

10 January 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the G77 and China Chairmanship Handover Ceremony**

Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,

It is a great honour to address the Group of 77 and China on the occasion of the handover of the Chairmanship of the Group from South Africa to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

At the outset I would like to extend my deepest appreciation for the support of the Group to my Presidency in the main part of the 61st session. As one of you, I am pleased with the achievements we made in the last three months, especially in the fields related to the development agenda of the Organization. I am particularly pleased with the adoption of the resolution on Strengthening the Economic and Social Council which enables the ECOSOC to implement its new functions as mandated by our leaders at the 2005 World Summit. This significant step in UN reform was a culmination of a long process of negotiations that stretched over a period of more than 14 months.

Furthermore, together we have succeeded in putting more emphasis on the implementation of the MDGs. On 27th of November 2006, the General Assembly held its first thematic debate on "Partnerships towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Taking Stock, Moving Forward". This was a unique opportunity to accelerate the progress towards achieving the MDGs through closer partnerships between Member States, the United Nations system, Civil Society and the Private Sector. At this meeting the Islamic Development Bank announced the establishment of a US \$ 10 billions Poverty Alleviation Fund to help assist developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to achieve the MDGs by 2015. The Government of Qatar offered to host a follow-up meeting to the thematic debate in Doha during the first half of 2007. I would like to remind all of you that the General Assembly will hold its second informal thematic debate on gender equality and the empowerment of women on the 6th and 7th of March 2007.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to pay tribute to the manner in which the Government of South Africa, and particularly Foreign Minister Zuma, had carried out its Chairmanship of the Group during 2006. This year was critical to multilateralism in general and to our Organization in particular. It was a year of significant changes. It was also a year clouded in many instances by mistrust. During these difficult times, South Africa, represented in New York by Ambassador Dussmani Kumalo,

demonstrated leadership, understanding and the will to build bridges while defending fiercely the interests of the Group. I commend Ambassador Kumalo and his entire team for the hard work and dedication.

I would also like to welcome Pakistan, represented here today by Minister of state for Foreign Affairs Khusro Bakhtyar, to the chairmanship of the Group in 2007. I look forward to continue the cooperative and constructive relationship with you through the able leadership of Ambassador Munir Akram, whom I am confident will continue to lead the Group in our collective strive to achieve the common goals of the entire membership of the United Nations.

Thank You.