

15 September 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
before the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and
Development**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

We have come to the end of two long, but stimulating days, during which we have discussed, for the first time in this High-level Dialogue, the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development.

We have heard from over 140 delegates about the opportunities and challenges that international migration poses for development in each of their countries. And we have had four round tables that have focused on the impact of international migration on economic and social development, the centrality of human rights to ensure the development benefits of migration, the importance of remittances, and the crucial role of international cooperation and partnerships to address the challenges posed by international migration.

Above all, these two days have proven that international migration and development can be debated constructively in the United Nations.

This High-level Dialogue has been the culmination of years of preparation. I want, first and foremost, to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his support in preparing and organizing this Dialogue.

I also want to thank Member States, the various United Nations agencies, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector for their contributions in making this dialogue a success.

On this occasion, I would also like to extend my sincerest appreciation to Mr. Peter Sutherland, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration, for his tireless efforts in promoting the messages and recommendations set out in the Report of the Secretary-General. We look forward to a continued collaboration as our efforts evolve.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the key role of my predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, Foreign Minister of Sweden, in organizing the two panel discussions in New York and Geneva as well as the interactive hearings with non-governmental organization, civil society and the private sector.

Excellencies,

The High-Level Dialogue has affirmed a number of key messages in the Report of the Secretary-General. First, that international migration is a growing phenomenon and is a key component of development in both developing and developed countries. Second, that international migration can be a positive force for development in countries of origin and countries of destination, provided it is supported by the right set of policies. Third, that it is important to strengthen international cooperation on international migration, bilaterally, regionally and globally.

This dialogue has emphasized that respect for human rights is the necessary foundation for the beneficial effects of migration on development to accrue. Many of you have noted that some vulnerable groups, such as migrant women and children, need special protection.

You also highlighted that migration is no substitute for development. Too often, migrants are forced to seek employment abroad due to poverty, conflict and the lack of human rights. There has been widespread support for incorporating international migration to the development agenda and for integrating migration issues into national development strategies, including possibly into poverty reduction strategies.

You have underscored the need to provide decent work and decent working conditions in countries of origin and countries of destination. This would alleviate the negative aspects of migration including the brain-drain.

Furthermore, you have noted that remittances are one of the most tangible benefits of international migration for development. They improve the lives of millions of migrant families, but also have a positive effect on the economy at large. Many of you called for a reduction in the costs of remittances transfers and for maximizing their development potential.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

We have now completed the High-level Dialogue, where do we go from here? During these two days, in your plenary statements and in your remarks in the round tables, nearly all of you have expressed the wish to continue an international dialogue in some form. Many of you have embraced the Secretary-General's proposal of establishing a Global Forum on Migration and Development and the offer made by the Government of Belgium to host the first meeting of the Forum next year. I commend your commitment to advancing this constructive dialogue on this important issue.

In closing, let me once more thank all of you for your active participation in this High-level Dialogue and wish you all the best in your future deliberations on international migration and development. In the coming days I will make available a Chairperson's Summary which will be widely distributed to all Member States, Observers, United Nations agencies and other appropriate organizations.

Thank you.