

20 December 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the Adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of
All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

It gives me great pleasure to preside over this meeting of the Plenary today, to adopt the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The Convention was recently adopted, by consensus, in the Third Committee and I look forward to its adoption by consensus once again this morning.

To promote, protect and uphold human rights for all, is one of the core pillars enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The adoption of this important Convention will reaffirm the willingness and commitment of Member States to make further progress in this important area.

The practice of enforced disappearances is still widespread throughout the world. Unfortunate victims are abducted and isolated. Their families are kept in the dark, uninformed of the well-being and fate of their loved ones. Even worse, some of those who disappear are subject to torture and extrajudicial killing.

Since 1980, there have been more than fifty-one thousand enforced disappearances in more than ninety countries. More than five hundred cases of enforced disappearance were registered last year alone. This situation is alarming. We must do something about it.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

By adopting the Convention we can help prevent enforced disappearances and provide "justice" for the victims and their families who have suffered. The Convention will pave the way for the criminalization of enforced disappearances and bring perpetrators to justice. It will also, introduce an innovative follow-up mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention.

Moreover, the adoption of the Convention will send a positive signal that the Human Rights Council can deliver concrete outcomes that have an impact for people on the ground.

I hope the General Assembly will be able to adopt this Convention by consensus. I would further urge Member States, at the earliest opportunity, to take all necessary steps to ensure its full implementation.

Thank you very much.