

**Statement of Mr. Sayed Aqa, the UN Resident Coordinator in Bahrain
on the Occasion of the Assumption of Presidency of the UN General Assembly by
the Kingdom of Bahrain
September 12, 2006**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

First let me thank you all for making the time and attending the live broadcast of the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly's 61st session. My special thanks to our partners in the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Information, particularly H.E. Mohammed Abdul Ghafar the Minister of Information and State Minister for Foreign Affairs who made this gathering possible today.

This is a routine annual event for the UN. However, not this year. This year it is a historic event for the government and peoples of the Kingdom of Bahrain under the leadership of His Majesty the King Hamad and international community. Presidency of the UN General Assembly by Bahrain will no doubt further enhance the international and regional standing of this proud nation. Equally of significance, not only for Bahrain, but for the Muslim world and the international community as a whole is the wise decision of Bahrain to appoint a very competent and capable women, Shaikha Haya bint Rashid Al-Khalifa as the President of the 2006 – 07 session of the UN General Assembly. As you are aware Shaikha Haya is the first Muslim women, the first women since 19169 and one of the only three women who have been elected as the President of the UN General Assembly since the establishment of the organization.

This underlines a historic fact that Muslim women and women from developing countries are assuming more and more leadership roles at national, regional and international levels. All the three women that have served as the President of the UN General Assembly have been from developing countries – India, Liberia and now Bahrain.

Now turning to examples of substance of the tasks that H.E Shaikha Haya is facing in her role as the President of the UN General Assembly. Important issues such as the UN Reform including the reform of the Security Council, election of the new UN Secretary General – Mr. Anan's replacement – functioning of the newly established but important UN institutions such as the Human Right Council – in which Bahrain has successfully secured a seat – and the Peace Building Commission, establishment and operationalization of the UN Peace Building Fund, revitalization and strengthening of the General Assembly, addressing peace and security issues including situation in the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Haiti etc., climate change and energy and environment issues, fighting drugs, promotion of human rights, promotion of justice and adherence to the international law, disarmament including the nuclear issues and most importantly the issues of gender; among others.

Addressing each of these topics require not only hard work but excellent leadership, diplomatic and balancing skills. We at the United Nations and the international

community as a whole have full confidence in Shaikha Haya and her skilled team to meet these challenges successfully. Next year this time we will celebrate all her achievements and believe that the UN will be further strengthened and the world challenges much closer to successful solutions.

The UN Family in Bahrain has a small but very effective presence. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the UN Information Center all have their regional offices in Bahrain and UNDP has a dedicated office for the Kingdom of Bahrain. The UN family works closely with our national counterparts to address socio-economic and industrial development challenges; provide assistance in the areas of governance, political development, women empowerment, energy and environment, coordination and other areas of national importance. The UN family works under the overall coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator.

The international successes of Bahrain particularly its Presidency of the UN General Assembly and membership of the first ever UN Human Rights Council are strong motives for strengthening the national reform agenda and forging stronger partnership with the United Nations in Bahrain.

The UN family in Bahrain is fully appreciating the excellent cooperation extended to it in Bahrain and has received positive indications to not only continue our partnership but to significantly expand our partnership into new areas. The UN together with our government counterparts and the civil society organizations will embark in a consultative process to identify specific areas of cooperation in line with national needs and priorities. The results of this will form the basis for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework commonly known as the UNDAF and agency specific Country Programmes.

Once again extending our warmest congratulations to the government and people of Bahrain for these historic achievements I, on behalf of the UN family in Bahrain, look forward to expanded partnership with the Kingdom of Bahrain under the principle of national ownership and national leadership. I believe our President of the General Assembly will appreciate gift from Bahrain. The best gift we can give her is making the UN reform process a reality in the Kingdom of Bahrain. We can do this by expanding our partnership and committing to one UN Team approach in Bahrain that is the central theme of the UN reform.

Thank you all!