

12 April 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the Informal Briefing on the Rule of Law Coordination and
Resource Group**

Deputy-Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for coming to today's informal briefing on the report of the Secretary-General entitled 'Uniting our Strengths: Enhancing United Nations Support for the Rule of Law', (A/61/636).

The main purpose of today's meeting is to listen to a briefing by the Deputy Secretary-General, who is also the Chair of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, as well as representatives from relevant agencies on progress to date in the implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's Report. Before I hand over to the Deputy Secretary-General, I would like to make a few points underlining the importance of this issue.

At the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State and Government called for the establishment of a rule of law assistance unit in the Secretariat, in order to strengthen UN activities to promote the rule of law.

World leaders recognized that universal adherence to the rule of law, and implementation of national and international agreements are at the core of the UN's normative activities.

The General Assembly has reaffirmed the importance of the rule of law by adopting resolution 61/39.

As a global community of States, we must all adhere to internationally agreed principles and laws. These form the basis of our global system of governance.

Since the treaty of Westphalia, adherence to the rule of law has been the cornerstone of the long term stability and prosperity of nation states, and the peace, security and welfare of the international community as a whole.

Respect for the rule of law is vital for building trust and strengthening our multilateral system.

Without the rule of law, we leave the door open for human rights abuses, discrimination, corruption, and we increase the chances of civil conflict and war.

In particular, for countries emerging from conflict situations, adherence to the rule of law, and building confidence in legal and judicial systems, is crucial for creating the conditions for sustainable peace and development.

The signing and ratification of international legal instruments alone is not by itself enough. Each country must also put into practice international obligations at the national level and continually review their impact on the lives of their citizens.

In many cases though, States lack the capacity to fully implement international obligations. This can be due to lack of financial and human resources, or a lack of training and other obstacles.

That is why it is important to ensure that at the request of Member States the United Nations can provide more effective assistance through the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, supported by the rule of law unit.

Moreover, just as the UN system seeks to work more coherently on the ground and at headquarters on development activities, the new inter-agency Group and its rule of law assistance unit will be able to create greater coherence across the various offices and agencies that work with Member States to promote the rule of law.

Therefore, it is very important that we support this initiative of the Secretary-General. I will be working with Member States and the Deputy Secretary-General during the remainder of the 61st session to ensure that we make real progress on this important matter.

I would now like to hand over to the Deputy Secretary-General Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro.

Thank you very much.

Closing remarks

Deputy Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Today we have heard informative briefings by the Deputy Secretary-General as well the representatives from four key agencies that are members of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group.

We have heard how this inter-agency Group and its assistance unit will help promote system-wide coordination of activities relating to the rule of law, and strengthen United Nations activities in this regard.

Compliance with the rule of law is not a choice, but a duty for all Member States - at all levels - national, regional and international. A peaceful world also depends on the respect for, and adherence to, the rule of law by all its citizens.

Thank you very much.