

20 March 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the 37th Annual United Nations Peace Bell Ceremony to Mark
Earth Day**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to The Earth Foundation for organizing this ceremony and for using this opportunity to celebrate UNESCO's 'International Year of Planet Earth'

The Earth belongs to everyone.

It is the responsibility of us all to avoid making future generations live on a planet that has been ruined by human activity.

It is of serious concern that pressure from industrial society has left a heavy ecological mark on human society which exceeds the regenerative capacities of nature. Without a radical change, we will all find ourselves in a precariousness situation.

I therefore fully endorse the aims of the International Year of Planet Earth - to demonstrate new and exciting ways in which Earth sciences can help future generations meet the environmental challenges ahead and ensure a safer and more prosperous planet for all.

We need to raise the level of awareness in the minds of politicians, decision-makers, the media and the general public of the contribution the Earth sciences can make.

We also need to take control of our needs and our methods of consumption. This will enable us, not only to improve living conditions for all, particularly the most impoverished, but also to ensure the long-term sustainability of our planet's natural resources.

By spreading the values of self reliance and teaching greater self awareness - as the Earth Foundation does - we can help to achieve these goals.

At the global level, we also need clear objectives and strong ecological governance, a concept that continues to elude us.

I remain convinced that the United Nations General Assembly is the ideal forum for concerted action by the international community in this vital area.

In view of the many challenges posed by environmental degradation, now is the time for action.

We must, without further ado, agree on the definition of an institutional framework that will enable us to take more effective and efficient collective action.

The credibility of our multilateral system and the future of the planet are at stake.

Thank you very much.