

20 June 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the 10th International Meeting of Economic and Social Councils
and Similar Institutions**

Honourable President of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions,
Honourable Director-General of the World Trade Organization,
Honourable Representative of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization,
Honourable presidents of economic and social councils and similar institutions,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to take part in this 10th International Meeting of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, whose work has focused particularly on international cooperation and development.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Wang Zhongyu, President of the Economic and Social Council of China, whose two-year mandate as President of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) marks an important phase of the effort to promote the development of an organized international civil society.

I welcome the fact that increasing numbers of organizations of civil society are becoming involved in matters that had long been the province of governments alone. Today, in an increasingly global and interdependent world, international cooperation should take these new partners into account.

For governments are no longer alone; civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media, financial institutions, and trans-State and sub-State actors are playing an increasingly important role on the international stage.

I therefore hope that dialogue among the economic and social entities that you represent will continue. Despite our different approaches and sometimes opposing views, I remain convinced that we all share the same basic goal: the desire for a better world, a world of progress and development for all.

To that end, I share your faith in the virtue of dialogue as a vehicle for expression and cooperation in pursuit of a common ideal.

I say this with particular conviction because dialogue as a means of achieving development and combating social exclusion is at the very heart of the work of the General Assembly, the most representative deliberative body of the United Nations.

For it is through dialogue, through discussion that is open to all and that continues to expand through the inclusion of representatives of NGOs and organizations of civil society and the private sector, that Member States become part of the search for adequate solutions to the challenges and threats with which our modern world is faced.

Above all, I want to stress that genuine partnership among all development actors, including civil society, is essential to our shared future.

Honourable President,
 Excellencies,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

United Nations conferences and world summits, major forums of international civil society and meetings organized within the framework of decentralized cooperation, all have a common goal and a shared motivation: promoting the development of a new multilateralism based on the idea that we are living in an increasingly interdependent world and that we face global threats and challenges which are also interrelated and which call for collective action and solidarity.

In the field of development, as with all other major issues of concern to the United Nations and to the international community as a whole, it is both necessary and healthy for civil society to make its voice heard as a source of proposals and action.

The United Nations, owing to its universal nature and its awareness of the important role played by civil society, remains the ideal framework for implementing, encouraging and harmonizing initiatives aimed at promoting development and combating social exclusion.

In your study of development this year, it is stressed that while States have the primary responsibility for development, active partnership at all levels is also needed.

I am thinking particularly of specific measures such as progress towards the official development assistance (ODA) goal of 0.7 per cent, debt cancellation and the introduction of the more equitable trade measures within the framework of the Doha Round that some Governments have planned. Also welcome are the initiatives aimed at identifying innovative sources of financing for development, to which the Governments of France, Brazil, Spain, Chile, Great Britain and several other countries attach particular importance.

Thus, the focus is on the need to combine private investment from abroad, ODA and trade more favourable to debt cancellation. Of course, these measures should be supported at the national level by good governance and efforts to combat corruption and social exclusion.

In this context, your document invites member States to follow a clear timetable in fulfilling the commitments made within the framework of the international development agenda, and particularly those made at the major conferences and summits held under United Nations auspices, including by meeting all eight of the Millennium Development Goals.

As a woman and a member of the Arab Muslim world, I am, perhaps, especially aware of the need for the economic, social and societal changes without which the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved and which cannot succeed if they are imposed against the people's will or without taking them into account.

This transformation needs to take root, grow and bloom in the hearts of the people, and that is why your consultative assemblies are so important: they are the bearers of these necessary changes.

I am happy to be here to encourage you in your mission and to tell you that I will look with keen interest on any of your Association's initiatives in the Near and Middle East.

Honourable President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that this 10th International Meeting of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions will bear fruit and will herald the coming of greater solidarity in multilateral cooperation as part of the great human adventure of the United Nations efforts to promote economic and social progress and the well-being of peoples.

I thank you and wish you success in your future work.