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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 Informal Thematic Debate on Partnerships towards Achieving
the MDGs: Taking Stock, Moving Forward**

Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you all for coming today. I am particularly grateful to those of you who have traveled to New York.

We gather here to discuss progress made so far to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. To identify those obstacles that threaten their achievement, and, explore new partnerships to accelerate progress to achieve them by 2015.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the Secretary General, Kofi Annan. His outstanding tenure will leave a lasting legacy. Thanks to his leadership, the implementation of all development commitments has become the top priority for the United Nations. Through the universally accepted MDGs he has helped to provide us with a program of action to achieve a better world, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable.

World leaders have reaffirmed the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative and policymaking organ of the United Nations. We are holding this event today because the General Assembly can boost efforts to make a real impact on the lives of the poor.

Our emphasis must be on partnership because the development goals of Member States will only be achieved if the private sector, civil society and governments are fully engaged.

I would like to set the scene for the debate today by taking stock of the challenges ahead and the progress we have already made.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the beginning of the 21st century, we are a global family that is more interdependent than ever before. We now have the choice to play a critical role to eradicate poverty forever.

But for many, we live in an uncertain world.

In some countries, pregnancy and childbirth kill a woman every minute -- they die with no trained midwife or doctor to help.

270 million children worldwide have no access to healthcare, and four million children die each year in the first month of their short life.

We live in a world where each year malaria kills one million people, tuberculosis two million people, AIDS three million people. Every human life lost is a tragedy.

In education, we are not on course to achieve equal enrolment of girls and boys, and universal access to primary education by 2015. While globally we will meet the poverty reduction goal, there's a huge challenge in Africa, which saw poverty rise in the last decade.

The situation is worse in countries affected by conflict, which receive less aid but contain the highest concentration of the world's poor.

Almost two in three people lack access to clean drinking water. Close to half the population in developing countries suffer from health problems caused by poor water and sanitation.

To meet the water target we need to bring additional clean water to three hundred thousand people every day for the next decade. That is why I invite you all to see Dean Kamen's groundbreaking system to purify water at low cost outside the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

All of these challenges are taking place in a rapidly changing world.

Within three decades urban populations will more than double, putting an additional strain on basic services like health and education.

Some countries are trading more, helping to create rising global prosperity, while others are being left behind. The stalled Doha Round was meant to address this. Concluding Doha could help to lift 140 million people out of poverty.

Climate change has the potential to cause untold damage. In sub-Saharan Africa it could mean that food production is reduced by a fifth.

So we do face huge challenges, but we should take hope from the progress that is being made.

In the past 40 years, life expectancy in the developing world increased by a quarter.

In the past 30 years, illiteracy has fallen by half.

In the past 20 years, 400 million people lifted out of absolute poverty.

Last year official development assistance reached \$100 billion for the first time. Smallpox has been eradicated, and we are nearly there with polio.

And last year the world came together and agreed to do more. The Millennium Summit, the G8 and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty.

Donor countries agreed \$50 billion extra in aid, with \$25 billion to Africa, by 2010. And the debt of 20 countries was fully cancelled, over \$81 billion.

And today, on behalf of the President of the Islamic Development Bank, Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Ali, Vice President Dr Amadou Boubacar Cisse, former Prime Minister of Niger, will announce an additional new finance for the MDGs.

In partnership, we have made progress on a number of things.

We may not have made poverty history, but we are making progress. The challenge for all of us is to make good on our commitments and work in closer partnership.

That is why civil society, NGOs, the media and private sector have such an important role in achieving the MDGs.

The private sector is critical for generating jobs and higher wages, allowing higher public spending on basic services such as education and health.

Social justice is critical to economic prosperity.

And, over the past decade civil society organizations have become important global player in development. They also provide critical support to the UN on the ground.

A reformed and strengthened UN system working with civil society and the private sector will be better able to build capacity for development and deliver more global public goods.

The ultimate test of achieving our shared goals will be about how we manage the policy challenges of the future, including, urbanization, water scarcity, and climate change.

For example, the UNDP human development report argues that we need a new agricultural revolution for water - a "blue revolution" - to ensure the gains in food production are not wiped out as rivers run dry.

The changing climate is having the greatest impact on poor countries. The partnership of the scientific community and private sector will be essential to support their adaptation strategies.

But most of all, if the MDGs are to be achieved, it is critical that both developing and developed countries live up to the commitments made at last year's World Summit.

As developing countries adopt comprehensive national strategies then donors must deliver on commitments to provide additional resources to enable them to succeed.

And together, with all parties, the UN can foster partnerships to help deliver our shared goals.

This global partnership for development is a compact.

When poverty is so immediate and the suffering so intense, the world has a moral and strategic obligation, to address the concerns of the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly in Africa.

The President of the United States, John F. Kennedy once warned us that if a free society cannot help the many who are poor; it cannot save the few who are rich.

Each of us here today has a responsibility for delivering their share of the commitments we have promised. We are all accountable.

We must remember that these commitments are endorsed by world leaders, and I quote;

"We, Heads of State and Government... strongly reiterate our determination to ensure the timely and full realization of the Millennium Development Goals... We underline the need for urgent action on all sides". End of quote.

So following on from the 60th session of the GA - the year of promises and commitments - the 61st session is the year of action and implementation. We must all strive to create an atmosphere that can build effective partnerships towards achieving our shared goals.

I hope that our discussions today can cement our ongoing partnerships and pave the way for new ones, in the spirit of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Thank you.