

18 September 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Opening of the High-Level Meeting on the Mid-Term  
Comprehensive Global Review of the Implementation of the Program  
of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010**

Deputy-Secretary-General;  
Excellencies,  
Friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to be with you all here today, at this High Level Meeting on the 'Mid-Term Comprehensive Global Review of the implementation of the Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010'.

I would like to begin by extending my warmest thanks to all Member States for their participation; the Secretary-General for leading the UN's invaluable efforts in support of the LDCs; the Under-Secretary, Anwarul Chowdlury, for his substantive role; the experts who spent three challenging days earlier this month preparing for this high level meeting, and the various UN Funds, Programs and Specialized Agencies for their determination to help elevate the status of 600 million people living in the 50 most vulnerable countries of the world.

We are gathered here today to renew and reaffirm our political determination to meet the commitments set out in the 2001 Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action by 2010. It is only through a global partnership that brings together LDCs, donor countries, Civil Society, NGOs and the private sector that we can translate this collective endeavor into measurable outcomes.

Against this background, I am particularly encouraged that Member States have welcomed my proposal to discuss the implementation of global partnership for development in this year's General Debate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Least Developed Countries remain marginalized in the world economy and continue to suffer from extreme poverty, child mortality and HIV/AIDS; often with insufficient domestic capacity to have a long term impact on these issues. In many instances development is being set back by civil conflict, and the cost required to rebuild everyday life.

These impediments to development make LDCs even more vulnerable to internal and external shocks, and deprive them from taking advantage of the economic opportunities of globalization.

Together, the 2001 Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action, represent a comprehensive strategy for a global partnership to lift millions of people from extreme poverty.

At the 2005 Summit, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the eradication of global poverty, the promotion of sustainable development and economic prosperity for all. They urged all parties to continue to make concerted efforts and adopt speedy measures to realize the goals and targets set out in the Programme of Action.

As we move forward and implement these worth goals we must always remind ourselves that poverty has a human face: the children that go without food; the young women that sacrifice the opportunity for education and empowerment, in order to work or care for their brothers and sisters; or, the dignified elderly that have no one to care for them in their old age.

In Benin recently, LDC Ministers re-committed themselves to strive to improve the well-fair of their people, and reaffirmed their unswerving resolve to implement the Program of Action.

As a result of joint efforts made at national and international levels, in 2004, LDCs were able to achieve an annual average growth rate of 6 per cent - the highest in four decades! This is a commendable achievement which demonstrates, that together, we can overcome the obstacles to development and realize our shared goals.

However, overall progress remains mixed. Recent studies by UN Agencies and the World Bank have revealed that 34 of the total of 50 LDCs are experiencing increases in extreme poverty. In sub-Saharan Africa the situation is particularly acute, where on current trends most of the MDGs will not be achieved until the next century.

If this situation persists, LDCs are not going to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In fact, over the next decade extreme poverty could actually increase. An additional 100 million people could join the 370 million people already living in abject poverty.

Although alarming, this situation should not discourage us from our common mission, the common thread that gives unity of action to deal with world poverty, namely the Millennium Development Goals.

Together, we have an urgent moral imperative to eradicate abject poverty. We can be encouraged, that unlike in previous centuries, we now have the know how and resources to make a real and long lasting difference. We must spare no effort to bring about significant changes in the lives of the millions of women, men and children trapped in extreme poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When receiving her Noble Prize in 2004, Professor Wangari Maathai of Kenya stated and I quote:

"in the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground, a time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other." Let us ponder for a moment the wisdom of these words as we embark upon the task ahead of us. I believe this time has come. This time is now.

On this occasion, let us demonstrate our determination to eradicate poverty by redoubling our commitment and strengthening our efforts. We must reaffirm our collective resolve and solidarity to reach out to every woman, man, and child afflicted by hunger and disease. Together, let us give them a real chance to escape the dehumanizing misery of extreme poverty.

Thank you.