

12 September 2006

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

Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and pleasure for me to preside over the Sixty-first Session of the General Assembly. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank you all for the confidence and trust you have bestowed in me.

I would like to begin by welcoming the newest member of the United Nations family, the Republic of Montenegro. I believe it will play a valuable role in furthering the work and ideals of this Organization.

Excellencies,

Today, the United Nations faces many challenges. It needs the confidence and support of the people of the world just as the people of the world need this Organization. For this is an Organization of hope based upon commitment, consensus and co-existence. The numerous meetings, dialogues, conferences that bring together people from all over the world provide a real platform to exchange experiences and perspectives. This enables us to understand each other better, in order to achieve a global consensus on political, security, economic, environmental and social issues. Only by working together can we make a real difference, and translate our commitments into effective actions.

The 2005 World Summit, was a prime example of this vision. It provided the General Assembly with a clear and wide-ranging reform agenda in the fields of development, peace and collective security, human rights and management reforms.

Its outcome was indeed a pillar of hope. It confirmed the strong and renewed commitment of the world's leaders to the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Demonstrating by their commitments, a solid resolve to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

World leaders' collective vision of a more responsive multilateral approach to the many challenges facing the world, shall continue to guide our common efforts towards building a safer, freer and more prosperous planet for all human beings.

The Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly, under the leadership of President Eliasson, has implemented many of the recommendations adopted at the Summit, such as; the creation of the Peace building Commission; establishment of the Human Rights Council; setting up of the

Central Emergency Response Fund; and the adoption of resolutions on development, management reform, and a global counter-terrorism strategy.

Allow me, on this occasion to congratulate President Eliasson for his tireless efforts in moving forward the reform agenda. I commend all Member States for their cooperation and spirit of compromise shown throughout the previous session. You have worked under intense pressure. And, I trust we can continue moving ahead with the same momentum during this Session.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, for his tireless service to the mission and ideals of the United Nations during his tenure. He has played a pivotal role in enhancing and strengthening this Organization to rise to global challenges and the emerging needs of the world.

Excellencies,

It is important that we build upon, widen and deepen the progress achieved so far. Our achievements demonstrate the ability of the General Assembly to realize concrete results on important matters that concern the international community. They also demonstrate and confirm the continued importance of the General Assembly, as the "chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations".

To continue playing this role, the General Assembly has to continue to evolve and strive to deliver sustainable solutions to the major challenges of our time. This can only take place within the framework of multilateralism. A well functioning and proactive multilateral system is in the interest of all nations, particularly at a time when our growing interdependence, is the basis of our peaceful coexistence. Multilateralism - embodied in the UN - is the most effective way to ensure our collective peace and security, protect human rights and uphold the rule of law.

I believe it is the common responsibility of you, the Member States, to make the General Assembly and the United Nations even more effective. As efforts to revitalize the General Assembly are under way, we must not lose sight of the main purpose of these actions: to meet the rising expectations of the hundreds of millions of peoples around the world.

We have a challenging task to meet their expectations; those that are poor malnourished, illiterate or victims of disease. We have a challenging task to ensure their economic and social security which is just as important as their political and military security. We have a challenging task to liberate them from want while seeking to liberate them from fear.

I would also like to underline that over half the world's population, namely women, typically have less access to health care, employment, decision making and property ownership. This disparity needs to be addressed so that women and men can enjoy the same opportunities, the same rights, and the same responsibilities in all aspects of life. To promote gender equality, we need to empower women so that they have more autonomy to lead their lives. To achieve these

goals it is essential that we work closely together, so that together, we can promote human rights and achieve sustainable development.

We cannot confront all these challenges effectively if we do not have peace and security. The United Nations plays a crucial role in responding to the aftermath of natural disasters and maintaining peace and security in areas affected by violent conflicts. The recent violence in the Middle East caused regrettably, heavy casualties to both parties and extensively damaged the Lebanese infrastructure. Today, man-made conflicts are destroying lives and displacing people on a scale that sometimes exceeds the destructive effects of nature - floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

The people of the world have placed an enormous responsibility on our shoulders, we, the Member States, to identify and tackle the causes of human conflicts. Only by working together will be able to defeat the injustices that are at the root of conflicts.

International terrorism is another equally pressing and closely related issue. We need to develop and adopt both preventative and defensive measures to combat terrorism. Within this context, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of quality education coupled with conscientious media as positive vehicles to nurture tolerance, compassion and critical thinking.

Now that you have adopted a resolution on a global counter terrorism strategy, I hope that during this Session, we can continue our efforts to successfully reach an agreement on a comprehensive convention on terrorism.

Excellencies,

As we prepare ourselves to complete the remaining tasks of the previous session, we shall not overlook those recommendations of the 2005 World Summit outcome document which have yet to be fully implemented, such as; disarmament and non proliferation, Security Council reform, Mandate Review, and System-wide Coherence. All these are crucially important agendas. And working together, in the spirit of multilateralism, to achieve these goals, we can deliver a program of work to renew, strengthen and update the United Nations.

Reform is a process rather than an event, and we will need to actively pursue work on a variety of outstanding issues. I trust that Member States will work together to address every issue on its own merit, so that progress can be achieved at a steady pace on all the different aspects of the reform agenda.

We, the Member States, must identify our priorities and I will be more than happy to listen to your views during the General Debate and in the months ahead so that we, together, can design an action-oriented and practical work plan.

Even before then, we will hold the first ever High-level meeting on International Migration and Development. I anticipate that the discussions will confirm that the challenges of migration and development are complex and require no less than a collective response.

The following week, we will hold a High-level meeting on the mid-term comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. It will outline the successes achieved and the obstacles confronted by LDCs, and lay down guidelines for the way forward - the actions that need to be taken by the LDCs, their development partners, and the international community as a whole, to successfully implement the Programme of Action.

On this occasion, I would like to commend the important role that non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector play in the work of the General Assembly. It is my intention to continue to encourage and value their contributions to addressing the many challenges confronting the international community.

Excellencies,

The United Nations has been the focus of world opinion since its inception in 1945, yet the necessity for a truly global forum based on high ideal, had been expressed by world leaders and thinkers for many years before this.

At the Paris Conference in January 1919, the United States President Woodrow Wilson called for the creation of an organization that should be the eye of the nations to keep watch on their common interests, an eye that does not slumber, an eye that is everywhere attentive.

Today, should this eye become weary, it is up to us, the 192 Member States, to revitalize and reinforce its role so that Our Organization continues to remain the beacon of hope for peace, prosperity, and order for all nations.

Thank You.