

29 November 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the General Assembly I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Chairman and its Chairman. The Committee plays an important role that enables the international community to closely examine the situation of the Palestinian people and to support efforts for a just peace between the concerned parties.

I am honoured to open this meeting, which is being held in commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People who continue to live in tragic circumstances. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has produced great losses on both sides, but continues to exacerbate the humanitarian, economic and security situation of the Palestinian people living in the occupied territories.

Dialogue is crucial to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the existing conflict. Therefore, despite the immense obstacles for peace, I appeal to both Israeli and Palestinian officials to redouble their efforts, taking into consideration the interests of their peoples, to create the necessary conditions for a peaceful resolution.

This will require the international community to fully support both parties. The Quartet's proposed road map calling for the establishment of two States, living side by side in peace and security remains the best and the most viable solution.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In this extremely difficult and complex climate, we must foster the elements of agreement between the two sides to counteract the areas of disagreement that may deepen the existing crisis. Accordingly, the General Assembly has opposed the construction of the separation wall. A wall, which serves not only to widen the gap between the Palestinian and the Israeli communities, but has also helped to create psychological barriers discouraging dialogue and further impeding efforts for peace.

We cannot delay action to improve the social and economic situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories. We should not wait for anticipated solutions to begin helping them to face the growing challenges in their daily lives.

All indicators show that the Palestinian people are far from attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has noted that the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in Gaza, has led to growing unemployment and increases in poverty. According to the Committee's report, the unemployment rate stands at 34 per cent as a whole and at 44 per cent in the Gaza Strip, while the poverty rate stands at about 50 per cent overall and at approximately 70 per cent in the Gaza Strip. More than half of Palestinians are unable to meet their daily food needs without assistance. In view of the worsening security and economic situation the report also notes the increased suffering endured by women. Moreover, the World Health Organization has noted that the acute shortage of water for drinking and daily use has led to adverse effects on the population's health, in particular children. In addition, electricity supply is inadequate, available for no more than six to eight hours a day. A constant supply is vital for the operation of hospitals, medical equipment and for the storage of medicines.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This situation requires us to seek a serious, urgent and practical solution. In this regard, I would like to commend the efforts of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and civil society in supplying the ongoing daily needs of the Palestinian people.

We have a moral duty to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to this conflict that has gone on for over half a century. The principal goal of our Organization is to bring more peace, progress and prosperity to the lives of all inhabitants of the world. We must not forget that the survival of millions of people around the world depends on the interventions and resolutions of the United Nations.

Thank you.