

27 September 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the General Debate of the 61st Session of the United
Nations General Assembly**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have now concluded the General Debate of the Sixty-first Session of the General Assembly. I thank all of you for your valuable contributions.

The annual General Debate provides a unique opportunity for world leaders to meet and exchange views on the most pressing global issues and challenges. While there may not be agreement on all matters on our agenda, we share a common belief in the merit of dialogue and international cooperation. For this dialogue to be fruitful, we all agree that values such as mutual respect, tolerance and understanding should guide our work and deliberations.

For the past two weeks, we have had a rich and substantive debate. Your dignitaries have reaffirmed the centrality of the General Assembly's role as "the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations". It will not be possible for me to summarize all the points made, but let me mention a few issues addressed by many of you.

This year's theme of the General Debate was "Implementing a Global Partnership for Development". I am pleased that so many of your heads of State and Government highlighted this issue in their statements.

There was a clear message that we need to redouble our efforts to make progress towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals and address the deadlock in the international trade negotiations. Many of you stressed the need to move ahead to eradicate extreme poverty, particularly in light of the reversed trends we are witnessing in Africa. Some also underlined the need to explore creative methods of funding the development agenda, including contributions from the private sector.

You also expressed a strong commitment to continue the follow-up and implementation of the reform agenda adopted at the World Summit last September. You commended the achievements of the Sixtieth Session, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and the Central Emergency Response Fund, and expressed your will to enable these new organs and institutions to live up to their potential.

You reaffirmed the role of the United Nations in fighting the scourge of terrorism and welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. You emphasized the need to take this work forward, both by implementing the Strategy and by concluding the negotiations on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

On institutional reforms, you made it clear that you would like to see further progress on Secretariat and management reform, including mandate review; Security Council reform; strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly revitalization.

In addition, you would like the United Nations to assume a more proactive role both in the prevention and in the resolution of armed conflicts. You have underlined the importance of reaching a just and lasting solution to the Middle East crisis. You have also expressed the need to resolve the situation in Darfur.

You have called on the United Nations to take a lead in the prevention of ethnic cleansing, mass killings and genocide. Furthermore, many of you stressed the need to regain momentum in our work in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Other fundamental global challenges that you raised include environmental degradation and climate change, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, gender equality and education for all.

You also underlined the need to promote dialogue among civilizations, in order to enhance our mutual understanding of each other's cultures.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have provided useful input and guidance for our work ahead. Over the coming days, I will carefully review and reflect on the points made during the General Debate. I will continue to listen to any further thoughts and ideas that you may have for our program of work. My door will always be open to you.

We must approach our work in a transparent, efficient and coherent manner in order to make best use of our time and resources. We have to build trust and confidence among ourselves to serve our common interest and achieve tangible results that will make a difference to the lives of millions of people around the world.

Next week I will communicate to you my proposal on the way to carry our work forward. I look forward to close and constructive cooperation with all of you in the year ahead.

Thank you.