

4 April 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
at the General Assembly Meeting to Adopt the Draft Resolution on  
the Administration of Justice**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

During this 61st session of the General Assembly, we have taken a significant step forward in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of this Organization by approving the first serious overhaul of the United Nations' system of administration of justice in 60 years.

Around the world, the Organization promotes justice and equality and represents the rule of law to its members. The Organization therefore requires a system of justice which is independent, transparent, professional and adequately resourced.

We owe it to the 55,000 staff of the UN Secretariat, Funds and Programmes who, in the case of employment disputes, only have recourse to the Organization's own justice system.

Having taken this step, I would like to give my personal thanks to delegates in both the Sixth and Fifth Committees as well as ACABQ who worked tirelessly, with focus and commitment, over these last few weeks to establish a more effective system of internal justice for both current UN staff as well as the next generation of employees.

I would also like to thank the members of the independent external panel of legal experts, "the Redesign Panel", that proposed the radical overhaul of the system last summer as well as the Secretary-General and his staff who helped to facilitate this important deliberation.

This has been a true team effort and a model for cooperation among Member States and Secretariat management and staff.

Distinguished delegates,

The existing system of internal justice, in place since the late 1940s, was designed for a different era when the Organization had only a few thousand staff in a handful of locations. It relied on the voluntary input of staff themselves, participating in ad-hoc boards and committees, with only limited authority to advise the Secretary-General.

Over time, the backlogs and delays have become significant and the independence and credibility of the system seriously compromised.

The existing system serves no-one well - not the staff, not the managers and ultimately, not the Organization or the Member States. The Redesign Panel rightly recognized this and made bold proposals for change.

The draft resolution which you have before you today, lays out the key features of a fundamentally different system. You have asked for all its elements to be fully functional by January 2009.

These include:

A more robust informal system with the emphasis on resolving a large number of disputes between staff and managers before they go to "litigation" - a strengthened Ombudsman function for the Secretariat and its Funds and Programmes that will be integrated, yet de-centralized and with the capacity to conduct formal mediation services.

A professionalized formal system with two tiers, comprising a first-instance tribunal and an appellate body rendering binding decisions and ordering appropriate remedies. This will replace the advisory bodies that exist in the current system.

A stronger capacity for providing legal assistance and guidance to staff.

A series of measures to improve the accountability of managers and correct faulty decisions.

A new office for the Administration of Justice, headed by a senior official who will take ownership of this system and coordinate all its elements.

These represent important measures. However, we must keep up the momentum to make sure that this new system is created in a timely and efficient manner.

The Secretary-General has been asked to prepare a set of reports which will provide the necessary supplementary details for the new system. You have also asked the Secretary-General to put forward an immediate request for resources so that the transition can be made from the old to the new system effectively and with minimum disruption.

The swift approval of these additional reports, along with approval of the necessary resources, is essential in ensuring that the new system comes into effect in a timely manner, as a delayed justice is unfair justice.

I am confident you will continue to provide the necessary support and guidance, as you have done so in these past few weeks.

While understanding that today is only an initial step to this very important reform, it is indeed a crucial step. The reform of the system of the administration of justice should not be viewed in isolation from the total package of the UN reform.

By adopting this resolution, the General Assembly will reaffirm our commitment and determination to see a better United Nations.

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to thank you again for your support on this issue. You have done the Organization a great service, which will be appreciated for years to come.