

18 December 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Performance of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in the  
General Assembly**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

I would like to thank the Government of Spain for sponsoring this wonderful event tonight, and, the Barenboim-Said Foundation for bringing the East-Western Orchestra to the General Assembly Hall.

We are gathered here to pay tribute, once again, to the Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He will leave a great legacy, and I know he has left a lasting impression on the lives of many of you here today.

Kofi Annan has devoted his life to the values enshrined in the Charter, and skillfully guided the United Nations into the 21st century with hope and vision.

He can leave us knowing that he has done everything in his power to create a safer and fairer world.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Politics and diplomacy do not provide the only paths to peace. The arts can offer hope, inspiration, and practical solutions beyond politics.

When politics may sometimes divide us, music can unite us. Music can transcend culture and religion. It knows no borders or barriers.

Like Wagner, Barenboim and Said saw compassion as a specific moral response to violence and chaos. Inspired by a moral quest to promote tolerance, human rights, and freedom of expression, they created the East-Western Divan Orchestra: bringing together Israelis and Palestinians in mutual harmony.

They created a forum, beyond politics, to promote peace and reconciliation. The orchestra here tonight is a symbol that in the face of suffering, and conflict, Israelis and Palestinians, can come together in peace and hope.

So, as we honour the Secretary-General, let us also celebrate the power of music to transcend barriers, and, build bridges of love, peace and understanding among peoples of the world.

And, as we enjoy the performance tonight, let us, also be reminded of the purpose, dreams and ideals that inspired the founders of the United Nations.

Thank you very much.