

# United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

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## **Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly, at the Forum on General Assembly and Non-Governmental Organizations organized by the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the UN Foundation**

Excellencies,  
Friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
A warm welcome to all of you.

It gives me a real pleasure to co-chair this gathering with the President of the United Nations Foundation, Mr. Timothy Wirth, whom I sincerely thank for his cooperation in organizing this Forum on the relationship between the General Assembly and non-governmental organizations.

I am grateful that so many of you, both Member States and Civil Society have found the time to join us here today. I am indebted to all of you, in particular to those who have dedicated their time, energy and resources to facilitate this event.

The General Assembly held its first informal hearings with civil society, NGOs and the private sector in the run up to the 2005 World Summit.

World leaders welcomed this enhanced dialogue between Member States, the private sector and civil society, including NGOs.

Since then there have been a number of informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly involving civil society.

Building on the experience gained, I believe in the importance of fostering a stronger relationship between civil society and Member States.

I welcome the unique contributions of all voices at the UN and recognize the sovereign role of Member States. In this context, I concur with the views of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, when he states, I quote: ".the goals of the United Nations can be achieved only if civil society and Governments are fully engaged", end of quote.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations relationship with civil society is as old as the Charter.

Civil Society has been making a serious contribution to the United Nations since 1945, including a very active early role in the decolonization process.

Over the years, NGOs have served as UN partners in a wide variety of program areas. Among the thousands of organizations accredited to the UN, there is a rich body of expertise that has been extremely valuable to many UN bodies.

The General Assembly has on many occasions invited civil society to participate in the work of its committees and leaders of civil society organizations have been invited to address many plenary sessions.

I would like to commend three areas where this special contribution has been particularly active:

First, galvanizing public support for the UN's goals;

Second, as partners in the implementation of the UN's humanitarian efforts; and,

Third, representing the needs of people on the ground.

Since my election in June 2006, I have had the pleasure of meeting many civil society organizations. There are many familiar faces that I recognize here today.

I am grateful for your engagement in the key issues of the day, and your support for the values and principles of the United Nations

Civil society organizations can significantly help drive the UN's development agenda forward.

You are indispensable partners in delivering services to the poor, catalyzing action within countries and holding leaders accountable for their commitments. In crisis, post-conflict and post-disaster situations, national and international NGOs are vital implementing partners - without them, UN humanitarian assistance could hardly be delivered.

You have made and continue to make valuable contributions to the UN's reform agenda, particularly on gender equality.

It is no coincidence that the recent High-level Panel's report on System-wide Coherence recommended increasing the United Nations' capacity to promote partnerships between the UN, governments, civil society and the private sector, in order to achieve shared development goals in each country.

Along with strengthening the relationship between the UN and civil society on the ground, it is vital to ensure that civil society has a stronger voice regionally and at headquarters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I shall convene a series of informal thematic debates on development, gender and the dialogue among civilizations, during this session of the General Assembly, involving the private sector and civil society.

The first debate is on the 27th of November. It will focus on the progress made so far to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, identify obstacles that threaten their achievement, and, explore innovative solutions to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

I look forward to your active participation at these events.

We must always remember that the UN is an organization which represents the aspirations of peoples all around the world.

We must continue to strive to create an atmosphere that can build effective partnerships towards achieving our shared goals.

I look forward to continuing this fruitful dialogue and wish you a productive meeting.

Thank you.