

27 March 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the 19th Summit of the League of Arab States**

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the nineteenth summit-level session of the Council of the League of Arab States,

Your Majesties, Highnesses and Excellencies,

Your Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States,

Your Excellencies,

I have the honour to be with you today in my capacity as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations; the first President of the Assembly to take part in a historic meeting of this kind; and, to address you on behalf of the Members States of the United Nations whom I represent and whose wishes for your success I convey.

I would like at the outset to thank the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for inviting me to take part in the proceedings of the Arab Summit, and for the notable and outstanding efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to foster peace, security and Arab unity.

The ongoing cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States constitutes one of the cornerstones of Arab cooperation to overcome the challenges faced by the region. In this regard, I should like to express my appreciation for the efforts of His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, in strengthening this cooperation.

Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Excellencies,

The fateful circumstances in which the world finds itself today call on us, starting from a shared Arab security and political perspective, to redouble efforts to realize political, economic, security and cultural projects designed to facilitate the movement of people, commodities, investments and ideas, to open doors that have been closed, and bring peoples closer together in order to foster greater interaction and cooperation. This would without a doubt, pave the way for mapping out and crystallizing a clear vision to help confront the growing challenges in the Arab region, from the Palestinian problem and the need to ensure continued unity within Palestinian ranks along the lines of the Mecca Agreement, to the situation in Iraq, Lebanon and the Horn of Africa,

and other regional challenges. The most basic of these challenges is to rid the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction, above all nuclear weapons, within the framework of the principles of the United Nations and on the basis of international legitimacy and respect for the foundations of international law.

International instruments affirm the legitimacy of peaceful use of nuclear energy. At the same time, they caution against the acquisition of such technologies without the transparency and effective international supervision needed to guarantee human and environmental safety in accordance with international standards.

Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Excellencies,

The issues before you today have local, regional and international dimensions. They take on particular significance in light of the challenge of living together in peace and security. What we must ask ourselves is this: how can the Arab World, with its abundant energies, possibilities and resources, be transformed into an effective force on the global stage and enter into an equitable dialogue with other peoples and cultures?

Giving Arab women their right to participate in all political, economic, social and cultural levels is a cornerstone for hastening development in Arab societies. Perhaps the world should take my appearance before you today as a reflection of the Arab States' appreciation for women and of the importance attached by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, to the role played by women in building and developing our society.

One of the hopes of this Summit is that it will confront the challenge represented by the spread of an abhorrent spirit of sectarianism and factionalism in the region, and the threat that it poses to the foundations and fates of entire societies.

We must work with patience and determination to foster an inclusive sense of citizenship to confront this increasing slide into factionalism and ethnocentrism. Educational curricula must reflect this sense of nationhood and instil an intellectual framework that ensures communication, understanding, acceptance and coexistence.

With regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, we cannot but call for positive engagement with the Arab Peace Initiative adopted at the Arab Summit held in Beirut in 2002, because this initiative reflects the Arab world's ownership of its destiny to solve the challenges facing it. It also provides the necessary basis for a just, comprehensive and permanent solution in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions.

The dialogue of civilizations is the principal tool for confronting the challenges of peaceful and secure coexistence. This is why I have called for a meeting of the General Assembly to be held this May on "Civilizations and the Challenges of Peace".

Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Excellencies,

Preparations for this Summit have fostered a climate of optimism and reflect the hope of the peoples of the region and the world community that we will agree resolutions to ensure peace, security and stability in a region that has been ravaged by conflicts, wars and destruction.

May God grant success to your steps towards strengthening Arab solidarity, and may peace and the mercy of God be upon you.