

5 December 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
at a Specific Meeting focused on Development**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to give the following statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa

Without doubt the internationally agreed Millennium Declaration, the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals, and other internationally agreed development goals, and the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit have made an unprecedented contribution to focusing attention and galvanizing global action around one of the greatest challenges of our time: the fight against poverty and the promotion of human development for all.

If we can achieve these shared development goals, not only will we put an end to poverty, but we can also help to make the world a safer, more stable and prosperous place for all.

By integrating and coordinating the outcomes of these major United Nations conferences and summits the General Assembly can make a real contribution.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

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.

Given the challenges we face I have put development at the centre of the agenda of my Presidency of the General Assembly. That is why, on 27th November, the General Assembly held an informal thematic debate on development, "Partnerships towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Taking stock, moving forward".

The aim of the debate was to take stock of progress made to achieve the MDGs, and to accelerate progress by providing a forum to examine practical measures that can lead to tangible results. During the debate, which brought together donor and recipient countries as well as civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, we heard examples of effective partnerships, new approaches and success stories, but also of the challenges that threaten faster progress.

Participants made new commitments to eradicate poverty, including the generous announcement made by the Islamic Development Bank to establish a US\$10 billion Poverty Alleviation Fund.

We heard that progress has been made towards reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs.

Over the past forty years the proportion of people in developing countries who can read and write has risen from under half to nearly three quarters. Average life expectancy has increased, and there are 300 million more children in school. Rates of extreme poverty have fallen rapidly in much of Asia. In 1990 more than 1.2 billion people - 28 per cent of the developing world's population - lived in extreme poverty. By 2002 the proportion had decreased to 19 per cent.

Overall, steady progress is expected in the decade ahead. Thanks to increases in trade, aid, debt relief and rapid economic growth in Asia, the number of people across the world living on less than US \$1 a day is expected to halve by 2015.

However, progress towards achieving the MDGs is likely to remain uneven without further action. Half a million women still die in pregnancy and childbirth each year and although death rates of children under the age of five have been dropping, every day around 30,000 children still die of preventable causes. Over 100 million children still do not go to primary school.

The biggest challenges are in sub Saharan Africa and South Asia - on current trends, by 2015 over 90 per cent of the world's poor will live in these areas.

Step by step we are making progress. More is expected and further action is needed. The challenge for all of us is to make good on our commitments and work in closer partnership.

Four key messages emerged from the informal thematic debate on development that will no doubt be echoed here today;

Firstly, that the commitments made at the major UN conferences and summits, particularly to create a global partnership for development, should be fulfilled in a timely fashion. Each of us here today has a responsibility for delivering their share of the commitments we have promised. We are all accountable.

Second, that by creating broader partnerships at the local, national and international levels, we can accelerate the implementation of the MDGs. Many delegations stressed that partnerships for development within their own countries, involving public and private sector, NGOs and the civil society, were important to achieving the MDGs.

Third, we heard that the UN is central to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs: from practical measures on the ground to the UN's broader role fostering global and local partnerships, and providing technical support.

Finally, we heard that by working together we can implement the MDGs by 2015, and that doing so would be the single greatest gift to humanity that the international community has in its power to deliver.

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

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

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.

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

I remain convinced that we can achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and I hope that our discussions today can generate further action.