

3 November 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
on the Culture of Peace**

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are considering several items, including agenda item 42, the report of the Economic and Social Council; item 43, "Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin"; item 44, "Culture of peace"; item 45, "The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order"; and item 49, "Sports for peace and development".

In September 2005, world leaders reaffirmed, in the World Summit Outcome Document, the Declaration on a Culture of Peace. This year is the sixth year of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. We should indeed highlight its objectives and the true meaning of the culture of peace. It is a set of principles and conduct for a way of living designed to renounce violence and prevent the eruption of conflicts. It also focuses on the underlying causes of such conflicts. It attempts to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations between individuals, States and groups.

Resolution 53/243, adopted by the General Assembly in 1999, set out eight strengthening actions relating to the culture of peace: actions to foster a culture of peace through education; to promote sustainable economic and social development; to promote respect for all human rights; to ensure equality between women and men; to foster democratic participation; to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity; to support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge; and to promote international peace and security.

It was the task of UNESCO - working together with a number of entities within the United Nations system, Member States and civil society - to coordinate all of the relevant activities relating to the International Decade for a Culture of Peace. Document A/61/175, which is before the Assembly today, provides a comprehensive picture of all of the important and effective activities envisaged, showing that the United Nations is playing a major and significant role in establishing a new global human order.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of initiatives taken to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures, religions and peoples. This is a way of strengthening rapprochement, tolerance and mutual understanding of values, languages, history and culture. A number of summit conferences have focused on practical and concrete activities to foster such dialogue.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The leaders of the world, in the World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1), also stressed the importance of sports in all forms in strengthening a culture of peace and development. Sports can also help to promote tolerance and mutual understanding. The year 2005 was declared the International Year for Sport and Physical Education, and we stressed the important part played by sports in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to improve public health. Emphasis was placed on the concept of sports as a world language that could break down barriers, including social, religious and ethnic barriers between peoples and societies and could bring people together, surpassing differences and strengthening communication and understanding. All of this would help to promote lasting peace among peoples.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, the world is still faced with conflict, war, violence and diseases. We all have to work together to put an end to those phenomena, which hamper sustainable development and peace. The United Nations and the General Assembly play an extremely important role by developing policies and mechanisms to deal with those scourges. I myself believe that sports and propagating a culture of peace are two important elements that will help us to build a world full of tolerance, solidarity, mutual understanding and peace.

Thank you.