

13 November 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the Joint UN-IPU Annual Parliamentary Hearing**

Mr. President,
Deputy Secretary-General,
Honorable Parliamentarians,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today at the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. At the outset, I would like to thank the Honorable Pier Ferdinando for inviting me to participate in this event.

I am extremely encouraged by the number of parliamentarians who have come here from all over the world. Your presence here today testifies to the significance of this hearing.

I am also pleased to see so many representatives of civil society.

During the 2005 Summit, World Leaders resolved to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through the Inter-Parliamentary Union. And, that this should cover all areas of the work of the United Nations, including implementation of reforms.

Through our close cooperation we have an important opportunity to better understand the consequences of international decisions on national realities. Also, to engage in fruitful intellectual and cultural interaction. This is essential to our decision-making processes at the United Nations.

Nowhere is this cooperation and dialogue more important, than in the field of conflict prevention and peace building. I am therefore delighted that this year's meeting focuses on reinforcing the key role of the United Nations in these two areas.

In this regard, I would like to touch on a number of important developments that are extremely encouraging;

First, we are witnessing a new culture in the United Nations, where the need for prevention, rather than reaction, is becoming more and more vital.

Second, today we have better tools at our disposal to both identify potential conflicts and to defuse them.

These include:

- an enhanced mediation role for the Secretary-General;
- a higher level of coordination within the UN system to tackle potential conflicts; and,
- stronger advocacy of human rights as key to social harmony and the commitment of states to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Third, there is a higher recognition of the important role women play in both the prevention and the resolution of conflicts. This was evident in the historic Security Council resolution (1325).

Mainstreaming gender in all our work is very important if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

That is why I commend the Secretary-General for asking the High Level Panel on System Wide Coherence to present recommendations to strengthen gender mainstreaming, particularly in the United Nations' operational work.

In their report presented informally on 9th November, the Panel makes a convincing case for giving the UN a stronger voice and more resources, to focus and empower its work on gender. This is something we should all welcome and encourage.

I am also, pleased to confirm that the General Assembly will hold an informal thematic debate on gender issues early next year.

Given this activity at the UN, I call on you to further your efforts to mainstream women's issues, increase their participation in the political process and their access to elected offices.

Fourth, the establishment of a new Peacekeeping Commission gives us an opportunity to address the issues, which have often led countries to fall back into conflict.

I would like to praise the IPU for its continuous support to democratization, as a means to promote lasting peace and security. And, for its assistance in one of the first cases before the Peacebuilding Commission, in Burundi.

In order to translate all of these endeavors into tangible results, we must continue to work closely together, in a real partnership that takes into consideration the interests and contributions of all stakeholders.

I am convinced that parliaments have a significant role to play in this partnership. Therefore, we must continue to identify the means through which efforts at the national level are complementary to actions at the International level.

Then and only then, can we truly learn from each other and create common grounds that rise above the political, cultural, and religious differences that may at times lead to misconceptions and mistrust among us.

I wish you all a very successful hearing.

Thank you.