

Statement by Her Excellency
Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa
President- elect of the 61st Session of the
General Assembly

On the round table discussion
“Civil Society and Global Partnership for Development”

United Nations Headquarters
Friday, 8 September 2006

Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends

I am pleased to hold my very first round table discussion in the United Nations in the presence of H.E Mr. Jan Elisson and with members of civil society. From the time this important world body was established, civil society has played an indispensable role and made significant contribution to the UN's strength and evolution. . Only by furthering this partnership can we achieve what we aspire - to a prosperous world, with healthy societies and a strong sense of civic responsibility.

We have witnessed the immense efforts of civil society in times of crisis and peace alike. In crises, they represent a strong voice in support of non-violent solutions and remain key partners in delivering humanitarian services to the most remote and dangerous places. In peacetime they speak up for the marginalized sectors of society, and inspire individual men and women in all parts of the world to develop a mutual sense of our global humanity. We see examples of this with women's right – a personal concern of mine both as a lawyer and as an advocate of human rights-, where NGOs have been pioneers in prompting equality at all levels, including at the UN through resolution 1325.

The valuable contributions I have heard during the informal discussions held with civil society in preparation for the high level dialogues - both on the Mid-term review of the Brussels Declaration and on migration - reinforce the crucial role they play, especially in developing countries in fostering civic engagement, and ensuring progress and cohesion for societies going through economic and social transitions.

In the context of the Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, and the Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities, it remains evident that NGOs determination to improve the lives of millions of people has been indispensable. However, we must continue to strive to achieve more in terms of implementation. We must decide how best the

combined efforts and energy of the United Nations and civil society can become even more effective for those in need. Thus, we must focus on fulfilling our promises before we can go on to make new commitments.

The adoption of international targets and historic conventions is something that the international community can take pride in. Yet, we must answer to those who are in urgent need for their complete, rather than partial implementation. This is especially true for the Millennium Development Goals, a set of international standards championed by civil society in pursuit of positive and long lasting change.

The elimination of poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS and socio-economic imbalances will not be achieved by mere talk. We must therefore, continue our concrete work until we succeed in bringing about the lasting transformation the world urgently requires!!

At this time in our history, when we are witnessing much discontent and despair, we must continue to strive to fulfill the ambitions of the United Nations. These ambitions urge us to embrace the diversity of experiences and perspectives of our 192 members. They also compel us to utilize the expertise and valuable contributions of other actors and stake holders, such as the private sector, parliamentarians and local governments and non governmental organizations.

I have long been a believer in civil society. Therefore, through out the 61st session of the General Assembly, we shall continue to maintain an open dialogue with the NGO community. I welcome, and look forward to our closer co-operation. It is only through working together that we can achieve lasting change.

Thank you

