

17 October 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Commemoration of the 14<sup>th</sup> International Day for the  
Eradication of Poverty**

Today, we come together to commemorate the 14th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. I am delighted to be here to offer my full support and continuing commitment to the fight against poverty.

In 1992, the General Assembly first passed a resolution inviting Member States, NGOs, civil society and the citizens of the world to come together to draw attention to the plight of the poor. The 17th of October is now commemorated annually all over the world. It represents a growing awareness and a global call for action to fight poverty everywhere.

The 14th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is an opportunity for us all to acknowledge, that the real experts in poverty reduction are those that experience this struggle every day. The participation and empowerment of the poor is at the centre of today's commemoration. Without real empowerment and a platform for the poor to express their needs and desires, progress towards the Millennium Development Goals will continue to be slower than we would all like.

Today, through your participation we have a unique opportunity to listen, learn and reflect upon the real life struggles that you and others face on a daily basis. Today, let us stand in solidarity with the millions of people around the world who are commemorating this day. The theme of this year's commemoration - "Working Together out of Poverty" - reflects the need for us all to work together to fight poverty. Working together, and building on the experiences and knowledge of the poor, we can advance practical steps and develop informed strategies to eradicate poverty.

I would briefly like to pay tribute to the pioneering work of the Grameen Bank and its founder, the recipient of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, Muhamed Yunis. Through thousands of tiny loans it has provided a practical way to enable millions of women, unemployed and landless laborers to lift themselves out of poverty. It is my strong belief that examples such as the Grameen Bank demonstrate that - given a chance - it is the poor who can best empower themselves. We must listen to their voices and never underestimate their talent and ingenuity to develop everyday strategies to survive.

As President of the General Assembly, I would like to work during my tenure to make substantive progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and other internationally agreed development goals. That is why I have called for an informal thematic debate at the United Nations involving donors, partner countries, the private sector and civil

society. We can all demonstrate the strength of our commitments by translating our words into concrete actions. I hope that through the informal thematic debate, we can make a contribution to;

"Working together out of poverty - make poverty history".