



Women's Federation for World Peace, USA

An NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Women's Federation for World Peace, USA E-Newsletter

Becoming Women of Peace

September/October 2006

Dear WFWP,

Welcome to the September/October 2006 issue of WFWP, USA's E-Newsletter! We hope you enjoy the articles in this issue.

Four of the articles relate to the United Nations. The first article introduces the Hon. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, the newly elected President of the UN General Assembly from Bahrain. The second article reports on the Opening Session of the 59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference, entitled "Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development." Two articles highlight International Day of Peace activities sponsored by WFWP in Europe as well as in the US. A Women of Faith program in Minnesota rounds out this issue.

Our wish is that the E-News can be a tool to connect women across the nation in support of strengthening the family, living a life of service to others, and promoting peace and reconciliation. Enjoy!

Jennifer Ang, Editor

in this issue

Historic Choice for President of the UN General Assembly Opening Session of the 59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference
International Day of Peace Celebrations Across Europe
International Day of Peace Program in Sacramento, California
Bringing Light to the World: A Women of Faith Program held in St. Paul, Minnesota

Historic Choice for President of the UN General Assembly



By Laura Hornbeck, WFWP Texas Regional Chairwoman

Each September, the UN General Assembly reconvenes in New York with a newly-elected President. While the name and face of the Secretary General may be well known, as he or she can serve up to two five-year terms, the President is not so familiar to most, perhaps because each President serves the General Assembly for just one year.

This year, for only the third time in its history, a woman was chosen President of the

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Opening Session of the 59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference

By Jennifer Ang, Administrative Director, WFP, USA



The Opening Session of the 59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference, entitled "Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development", was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on Wednesday, September 6, 2006. Representing WFP, the Opening Session was attended by a delegation of fifteen women from WFP, Japan; Ms. Motoko Sugiyama, the Director of the WFWPI UN office, along with three UN office staff, Ms. Bonnie Berry, Ms. Merly Barlaan, and Ms. Hannah Alexander. Ms. Alexa Fish Ward, President of WFP, USA attended, along with Ms. Jennifer Ang, WFP, USA Administrative Director.

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International Day of Peace Celebrations Across Europe



Prepared by WFP, Europe representatives, including Elisabeth Riedl and Ester Calovkova

This year, WFP, Europe focused on creating several events across Europe to commemorate the United Nations' International Day of Peace. The United Nations declared, on Thursday, September 21, a day of global

ceasefire, a day of peace and non- violence. United Nations member countries held events to celebrate the International Day of Peace: one minute of silence was observed at noon, some schools focused their attention on peace through special assemblies or discussions, and prayer vigils and peace concerts were organized. Below are summaries of the activities sponsored by WFP, Europe in several countries.

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Bringing Light to the World: A Women of Faith Program held in St. Paul, Minnesota



By Mary Jane Anderson, WFWP Minnesota Regional Chairwoman

On a cool, but sunny September day, forty-six women from diverse racial and religious backgrounds came together to participate in a Women of Faith event featuring the Bridge of Peace Ceremony. The organizing committee consisted of Bishop Aya Carroll from The African American Catholic Congregation, Rev.

Carolyn Arnett, pastor of Mercies of God Baptist Church, and WFWP leaders, Mrs. Gudrun Gavin and Mrs. Mary Jane Anderson.

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59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference

*Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for
Human Security and Sustainable Development*

September 6 – 8, 2006

OPENING SESSION

The Opening Session of the 59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference, entitled “Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development”, was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on Wednesday, September 6, 2006. Representing WFWP, the Opening Session was attended by a delegation of fifteen women from WFWP, Japan; Ms. Motoko Sugiyama, the Director of the WFWPI UN office, along with three UN office staff, Ms. Bonnie Berry, Ms. Merly Barlaan, and Ms. Hannah Alexander. Ms. Alexa Fish Ward, President of WFWP, USA attended, along with Ms. Jennifer Ang, WFWP, USA Administrative Director.

The master of ceremonies for the Opening Session was Mr. Raymond Sommereyn, the Director of the Outreach Division in the United Nations Department of Public Information.

Mr. Sommereyn was followed by Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the 60th Session of the General Assembly. In reference to the immense challenges of today’s world, Mr. Eliasson said: “We have such huge tasks now that I sometimes ask myself, ‘Will we make it?’ He emphasized the need of those present to show that multilateralism, involving “working together, creating international structures, creating strong and effective international cooperation, and strengthening the United Nations, is a good thing for the world.”

He praised the unique compassionate approach that NGOs often bring to humanitarian challenges: “Without passion, nothing happens in life, but without compassion, the wrong things happen in life.”



Mr. Eliasson implored the NGOs present to get actively involved in partnerships with the United Nations, saying: “We need your voices; we need your contribution. ... I want you to feel that you are partners with us in the work on development, security and human rights, and the basic pursuit that we must work for, a life of dignity for all.”

After Mr. Eliasson’s address, Mr. Álvaro García Linera, Vice President of Bolivia, gave the keynote address, on behalf of the President of Bolivia, Mr. Evo Morales, who was not able to attend the conference.

Mr. Garcia told the audience that President Morales’ election was the first step for Bolivia to begin to chart its own course of development, breaking away from a 300-year history of models that were dictated from outside of the country.

He asked representatives gathered to request of their governments to stop spreading the myth of “one size fits all development.” He emphasized that development belongs to all people, not just to one social group or tribe. In his words, it was time to get rid of mechanisms that reinforced discrimination and marginalization. This process of change would require debates and discussions between governments and civil society.

After Mr. Garcia’s talk, the audience heard from Mr. Katsutoshi Kaneda, Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Japan.

In addressing the issue of human security, Mr. Kaneda pointed out that the best way to promote human security is to take a people-centered approach, which gives individuals the resources to deal with insecurity.

“Human security is people-centered. It seeks to maximize people’s potential by empowering them to take charge of their own lives. ... Empowered people can make better choices and cope more effectively with insecurity.”

He also stressed the importance of building global partnerships: “We need a clear acknowledgement of the challenges we face, the interconnectedness of the issues and the need to deal with them in an integrated, not fragmented, manner. To engage in such action, we need to build a strong global partnership that can be a platform for everyone.”

At this time, several elected NGO representatives from the NGO community offered their remarks.



One NGO speaker, Ms. Renate Bloem, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), has also been a human rights advocate, focusing particularly on the rights of women and children.

Ms. Bloem emphasized the need for NGOs to grow and evolve along with the changing condition of the international community, and for NGOs to get more involved, and to partner with other institutions and governments, in a multi-stakeholder approach, in response to the challenging situations in the world, as stated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

“As the Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor has recently stated, we work with a 20th century Organization that has to solve 21st century problems: problems without borders and without passports, which have become the responsibility of the whole mankind. Hence the UN needs to evolve, but NGOs have to evolve too.”

Ms. Bloem pointed out that the UN is making reforms and changes, and that civil society organizations that partner with the United Nations have to remain vigilant in making sure they are given the same level of participation as before.

The final speaker of the opening session was Ms. Michaela Walsh, the NGO Chair of the Conference and Co-Chair of its Planning Committee.

Ms. Walsh talked to those gathered about how she wanted to design this conference, once she had accepted the appointment as Co-Chair of the Planning Committee.

“When I accepted this appointment, I made it clear that involving the youth voice in the conference was my first priority, as a percentage of each NGO and as speakers.”

She commented on the importance of involving the younger generation: “It is important for us to help this generation to understand the history and significance of the founding of the UN during our lifetime. It is equally important that the younger generation know that we are here to encourage and support them in taking whatever risks are required in today’s global society for them to take responsibility for helping design the future of our world.”



She also stated the necessity of overcoming conflict and reconciling differences between cultures and diverse backgrounds, in order to avoid putting time and resources into war, instead of peace: “Efforts to attain the MDGs go hand in hand with peace throughout the world – but the work economy cannot afford these efforts and the costs of war. War cannot be avoided without our individual capacity to learn to trust diversity, different ideas and, above all, different cultures and different generations.”

This concluded the Opening Session of the 59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference.

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Peace Celebrations Across Europe

In commemoration of the International Day of Peace, September 21, 2006
Prepared by WFWP, Europe representatives, including Elisabeth Riedl and Ester Calovkova

This year, WFWP, Europe focused on creating several events across Europe to commemorate the United Nations' International Day of Peace. The United Nations declared, on Thursday, September 21, a day of global ceasefire, a day of peace and non-violence. United Nations member countries held events to celebrate the International Day of Peace: one minute of silence was observed at noon, some schools focused their attention on peace through special assemblies or discussions, and prayer vigils and peace concerts were organized. Below are summaries of the activities sponsored by WFWP, Europe in several countries

Austria

Vienna:

The event in Vienna was organized by The Austrian Network for Peace and Non-violence. This coalition was formed by thirty-five groups in 2000, in response to UNESCO's call for an 'International Decade of a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World', from 2001 to 2010, which was the result of an appeal to the UN by several Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. For the event, there was an Information Mile, lined with information tables, near St. Stephan's Cathedral, the most famous cathedral in Vienna. WFWP members gave out information leaflets.

Salzburg:

This year marks the second commemoration of the International Day of Peace by the Peace Network of Salzburg, held at the UNESCO high school in Elsbethen. WFWP members were among the more than 100 participants who shared their wishes for peace. During the celebration, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's message (see below) was read, as well as a message from the Mayor, Dr. Schaden.

Activities included an "Art for Peace" painting session by the LOSITO African-European Arts Exchange; a drumming session by the Peace Pole Project; a project initiated by the World Peace Prayer Society (WPPS); greetings from representatives of the world's religions and civil society, including Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Baha'i; Caritas overseas assistance (Lebanon) Attic, Intersol, and the World Prayer Peace Society; and a World Flag ceremony.

The World Flag ceremony included the reading of a peace message as each of the religious and civil society representatives lit a candle. The candles were placed on a circle of flags. A beautiful stillness came as all observed this ceremony with the lights flickering on the globe in the dark room.



United Kingdom

In the communities of Watford, women met at the Multi Racial Community Centre for a cup of tea and a piece of a 'Peace Cake'. There were around 50 women: 25 to 30 Muslim and around 15 to 20 Christian.

In Watford, the ladies of the local WFWP chapter baked cakes and decorated an especially large cake with the word *Peace*, which was shared with their sisters from the Watford Muslim Women's Organisation. The cake was cut together by 4 women from different racial backgrounds.



Slovakia

This year, WFWP organized a celebration in Dunajska Luzna, close to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. Thirty participants gathered for a program which began with a short meditation and prayer for peace.

The president of WFWP, Slovakia, Ester Calovkova, wrote a beautiful poem about peace that brought many to tears. All were deeply touched by her inspired words. Peter Badac from Kosice contributed to the program with a delicious meal, as well as with guitar and songs. The songs created an atmosphere of substantial peace and friendship.



Switzerland

A program was held in Geneva. The Working Groups on Peace and on Women's Employment and Economic Development, of the Geneva NGO Committee on the Status of Women of the Conference of NGOs (CONGO), organized a panel on "Peace, Gender Equality and Development," to mark the International Day of Peace and to mobilize action in relation to the work of the Human Rights Council.



Some of the key issues highlighted by the Panel as needing immediate attention included:

- The massive violation of women's human rights in war-torn areas such as Darfur, Sri Lanka, Colombia and the Middle East regions which necessitates not only compassion but most urgently "passion" and decisive action.
- The question was raised about the misuse of security budgets allocated for human security and development by UN Member States in order to maintain anxiety and a culture of fear and violence for the vested interest of a few.
- Attention was called to the obvious gaps in the integration of women in the UN Reform, notably the Peace Building Commission and the Human Rights Council. Participants called for re-emphasizing the importance of gender equality perspectives and women's right to development and, in this regard, the issue of the need for a UN women's specialized agency was raised.

Participants were struck by the exemplary efforts of a young woman from Kosovar who, after experiencing the atrocities of war in her own family and country, decided against hatred and created her own peace movement, "Kids for Peace", at the age of twelve.

**Message of the Secretary-General on
the International Day of Peace**
September 21, 2006

My dear friends,

For some of us, peace is a day-to-day reality. Our streets are safe; our children go to school. Where the fabric of society is strong, the precious gifts of peace can almost go unremarked.

But for far too many people in the world today, those gifts are only an elusive dream. They live in chains: a climate of insecurity and fear. It is mainly for them that this day exists.

Twenty-five years ago, the General Assembly proclaimed the International Day of Peace as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence. The United Nations has observed it ever since. It is meant to get people not just thinking of peace, but doing something about it.

Yet, on this day as on the other 364, violence continues to claim innocent lives. And these last few weeks have seen tragic new escalations of conflict in several parts of the world.

The United Nations works for peace in many ways. We are doing our utmost to prevent further bloodshed. And we have had some successes.

States are paying more attention to preventive diplomacy. UN peacekeeping missions -- and our efforts to support democracy and promote human rights -- are making a difference. And individual citizens everywhere, men and women in every society, are working to relieve suffering, and to build bridges between people of different faiths or cultures.

In fact, there are fewer wars today than in previous decades. But still far too many. Every casualty of conflict is a failure, which reminds us how much more there is to do.

In that spirit, I call on people everywhere to observe one minute of silence today, in the name of peace. Let us remember the victims of war. And let each of us pledge to do more, wherever we can make a difference, to bring about lasting peace.

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Bridge of Peace Ceremony brings women of the Abrahamic faiths together
September 22, 2006
Sacramento, California

On the eve of both Ramadan and Roshashana, the Jewish and Moslem High Holy days, the conflict in the Middle East remains heated and unresolved. Here, in Sacramento, on the State Capital grounds, we found an oasis of peace, a moment where the world stopped to take a breath of fresh air from the ongoing crises.

On Friday, September 22nd, as part of the World Peace Rose Garden celebration for the UN International Day of Peace, four Christian, four Jewish, and four Muslim women leaders crossed the “The Bridge of Peace”.

“This event was the highlight of the celebration.... there was not one person observing who was not moved in some way,” said TJ David, co-creator of the Rose Garden. Many of the participants, as well as the audience, were in tears.

Rukhsana Haq, representing the Speakers Bureau of Sacramento Area League of Associated Moslems, crossed the Bridge of Peace with Meshia Davis, Public Affairs Representative for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. As they exchanged roses and embraced on the bridge, they could not help but break into tears. “We feel like we are sisters now.” They beamed after the event.

“The Bridge of Peace was created by Women’s Federation for World Peace in 1992 as a way to heal historical resentment between races, religions, and cultures...,” said Catherine Wright, spokeswoman for WFWP. “We feel that women have a special nature, a nurturing heart, that will be an important part of creating peace.”

Joanne Cole, head of Capital Christians women’s ministry, and Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank, head of Temple Or-Rishon, became sisters of peace as well. “This has been very healing for the clergy in our community,” said Rabbi Sheryl, while Joanne Cole mentioned, “we have done a good job creating walls between us, but I don’t think it is what God wanted.”

Mrs. Wright’s introduction to the ceremony concluded with these words:

“Throughout the centuries, our three faith traditions have been in conflict with each other, but it is the core teachings of these same faith traditions, which now bring us together. The source of these traditions is the source of peace, the source of love, and the source of forgiveness.”



Participants (left to right)

- Catherine Wright**, MC, spokesperson WFWP Sac. Valley
- Rev. Alice Baber-Banks**, Christian Fellowship Ministry Church
- Jo Ann Solov**, Congregation B’nai Israel
- Dina El-Nakhal**, Director of Communication, Council on American – Islamic Relations
- Pastor Kathi McShane**, First United Methodist Church
- Mesha Davis**, Public Affairs Media Representative, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- Rukhsana Haq**, Speakers bureau of the Sacramento Area League of Associated Muslims
- Rabbi Nancy Wechsler-Azen**, Congregation Beth Shalom
- Kauthar Abdel Azeez**, Wife of Imam Azeez, SALAM
- Durriya Syed**, SALAM and Women’s Interfaith Network
- Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank**, Temple Or-Rishon
- Joanne Cole**, Head of Women’s Ministry, Capital Christian Center
- Michal Kohane**, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Sacramento

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Bringing Light to the World: A Bridge of Peace Ceremony held in St. Paul, Minnesota

*By Mary Jane Anderson
Regional Chairwoman, Minnesota Regional Chapter, WFWP, USA*

On a cool, but sunny September day, forty-six women from diverse racial and religious backgrounds came together to participate in a Women of Faith event featuring the Bridge of Peace Ceremony. The organizing committee consisted of Bishop Aya Carroll from The African American Catholic Congregation, Rev. Carolyn Arnett, pastor of Mercies of God Baptist Church, and WFWP leaders, Mrs. Gudrun Gavin and Mrs. Mary Jane Anderson.

The program was held on the campus of Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, which accommodated the event with a lovely buffet of assorted finger foods and beverages. The Law Graduate Conference Room supplied high-tech equipment to facilitate the program with video and PowerPoint presentations.



After registration, the guests were seated and became acquainted with one another by making their own place-cards. Each table had colored paper, markers and stickers to decorate the cards. Guests were invited to introduce themselves to one another, by showing their self-decorated name cards. There were little bottles of bubble soap available, and some adventurous guests opened them up and blew some bubbles into the room.



After the opening prayer by Rev. Arnett and welcoming remarks from Bishop Aya, Mrs. Gavin and Mrs. Anderson, the tone of the program was set by a PowerPoint presentation of stirring photos set to the song, "One World", sung by a professional singing group, Celtic Women. The chorus of the song was: "We're all a part of one world, we all can share the same dream. And if you just reach out to me, then you'll find deep inside, I'm just like you."

Three speakers followed the musical presentation. Mrs. Karen Morehead spoke first on the theme that true peace must come from forgiveness. She told about a recent play she had attended, about an eleven-year-old girl, Maria Goretti of Italy, who had resisted her twenty-year-old neighbor instead of losing her purity to him and, consequently, was stabbed 14 times by him. During her twenty hours of suffering before she died, she prayed and forgave him. He had visions of her while in prison and, through her spirit of forgiveness, was forever changed. He was present at her canonization in 1950, fifty years after her death.



The second speaker was Mrs. Reiko Jenkins, member of the Board of Directors of WFWP, USA, who spoke about WFWP and how peace can be attained through reconciliation and compassion. She gave a humorous and enlightening account of the challenges and triumphs of being a part of an interracial marriage. She pointed out the need for women to be involved in the public sphere and spoke of ways for women to juggle family and public lives at the same time.

To close this part of the program, Bishop Carroll passionately brought the problem of racism to front and center. She stressed, "This problem will destroy humanity as we know it in the next two to three generations, if it is not solved now!" She helped the participants become aware of their serious responsibility in peacemaking by solving divisions among the races and cultures worldwide. Her wisdom and strength of conviction were inspiring. Her words seemed to symbolize a rock for all to stand and build upon, beginning right there.



The Bridge of Peace Ceremony followed the speakers. With background music, "Let There Be Peace on Earth," twenty-one pairs of women, each representing different cultures, became "sisters" by walking across a small wooden bridge accented by colored balloons. Each woman picked up a white, pink, red or yellow rose before she approached the bridge. The roses were exchanged when the pairs met in the middle of the bridge, along with a hug. In the background was a photograph projected onto a large screen illustrating a bridge in a beautiful, peaceful garden. Each pair of "sisters" exchanged signed certificates with one another, which read: "Peace and Harmony Through Sisterhood. Through this Sisterhood Ceremony, I join in friendship with my sister to build a bridge of peace and reconciliation between our diverse races and cultures in America. As a woman concerned with peace at all levels of human endeavor, I will strive to be a peacemaker and creator of harmony in my family, community and society across our nation and around the world."



Concluding the day, each sister pair exchanged small gifts. Every table was decorated with a lighthouse centerpiece surrounded by long tapered candles. Led by Bishop Aya, each participant picked up a candle from the table and, with subdued light, the candles were lit from one woman to another. This ceremony symbolized that, in a world that has lost its light, its way and true meaning, women must re-ignite the light. "We must restore the love, the harmony, and the justice. We must be the righteous and teach again what we have always known, that we need each other. We need to see the God in one another. We are the beacons of light. We are the lighthouses of this world, just like the lighthouses on each table, which symbolize the call we have to shed light, to bring hope, and to guide others to safety."

Bishop Aya spoke more deeply about the symbolism of the lighthouse. "The lighthouse of Alexandria was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. We women, as sisters, are truly one of the wonders of the world. It is on our shoulders to bring order out of chaos, to bring love out of hate, to bring joy out of sadness, and to bring family out of broken homes and homelessness." The candles were extinguished and all sang, "This Little Light of Mine", led by Rev. Arnett.

Before leaving, the women were asked to look under their seats. Whoever found a sticker was the winner of the lighthouse centerpiece. Candles were also exchanged and each was charged with helping the other to keep the light going, to fortify one another and to go out into the world two by two to bring peace to their community. A closing prayer was offered as all joined hands.



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Historic Choice for President of the UN General Assembly

By Laura Hornbeck

Regional Chairwoman, Texas Regional Chapter, WFWP, USA

Since 1997, WFWP has been recognized by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations as an NGO (non-governmental organization) in General Consultative Status. This is a recognition shared by only 130 organizations in the world, based on the global scope of our humanitarian service activities.

Each September, the UN General Assembly re-convenes in New York with a newly-elected President. While the name and face of the Secretary General may be well known, as he or she can serve up to two five-year terms, the President is not so familiar to most, perhaps because each President serves the General Assembly for just one year.

This year, for only the third time in its history, a woman was chosen President of the UN General Assembly, and for the very first time, they chose a Muslim woman. Her name is Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, a lawyer, activist and international diplomat from the tiny archipelago nation of Bahrain, in the Persian Gulf off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. That nation's population is 650,000, the majority of whom are Shiite Muslims.

Ms. Al-Khalifa, called "Sheikha Haya" as a title of respect, is 53 years old and is unmarried. Her achievements have been extraordinary. She was one of the first women in Bahrain to practice law, and she founded her own successful law firm. She is trilingual in Arabic, English and French. She was the first female diplomat from Bahrain, serving from 1999 to 2004 as that country's ambassador to France. She has been active in the movement to elevate the legal position of women in Bahrain and is an advocate of a progressive interpretation of Islamic texts as they apply to women.

As reported in the online “Voice of America” news, when asked for her perspective as a Muslim woman on the challenges facing the United Nations today, she responded, “It does not matter if I am a Muslim or a Christian or Jewish, we are human beings and we have the same worries and the same problems...”

Ms. Al-Khalifa stated in the UN Chronicle Online Edition that she wants to see concrete results coming out of the next session, especially in regard to reforming the United Nations and helping poor nations improve economically. As she put it, “I don’t believe in too many resolutions or too much talk.” Her desire is to keep the Assembly focused on the “human dimension of our work.”



She said, “This house is for all humanity – not for the interest of only one State or another. We may sometimes fail ..., but we provide great support in the area of development and humanitarian aid to millions of people in developing countries, especially Africa. ... I am President only for one year – this is a very short period – so time is very important to me. I don’t want to lose time merely having discussions. We have to concentrate and find solutions, reach concrete results.”

Stating that the problem of gender inequity is beyond the scope of government and must also involve non-governmental organizations, she said, “These (NGOs) are the people who work closely with communities and explain to women what their rights are.... In many societies, there is still a gap between government policy and ...public acceptance... For example, there are four countries in the Gulf region that have given women the right to vote and to become parliament members; however, during elections no one elects women. Some religious people even say that it is not good to elect women. ... I hope that this will change with time and as understanding deepens.”

Emphasizing the value of education, Ms. Al-Khalifa said, “A key to gender equality is education, not only of women but of men as well. . . Education is not merely about reading and writing. It’s a way of thinking, it’s philosophy, it’s how you develop ideas. In the absence of quality education, you see violence of all kinds.”



She said that since she was a young girl, she questioned the assumptions of society. She wanted to know why women could not move about as freely as men. When she was in school, she said, “(A) teacher told me that no woman could leave her house without her husband’s permission; otherwise, the angels would condemn her. I asked the teacher, ‘Must a man also ask his wife’s permission so that the angels will not condemn him?’ The response was, ‘No, no, it does not work that way.’

“I wanted to know what was behind these taboos. This is the reason I wanted to study law...A background in law gives you the ability to see things more clearly...And it gives you a method for finding answers to difficult questions, and solutions in difficult situations.”

Such a brave and determined woman will surely find a way to push the United Nations forward in its mission to make this world safer and healthier for all people. We congratulate Sheikha Haya Al-Khalifa and the UN General Assembly for electing her, and we look forward to hearing more from this remarkable woman in the coming year.

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