

16 May 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the Awards Ceremony at Rutgers University**

President McCormick,
Dean Galili,
and Director Amirahmadi,

I would like to thank you very much for inviting me to take part in this event alongside such a distinguished guest as Dr. Shirin Ebadi. I would also like to thank you for making my presence at this event possible, and Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, for honoring me on this occasion.

I am especially honored to share this honor with Dr. Ebadi, as the subject which brings the two of us here tonight, Women and Human Rights in the Middle East, has been very close to my heart throughout my career as a lawyer and a diplomat. Over the past three decades, I have strived to defend women's rights in my home country, in the region of the Middle East, and more broadly on an international level. It therefore immensely gratifies me to see Rutgers recognize our struggle, not only as women from the Middle East but also as women who have dedicated their lives to advancing the rights of other women.

I would particularly like to thank the Committee on Middle Eastern Studies and the faculty of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers for their role in incorporating these issues in the curriculum of the university and in organizing this important event.

I hope that some of the recognition that we have received tonight will translate into a broader appreciation of the Center's efforts and an increase of interest in this topic, which is so important to an understanding of the contemporary social and political situation in the region of the Middle East.

Thank you President McCormick, and all of you, for your efforts in organizing this event and drawing awareness to these important issues.