rights Council, affiliated with the General Assembly, and the strengthening of the Central Emergency Response Fund.

The United Nations today faces challenges in many parts of the world that threaten global security and that require collective efforts to confront and resolve them. It is my hope that, in consultation and in coordination with one another, we will be able to identify any shortcomings and develop a system based on effective multilateralism that can accomplish tangible results and serve our common interests, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Indeed, the United Nations is in need of continuous efforts on the part of us all to revitalize its main organs, hence reforming the Organization has become imperative if it is to achieve its objectives.

I look forward to working with you in pursuing the universal principles enshrined in the Charter. I will also be guided by the Kingdom of Bahrain's foreign policy, which is based on the rule of law, tolerance and respect for human rights and freedoms. We need to enhance the General Assembly's relationship with the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations organs. There is also a need to strengthen the partnership among the United Nations, regional organizations and civil society institutions. I will work with you to ensure that at its sixty-first session, the Assembly continues the process of United Nations reform that began a number of years ago.

I am moved by a deep feeling of pain caused by the tragedies occurring throughout the world at both the human and environmental levels. At the human level, the suffering caused by political disputes, wars, terrorism, poverty and malnutrition motivates me; at the environmental level, pollution, global warming, the depletion of natural resources and the increase in the rate of extinction of living species compel me to try to make a difference.

In that context, I have not forgotten the many instances of women being harshly treated, in some parts of the world, instances of suppression and human indignities. Those memories indicate that the suffering experienced by women as a result of injustices motivates me to work with you to find appropriate solutions to alleviate their pain and to uphold the principles of the Charter, which emphasizes full respect for all humans without discrimination.

I am further motivated by our need to identify and communicate with one another so as to develop a common understanding. It is inconceivable to me how information technology can have advanced to such an incredible degree and yet we still have such difficulty communicating with one another. Indeed, over the past few years the Internet has made a reality of the notion of the universal library, which a few decades ago was merely a figment of the imagination of the noted Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. That attests to the role that advanced information technology can play in bringing human beings closer to one another.

Thus, if we reflect upon all the miseries and tragedies suffered by humanity throughout the twentieth century and to the present day, we realize that they not only harm humanity, but also distort the meaning of creativity, art and beauty, leaving a disastrous imprint on reality and on our lives. In fact, the future of coming generations depends on the way in which we address current problems. We must work to preserve humanitarianism and to ensure that our planet is a safer and more suitable place in which to live. Essentially, we are all human beings who share a common fate, and that is what inspired the founders of our Organization.

Thus it is crucial that we find a comprehensive and practical strategy to combat one of the greatest evils of our time: terrorism. Is it possible to achieve this without addressing the problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and extremism in all its forms? Is it possible to achieve this without examining educational curricula that give rise to terrorist ideologies and to exclusion? It is time that we focus on the importance of education in nurturing future generations and foster curricula that promote openness, critical thinking and creativity.

Is this not what we, the peoples of the United Nations, seek to achieve: a clear, pragmatic vision that will put an end to the ongoing violations of human freedoms? We are aware that the majority of the world's people live with hunger, disease, illiteracy, war and internal and international displacement. Yet we should not lose hope, for I believe that great hope arises from great hardships.

In conclusion, I cannot fail to reaffirm my commitment to work with you during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly to attain the objectives set out in the United Nations Charter, within a framework of transparency and full respect for all views and positions.