

21 September 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the First Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and
Cooperation for Peace**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here at this First Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to His Excellency Dr. Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Philippines for inviting me to this meeting.

As I look around this table, I can see that we all come from different parts of the world. Yet I am convinced we all share the same universal values of respect, tolerance, solidarity and justice that are the founding principles of the United Nations.

Thanks to the forces of globalization, our world has become a small village. The challenge before us all is to ensure a proper balance between our legitimate attachment to our individual cultural backgrounds and the need to relate to each other and embrace our differences so that we can all live in peace and harmony.

Leaders of the world, in particular spiritual leaders have indeed a special responsibility to foster interfaith dialogue and cooperation among their respective people. We must all rally to instill universal values in our respective educational curricula and promote messages of peace and coexistence in our media.

I warmly encourage you to continue and strengthen this important initiative; and wish to assure you of my personal support.

Thank you.