



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE ELECTION OF THE
PRESIDENT OF THE 61ST SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK
8 JUNE 2006**

Mr Secretary-General, Madam President-elect, Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates, Friends,

On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to extend my warm congratulations to Her Excellency Ambassador Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa and welcome her to the General Assembly and this splendid hall.

Her election to the Presidency of the General Assembly is a recognition of her impressive record of achievements as well as of the strong commitment of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. Let me express my deep appreciation of the presence at today's solemn occasion of the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa.

Ambassador Al-Khalifa brings a long and distinguished legal career, at both the national and the international level, to the United Nations. She was one of the first of two women lawyers to practice law in Bahrain. She has held many senior positions with leading legal organizations of the world, including with the International Bar Association. She is currently the Legal Advisor to the Royal Court in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Her pioneering role in the legal sphere has been coupled more recently with a prestigious diplomatic assignment. She served successfully as Bahrain's Ambassador to France as well as a Permanent Delegate to UNESCO from 2000 to 2004.

Throughout her professional life, Ambassador Al-Khalifa has been a champion of women's rights in her society and in the court system. Here at the United Nations, her election is a significant contribution to gender equality within the Organization. She will become only the third female President of the General Assembly and the first one since the twenty-fourth General Assembly session in 1969.

Today's election marks the beginning of a three-month transition period. Just as my predecessor, President Ping, I am ready to support my successor in her preparations and ensure a smooth transition between the two Presidencies. This goes especially for the ongoing reform processes and the two High-level Meetings, which will take place in the General Assembly in the beginning of the 61st session.

I warmly wish Ambassador Al-Khalifa the best of success in her new position. I welcome her presence in New York already now in early June and ask all of you to extend your cooperation to her and her Office during this important period of transition.