

12 June 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
on Accepting Path to Peace Foundation Award**

Archbishop Migliore,
Excellencies,
Friends,

I am personally very touched to receive this Award. It is a great honor for me. I am humbled to be in the company of such distinguished previous honorees, and be the first recipient from the Muslim world.

I would like to thank His Excellency Archbishop Celestino Migliore - President of the Path to Peace Foundation, and the Board of Directors for selecting me for this prestigious award.

Excellencies,

The Path to Peace Foundation has an excellent record in promoting development, human rights, inter-religious dialogue and drawing attention to humanitarian emergencies around the world.

I would also like to recognize the invaluable work of the Holy See in furthering the universal values of tolerance, peace and freedom – the core values of the United Nations.

Promoting a true dialogue among civilizations and religions is perhaps the most important political instrument that we can use to reach out across borders and build bridges of peace and hope.

We are, of course, all part of one large human family.

It is my firm belief that;

Without stability and security we will not achieve the MDGs: preventing violence, in the family or in society at large is crucial to this agenda. Religious values can play an important role by advocating a culture of peace to counter intolerance. They are also pivotal in promoting equal rights and prosperity for all.

Religious values can also make an important contribution to the debate on climate change. This is a moral issue about the preservation of the planet for future generations; and,

I also believe that all religious leaders have a duty to motivate their followers to engage 'others' more reasonably and with greater mutual respect, while remaining true to their own beliefs;

The challenge for us all on many of these issues – in particular for the leaders among us – is to develop a form of dialogue to better understand ‘each other’.

I know a lot of positive work is being done in this area. But we have more to do to overcome mistrust and promote greater cooperation.

Together – no matter what our religious affiliations are - we can work towards our common goals with love, compassion, humility and vision – and bring about real change.

Finally, may I take this opportunity once again to thank the Path to Peace Foundation for this award.

Thank you very much.