

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Sultanate of Oman

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION



سلطنة عُمان

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT BY

H.E. MR. YOUSEF BIN ALAWI BIN ABDULLAH

**Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs
of the Sultanate of Oman
and**

**Head of the Omani Delegation to the Sixty-first Session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

**22 September 2006
New York**

**** A shortened version will be delivered ****

*Permanent Mission of Oman To The United Nations
866 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
Tel: (212) 355-3505 Fax: (212) 644-0070*

Your Excellency Sheikah Haya Al Khalifa,

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to you and your brotherly country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, on the assumption of the presidency of the Sixty-First Session of the United Nations' General Assembly. I am fully confident that your vast experience will steer the work of this august assembly to a successful conclusion.

Let me pay tribute to your predecessor, Jan Eliasson, for the ideal manner with which he conducted the work of the previous session.

I would also like to praise the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his efforts to equip this organization with the appropriate tools to properly respond to world events and challenges.

Madame President,

This session is held amidst important and difficult circumstances. Despite the successes achieved by the United Nations in establishing the Human Rights Council, the Peace-Building Committee as well as the Emergency Fund, however, there remain numerous challenges ahead.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains very tense as a result of Israel's activities of killing, terrorizing, collective punishments, demolition of homes and other practice that runs counter to the lofty objectives of the Peace Process. There are requirements that have to be considered for peace to take place between Israel and the Palestinians.

Hence, we support the Arab League's call to refer the entire Arab-Israeli conflict to the United Nations' Security Council in order to find a lasting and a comprehensive peaceful settlement. It is a call that affirms the Arab States keenness on and their adherence to peace as a strategic option and a basis for peaceful coexistence between the Arab countries and the State of Israel.

Madame President

The world has recently witnessed the tragedy of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and all the resulting destruction of killing women and children. We affirm our support to the brotherly Lebanese people in this crisis. We also welcome the Security Council resolution 1701 and we hope that it will enhance security and stability in the region.

The positive response to the U.N. Secretary General's call for a greater participation and engagement in the enhanced United Nations Interim Force

in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is clear indication to the support the International Community accords to Lebanon.

My country is deeply concerned at the deteriorating security situation and the internal violence inside Iraq. We call upon all the Iraqi parties to give precedence to the national interest and to support their National Government in accordance with a conciliatory political agenda that looks after the interests of all sects of Iraqi people.

We welcome the conclusion of the Abuja Peace- Agreement between the Sudanese Government and the opposition groups and hope that it will stop further bloodshed among the brotherly Sudanese people. We look forward to seeing a positive and effective Security Council role in Sudan in cooperation with the Sudanese Government.

Madame President

Despite the fact that the African Continent enjoys natural and human resources, it still suffers from conflicts, spread of diseases and poverty.

While we support the efforts of the African governments to overcome these difficulties, we call upon the International Community to spare no effort towards helping the African countries to confront these difficulties.

Madame President

In the area of development in the Sultanate of Oman, it can be clearly noted that since the start of the blessed renaissance led by his Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, may God save him, the Sultanate has realized that development may entail environmental problems in case there was abuse of the available natural resources, in addition to the pollution caused by modern technologies and means of production, which could have a devastating effect on the environment and all its biological components. Based on this, the Sultanate has made sure that its endeavors in the field of economic and social development should be coupled with continuous care of the environment. This has been done through paying attention to environmental protection considerations during the planning and implementation of development projects. As a result, the Sultanate has adopted a new planning approach based on the close linking of development and the health of the environment and the protection of natural resources in order to achieve sustainable development.

In confirmation of this principle, the Sultanate formulated a national strategy for the protection of the environment that determines the main objectives and plans that tie development and environment and integrates environmental considerations in all phases of planning; consolidate these

pillars as basic approaches to development and integrating them in different administrative, institutional, political and legal frameworks.

On the other hand, the long term development strategy which embodies the economic vision for the Sultanate through the year 2020, and the five year development plans adopted by the Sultanate since 1975, aimed at the establishment and crystallization of basic principles for an environmentally sound development and protection of natural resources.

Moreover, the Sultanate of Oman fully observes the basic principles adopted by the international community and included in regional and international environmental conventions aimed at the achievement of sustainable development. That is why the Sultanate has signed or acceded to many agreements and laid down the national plans to implement them. These include, but are not limited to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Montreal Protocol, the Vienna Convention, the Basel Convention, the Stockholm Convention, the Rotterdam Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Cartagena protocol for Biological safety and the Kyoto Protocol attached to Climate Change Convention and other environmental protocols and agreements.

We are confident that this session will accord great importance to the questions relevant to this issue. We, in the Sultanate of Oman, with the great interest of his majesty Sultan Qaboos and his enlightened continued instructions, and in coordination with the United Nations and the international community, make concerted efforts to protect our environment and our territorial waters from pollution and endeavor to protect our natural resources to prevent their deterioration or extinction.

Madame President

There is a total accord among all people that globalization has positive aspects. However, it is noticed that in some cases it could damage the interests of several developing countries. On this basis, my country supports the call for the establishment of a global non-discriminatory and multiple-track trade system that seeks to achieve balanced outcomes of Doha Round resolutions. It is our hope that the current negotiations on multilateral trade issues especially those related to agriculture and services would achieve success in a way that would guarantee equality in looking after interests and rights of all states.

We look forward to seeing a positive role of the international, financial, economic and trade institutions in bridging the growth gap between developed and developing countries. We urge these institutions to provide

support to developing countries to help them overcome the obstacle of getting investment funds and to allow free access of their exports to global markets without any restrictions or protectionist measures. In this regard, we support the request of the brotherly State of Qatar to host the International Conference on Development in 2007.

In this respect, the Sultanate would like to pay tribute to the great efforts made by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and other world economic forums to meet the challenges facing developing countries, notably sustainable development, economic stability and financial equilibrium. We hope that international economic and financial institutions, will continue their co-ordination and integration of their activities in the fields of trade and investment, dealing with problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, disease and the deterioration of the environment, in addition to providing all sorts of technical monetary assistance and assistance in kind, in order to enhance the chances of success in facing these challenges.

Madame President

Economic performance in the Sultanate has witnessed an accelerated development in 2005. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in current prices, increased to about 11 billions and 817 million Omani Rials, compared to about 9 billion and 527 million Omani Rials in 2004, thus realizing a 24% rate of growth. This strong growth of the Omani economy was the result of rising oil prices, strong local demand, improved investment climate, and increased foreign demand on non-oil products. All principal activities, specially in non-oil sectors, have contributed with various degrees, in the growth of the national economy in 2005.

The Sultanate started this year, the implementation of the 7th five year plan (2006-2010) which aims at the achievement of a rate of growth of at least 3% annually on average, in addition to enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy, improve productivity, increase investment rates, accelerate privatization, economic diversification, the development of human resources, continued implementation of the strategy of Oman's digital society, and the movement towards an economy based on knowledge.

Madame President,

The Sultanate plays a positive and effective role in regional and international economic cooperation. It works to enhance and develop areas

of joint activities through the Customs Union of the Arab Countries of the Gulf, the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in whose work the Sultanate participates positively and effectively. In addition to that, the Sultanate, has signed with the United States of America a free trade Agreement, on January 19, 2006 in Washington. This Agreement is an important step towards the liberation of trade, and opening the door for larger investment opportunities.

Moreover, the Sultanate has signed together with the States members of the Gulf Co-operation Council, a number of framework agreements for economic, trade and investment co-operation with the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Turkey and the Latin American Common Market member countries. These framework agreements provide for the conduct of negotiations to establish free trade areas between the states members of the Gulf Co-operation Council and these countries and groups. It is also worth mentioning that negotiations between the states members of the Council and the European Union have reached their final stages, Also the Sultanate is one of the founding members of the Association of the States overlooking the Indian Ocean for regional co-operation and is a party to several projects and agreements among members of the Association.

The Sultanate has also joined the Asian Co-operation Dialogue in 2003. Since then, it plays an important role in the meetings, symposia and workshops held in the States members of that dialogue. The Sultanate also participates in the side meetings held at the margins of international conferences and meetings, in which members of the dialogue participate. The Sultanate has adopted the Road Safety Project.

The Sultanate hopes that the on-going multilateral trade negotiations, specially in the fields of agriculture and services, would yield fruit and satisfactory results that could serve the interests of all member states. This would enhance the climate for the liberalization of trade and economy and help establish a world economy characterized by sustainable development, balance and co-operation in a manner that would benefit both developing and developed countries, in a world that enjoys stability, peace, security and prosperity.

Madame President,

Throughout its march, the Sultanate has sought to promote social work in the country, in response to the instructions of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, may God save him, to keep abreast of social and economic life in the Sultanate. The name of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training has been changed to the Ministry of Social

Development. This reflects a qualitative shift in administrative social work that embodies the development ideas and approaches that could guarantee the realization of the objectives of sustainable social development.

The Sultanate has accelerated programs for economic and social growth to help establish a human and social climate supportive of improving the quality of life and enhancing the effectiveness of the institutions of the social sector, making use of human resources, spreading awareness of social problems and their repercussions, supporting volunteer work and developing volunteer work programs in addition to expanding the participation of the public in promoting rehabilitation services and welfare programs serving various social groups.

Since the family is the focus of the programs and activities of social welfare services, the government offers these services to certain categories of society to help advance them and make use of the abilities of their members in the 2005 great achievements that should be added to its record of development achievements.

The government, through its system of social security, pays monthly subsidies to save individuals and families, orphans, disabled, the elderly, divorcees, and families of prisoners and others whose situation is difficult as a result of having nobody who can provide for them. Since the start of this program in 1973 up till now, it has not remained static but has developed in accordance with social change, in order to be able to provide care for this category of society. This reflects the interest of the builder of this blessed renaissance, may God save him, in his children on Oman's good soil.

The interest of the father and leader in his children has extended to wherever they live, thus social welfare now covers citizens living in sisterly and friendly countries who are eligible to receive the benefits of the social security law. The number of such beneficiaries has reached 153 through the end of 2005. Embassies and Consulates perform the required social background checks and regularly follow their cases.

On the occasion of celebrating the glorious thirty fifth national day last year (2005), His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has graciously added a new noble deed to his many such deeds by allocating 16.000 lots of land for building houses or commercial and residential buildings to families benefiting from social security in various areas of the Sultanate. These were granted on the basis of specific criteria to eligible families. This was added to the other privileges provided to this category of people such as receiving a financial gift to be added to the value of the subsidy they receive on both Eid -ul Fitr

and Eid -ul Adha each year. They are also exempt of public services fees, and receive emergency financial help and special allowances in case of sickness and scholastic grants to their children in addition to providing them with needed school supplies. Add to all this that members of these groups may receive a gift to enable them to perform the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca).

Madame President,

Human development is one of the pillars of sustainable development. That is why the Sultanate has paid great attention to the development of human resources by enhancing the social welfare offered to people with special needs and rehabilitating them to be able to participate in building their homeland, alongside other members of society. The government's policies relevant to people with disabilities have achieved a marked advancement and growth. Be it in the way it deals with the disabled or the provision and updating of programs of care and rehabilitation, and also in efforts aimed at the early detection of disabilities, in co-ordination with the other competent agencies. In order to do this, the government has established social care institutions for disabled persons in need of rehabilitation and care because their families are either incapable of providing for their needs or that whatever the families can do is insufficient. These governmental institutions offer this category of people diversified services by providing them with compensatory devices and aids and medical requirements. The institutions also provide technical assistance to help non-governmental organizations working in the field of caring for the disabled. These institutions include:

- A center for the rehabilitation and care of the disabled, which is one of the distinguished institutions in the field of vocational rehabilitation and social care to its members of both sexes (14 to 25 years of age) who suffer from movement disabilities and hearing problems. The number of those enrolled in the center for the rehabilitation year 2005-2006 is 109 students of both sexes.
- A home for disabled children started operation in February 1997 as a model social institution offering services to a special category of disabled children (ages 3 to 14) who suffer from movement disabilities caused by brain paralysis. The number of children benefiting from these services in 2005 reached 55 disabled children who receive medical care and physiotherapy and whose families receive social guidance.
- Community based rehabilitation: the government, in co-operation with the ILO has adopted a strategy for community based rehabilitation to care for the disabled. The philosophy of this program rests on making use of the local resources of the community and

rehabilitating the disabled in their natural environment. Costs of this program are shared by the government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. The program is being implemented by the Voluntary Social Loyalty Centers that number 19 centers located in various parts of the Sultanate and serve about 1870 children.

- **Social Development Committees:** these committees have been established in various governorates and provinces of the Sultanate in the framework of the government's efforts to enhance the effectiveness of social work. The committees help the competent authorities in the Sultanate in achieving their objectives. They study social issues and projects and submit relevant proposals, and support voluntary social work and its institutions, increase public awareness, encourage the spirit of social work in the fields of disability and childhood, and the study of the negative phenomena and fighting them, in addition to advancing local communities in accordance with the conditions in each province.

Moreover, the government has inaugurated in 2004 the Pilot Program for the provision of care to the elderly and the disabled in their homes. This project consists of three phases: survey, intervention and evaluation. The first phase has been implemented in the Province of Nezwi. This phase covered random samples of 100 cases of the three ways of life, that of the desert dwellers, rural population and urban centers. The needs of these cases were identified after evaluating their health, social and psychological conditions.

Madame President,

Voluntary civil society charities have become an important partner of the government, in its efforts to establish pillars of community social care. The government organizes, encourages and enhances the effectiveness of these efforts to participate in various development projects through the promulgation of voluntary non-governmental societies that work in diverse areas (professional, economic, cultural, environmental and social), in accordance with the law on non-governmental societies enacted by the Sultan's decree N. 14/2000. The number of societies that work under the supervision of the competent ministry up till now is 67 societies, including 45 Omani women's societies that work for the advancement of Omani women, in the social, economic and cultural fields, raising their standards and developing their different skills. Another 12 societies are professional societies that work to encourage citizen participation, expanding the base of specialized voluntary work, enhancing professional awareness and cohesion

among their members. They also work to promote the profession for which these societies were created. In addition there are 8 charitable societies, a charitable fund and a charitable foundation which are non-governmental institutions established by individuals co-operating together to serve the society where that society needs their help. Moreover, there are the social clubs of foreign communities which are established to enhance relations of friendship and love among members of their communities. The number of such clubs is 7, with two branches in Salalah.

As a result of the social and economic advancement of the Omani family due to comprehensive development programs that started with the dawn of the blessed renaissance, and limitless openness on a multi-cultural world which has greatly influenced the Omani people and brought with it foreign customs, some positive and some negative, the government has paid much attention to the conduct of studies and researches about the urgent issues and phenomena in the Omani society. The number of such studies and researches reached 46 in 2005, which were done with the participation of local and foreign bodies. The implementation of these studies has contributed to the reduction of certain negative manifestations thanks to the conclusions they reached.

Because of the government's belief in the importance of keeping abreast of the information age, it has inaugurated, at the beginning of 2004, the project of the Social Indicators data base, in co-operation between the competent bodies in the Sultanate, and UNICEF. This is considered the first project of its kind in the Middle East. The project aims at the establishment of a social data and statistic base to assist decision makers, researchers and specialists in various areas. At the end of 2005, this base included 411 indicators in 15 different disciplines.

In view of the importance of family counseling in solving all sorts of problems facing them, the government, through a specialized division in the Ministry of Social Development, offers various guidance and counseling, and spreads awareness and preventive measures to individuals and families in order to strengthen families and enhance their efforts in facing the problems that threaten their cohesion and structure caused by the accelerated pressures and changes that families face at various social, psychological, educational and economic levels. Specialized courses and symposia are held to enhance these activities.

Madame President

My country supports the call for a review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to close the loopholes in this treaty and to preserve the right of the state parties to obtain nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

While we support the call to free the Middle East region from all weapons of mass destruction, we, at the same time, call upon all parties to the current talks on the Iranian nuclear issue to keep the doors of negotiations open based on the fact that direct dialogue is the best mean to reaching suitable compromise on pending issues.

Regarding the issue of combating terrorism, we are of the view that reaching an effective international strategy to fight terrorism, necessitates striking a balance between security requirements and commitment to human rights conventions. It is not wise at all, to endanger security and stability of states under the pretext of combating terrorism. It is also not fare to expose innocents to injustice.

Madame President,

In the field of human rights, we should not focus only on political and civil rights and neglect economic, social and cultural rights. The universality of human rights should not blur the legitimate diversity of civilizations and cultures. This diversity should get the respect it deserves.

We, in the Sultanate of Oman, are pleased to pay tribute to our achievements in the field of human rights and specially the political equality of the sexes. This development has given Omani women a bigger chance in holding leadership posts and participating in decision making. Thus Omani women have become an increasingly bigger partner in real development in the country.

In affirmation of the role of Omani women in the march for comprehensive development, the Sultanate has shown special interest in encouraging women and helping them contribute to economic and social development. The Sultanate has also prepared a draft national strategy for the advancement of Omani women. The strategy is the fruit of co-operation between governmental and non-governmental organizations and academic institutions in the Sultanate.

Believing in the importance of childhood as a basis for investing in human resources, and based on the duty to provide children with the needs for their lives and future, whether within their families or society as a whole, the government of the Sultanate underlined the fact that children have priority in

the comprehensive development programs, through the establishment of a national committee for the care of children. This committee was established by Sultani decree N. 71/1997.

Madame President,

The last two decades have witnessed calls for the need to focus on development. In view of the importance of this issue for national security and stability in each individual country, a series of summit conferences were held starting with Rio de Janeiro, to Durban in South Africa to the High Level Summit meeting held during the 60th session of the UN General Assembly (2005) in New York and the following special meetings such as the poverty eradication meeting held this year in Geneva from 3 to 5 July, and the high-level conference on assisting least developed countries, being held these days in New York. All of these meetings aim at finding ways to assist poor countries in achieving the development of their economy, so that they maybe able to improve the living standards of their citizens.

In this context, we consider that the actions of some developed countries that cancelled the debts of poor and developing countries, in response to the decisions of the Millennium Summit, are a step in the right direction that reflects international interest in this issue. We support the actions taken by the developed countries in favor of the marginalized groups in the international community. However, we call on them not to tie their assistance to certain demands that could limit the growth of these countries, or interfere in their internal affairs in a way that would compromise their sovereignty or national independence. We believe that moral responsibility and humanitarian considerations should persuade developed countries to steer away from politicization and review their visions relevant to policies of offering development assistance that should be spent in most cases on the reduction of poverty, ignorance, the consequences of natural disasters, disease and chronic epidemics.

Madame President,

Today more than ever, we need an effective United Nations capable of shouldering its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. The start of the new century has witnessed wide international calls for the reform of the United Nations and its agencies. These are just demands that would respond to the developments in the coming years. Yet, despite serious efforts in this respect, the differences in opinion have almost undermined the content of these demands. In view of the importance of this question, my country hopes that the on-going discussions and deliberations on the matter will yield concrete practical

results, that would meet the repeated calls for reform and achieve equality and fairness in dealing with all states members of the Organization and their fully shouldering their responsibilities.

Before concluding, I would like to refer to the fact that his Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General will end his current term of office at the end of the year, and another new Secretary General will be elected for this important organization. Since Asia has filled that post only once almost thirty years ago, my country calls for and supports the selection of an Asian for this post for the coming period.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations will yield positive results that would enhance our common endeavors to realize the hopes and ambitions of our peoples to live in a world of security, stability, peace and justice.

Thank You