

13 December 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
on Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Today we turn to a subject of great importance to us all and a matter of high priority for me as the President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

The issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly has been on the agenda of the Assembly since its forty-sixth session in 1991. During the last 15 years, the Assembly has raised its profile and taken on more work on a range of issues. At the same time, the Assembly has also devoted a fair amount of time to improve its efficiency and working methods.

At the 2005 World Summit, our leaders reaffirmed the central role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. We can be proud of what we have achieved over the years and we should remain resolved to do our utmost to respond to the needs of the peoples of the world.

Since the World Summit, the General Assembly has been engaged in a very intense period of reform. In the sixtieth and the sixty-first sessions, the General Assembly has agreed on various measures to strengthen this Organization. The most recent step was taken on 20 November, when the Assembly adopted by consensus the resolution on the Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.

In adopting these reforms, the General Assembly has demonstrated that it is prepared to take difficult decisions to better equip the United Nations to address the global issues facing us today. We also have a responsibility to monitor the implementation of our reforms. In particular, we should ensure that the newly established institutions, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, live up to their full potential.

At the World Summit, our leaders also reaffirmed the role of the Assembly in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. There are many examples of major international legal instruments that have been adopted by the General Assembly: from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, that was adopted by this Assembly this morning.

As we go forward in our efforts to further revitalize the General Assembly, we should build on previous initiatives and improvements in the work of the General Assembly. In the past three sessions, a number of substantive resolutions were passed by the General Assembly, outlining measures to enhance the role and authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly.

Special attention has been given to streamlining the agenda of the Assembly and improving the working methods of the Main Committees. Here, I would like to express my appreciation to all the Chairpersons of the Main Committees of this session, for their efforts in this regard.

The revitalization resolutions have also addressed the issue of strengthening the role and leadership of the President of the General Assembly. As a result of the reform agenda, new demands have been placed on the Presidency in the past two years. Any strengthened role for the President of the General Assembly requires a reinforced Office of the President and enhanced support by the Secretariat staff.

As the President of the sixty-first session, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Secretariat for all the support provided and to the Governments who have seconded staff to my Office. However, it has been my experience that the General Assembly as an institution is sometimes given an unfair treatment even within our own Organization. I will make every effort to enhance the role of the Assembly, in particular on current issues of importance to Member States.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

We need to focus more on enhancing the impact of our work on the everyday life of the peoples of the world. We must strive to be on the forefront of the global agenda so that we can play a role in shaping, not just reacting, to it. We must become more focused and action-oriented in our work. And we need to enhance the visibility of our work by strengthening our efforts to tackle strategic issues, reach out to broader audiences and communicate our views.

In all aspects of our work, we need to build on our relationships with external partners, including national and regional parliaments, civil society and the private sector.

One way to strengthen our relationships with other relevant actors is through interactive thematic debates, as called for in the most recent resolutions on General Assembly revitalization. As I have already informed you, it is my intention to arrange three thematic debates during the current session. The first one was held on 27 November on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. I intend to organize two more thematic debates next spring, one on gender and development, and the other on dialogue among civilizations. I will revert to you regarding the timing and arrangements for these meetings.

In resolution 60/286, the President of the General Assembly was invited to convene consultations among Member States to decide on the establishment of an ad hoc working group open to all Member States on the revitalization of the Assembly. I intend to conduct consultations early next year on how to proceed on this important matter. I will ask for your views on the preferred format for taking the issue forward and on the substance we should focus our efforts on in this session.

I look forward to your views and proposals on this important subject during our deliberations today.

Thank you.