

18 October 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
for the World Food Day Observance**

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Mr. Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you for this year's observance of the World Food Day. At the outset, I would like to thank Dr. Jacques Diouf for inviting me to participate in this important event.

On this day, we commemorate the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Canada in 1945. This commemoration comes at a time when the world is in urgent need to make investment in agriculture and food security a priority.

We have made steady progress towards achieving the first Millennium Development Goal; namely, the goal of reducing by half the proportion of people living in abject poverty and hunger, by the year 2015.

Yet, the progress we have made so far is not fast enough to realize this goal. Today an estimated 850 million people are still undernourished around the world. Most of them live in rural areas, and depend on small scale agriculture.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The causes of food insecurity are complex. Investment in agriculture alone will not be enough to tackle this challenge. Rather, we need to integrate health, education and environmental concerns into our approach. This can only be achieved by establishing stronger partnerships between the private and the public sector. Only then will we be able to deliver more effective progress.

I have noted the FAO's report on the "State of Food Security in the World". It suggests that only Latin America and the Caribbean are capable of reaching the first Millennium Development Goal given their current rate of progress. The Asia-Pacific region may also achieve this goal if their rate of progress is accelerated over the next few years.

Sub-Saharan Africa, however, faces a more dire situation and requires our special attention. At their current pace, this goal will not be realized until the 22nd century. Cycles of conflict, drought

and disease have spread famine and threatened the well-being of millions of people. We must work together to reverse these trends by channeling more aid for agriculture and rural development.

On this World Food Day, let us re-affirm our commitment to the eradication of poverty and hunger and invest in Agriculture for Food Security.

Thank You.