

14 September 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
before the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and
Development**

Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you all to this historical event. This High-level Dialogue not only confirms the clear linkage between migration and development and the various opportunities and challenges concerning this issue, but will serve as a platform to move forward; and essentially mobilize the political will and build effective partnerships to realize the potential migrants can have in developing both countries of origin and destination whilst safeguarding their rights.

Last month, I read a disturbing article about the ordeals that migrants experience on their journey. Most come in open wooden boats with no shelter except a plastic tarpaulin stretched over one part of the boat. The migrants are packed in, they have no room to stretch and lack all basic needs. You can all just imagine what they have suffered, from salt sources, infected wounds, and diseases; risking their lives for a new beginning. Yet thousands of migrants continue to take routes like these, despite the dangers knowingly or unknowingly determined to have a new beginning.

Excellencies,

Migration is inherent to human nature. It has become a major aspect of modern societies in the face of globalizations. The revolutions in communication, transportation and rights of individuals to stay abroad have facilitated movement of peoples across borders, movement to seek better lives and overcome such hardships.

In 2005, 191 million individuals courageously sought just this and this number is likely to rise in the coming years.

If harnessed constructively, migration can have a profound effect on development. The financial and human capital of migrants, especially remittances, can reduce poverty substantially by increasing access to education and healthcare, thus filtering directly into the Millennium Development Goals. On the other hand, migration of skilled peoples from developing countries to developed countries can severely impede development.

Naturally, this complex relationship raises numerous questions and only through an open, engaging, constructive debate can we eliminate misconceptions, understand each other's perspectives, identify our common concerns and examine new ideas and joint activities that strengthen migration policies and protect migrants' rights. This by default necessitates close cooperation between Member States, international institutions, NGOs, and the private sector.

Then and only then will we be able to address how to ensure that labor supply matches labor demand for today and the future and prevent smuggling from doing the matching for us.

Then and only then will we be able to address how to ensure a smooth internal transition for countries that have gradually shifted from being primarily sources of migrants to destinations for migrants.

Then and only then will we be able to address how to protect migrants' rights and ensure that migrant women's rights are not exploited.

Excellencies,

This is the very first high-level event of the United Nations entirely devoted to this topic. There have been many events organized by the General Assembly over the course of the year in preparation for this high-level dialogue, including Panel Discussions on International Migration and Development in New York and Geneva last June and July respectively, Informal Interactive Hearings with NGOs, Civil Society and the Private Sector in New York last July and an International Symposium on the subject in Turin also last June.

The four round table discussion this afternoon and tomorrow, will give Member States a unique opportunity to exchange views among themselves and with civil society, the private sector and international institutions on various topics related to Migration and Development.

In terms of Migration Management, Member States could work with interested parties to enhance the coherence in policy-making, foster dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination.

In terms of International Migration Law and Human Rights, Member States can work with the interested parties to increase awareness and strengthen the existing international legal instruments that protect migrants, promote integration, fights gender discrimination, and provide capacity building to countries that need technical assistance.

In terms of migration development, Member States can work with interested parties to mainstream migration into the Millennium Development Goals, emphasize the important economic role that migrant communities and the development potential of remittances.

Further, in terms of Labor Migration, Member States can work with interested parties to develop a more effective global labor market, improve the security of remittance transfers, and analyze the role of circular migration.

We notice that the link between migration and development is not new, what is new, however, is the speed of global mobility. The reduction of barriers in goods, capital and services all across the globe directly affect the movement of people. This reality cannot be ignored; no development strategy, no trade strategy, no foreign policy strategy should move forward without integrating migration considerations.

The United Nations has a crucial role to play in realizing the potential of international migration to underpin economic growth and development. Through this dialogue, the United Nations will search for ways of building effective partnerships so that coordinated action can be taken to develop the capacities needed in the field of migration.

Certainly the two days will not be enough. It will be the beginning of our path to conduct more research, help improve policy program responses, dispel myths and misperceptions about international migration, provide long term perspectives on key issues and anticipate new trends. The Secretary-General's report on International Migration and Development provides us with a number of recommendations including the idea of creating a Global Forum on Migration and Development. These proposals as well as Member States' contributions will inspire us in our deliberations on this important matter.

Indeed, it is imperative that we continue our exchanges and arrive at a more constructive understanding of migration and its benefits.

Thank you.