

11 May 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the Roundtable Discussion on Arts and Culture**

Distinguished Guests,

Welcome to the United Nations, and thank you all for coming to this roundtable discussion on the important role arts and culture play in bridging divides between nations and peoples.

I am delighted that we have such an accomplished panel today.

This discussion is an important part of the Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on Civilizations and the Challenge for Peace: Obstacles and Opportunities. So far the panels have been very dynamic and stimulating and I trust that this exchange will be equally rich.

I will keep my remarks very brief as we are interested in listening to the insights and perspectives that you all bring to the table.

However, I would like to make a few points about the different ways politicians and artists understand the world.

Politicians grapple with the reality of the world and the political challenges they face. At times this is not a reflection of the best that humanity can aspire to.

Artists on the other hand draw from the world and its realities and take it one step further by using their imagination. Their artistic expressions offer an important window into how we see each other and the world.

The challenge is to ensure that artists engage pragmatically with the politicians, as they are an integral part of the equation to build a better world.

Arts and culture can bring people together help us to embrace our similarities and our differences, and lay a solid foundation for peace and prosperity for all nations and peoples.

There are many fascinating and complicated issues to address so without further ado I give the floor to Michael Kimmelman.

Thank you all for coming.