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**Statement of the
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

**The Sixty-Sixth Session of the General Assembly
of the United Nations**

Delivered by

H.R.H. Prince Saud Al-Faisal

**Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

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Mr. President,

I have the pleasure of presenting to Your Excellency my sincere congratulations on your election as President of this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I am fully confident that your presidency of this session will effectively contribute to the achievement of the objectives that the international community is pursuing under the current international circumstances.

I would also like to take this opportunity to present my deep gratitude and appreciation to your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, who directed its work in such a wise and commendable manner.

I also have the pleasure to renew my appreciation for the great efforts of H.E. the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in administering this international Organization and promoting its message aimed at achieving peace and security in our contemporary world which is still suffering from numerous types of conflicts and challenges. Moreover, I would not miss this opportunity to convey to his Excellency the sincere congratulations of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz; and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince on the occasion of his re-election as Secretary-General – for a second term; which reflects the great confidence given to His Excellency by the international community in this important era. Meanwhile, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pledges to continue to support his Excellency in his significant mission associated with the implementation of the provisions and principles of the United Nation Charter; the achievement of security, peace, respect of the provisions of international law; and renouncing violence and extremism throughout the world.

Mr. President

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is proud of being among the signatory countries to San Francisco Charter under which the United Nations was established. My Country believes in the importance of a collective universal commitment to the fundamental principles and noble purposes of the United Nations for which that Charter was drafted, including regulating international relations, achieving world peace and security, respecting the principles of international law and international legitimacy, renouncing all forms and manifestations of violence and extremism. My Country stresses that the organization's ability to perform its tasks is associated with the political will of its members to practically implement its Charter and its included principles. In addition, my Country's Government is also aware of the importance of revitalizing and advancing the United Nations and its organs in order to fulfill their expected role. Accordingly, we are of the view that real reform requires giving the General Assembly a key role in maintaining international peace and security. Moreover, my Country believed and still believes that the ultimate goal for any restructuring of the Security Council should be strengthening its capabilities in order to effectively play its role in accordance with the Charter. From this perspective, my Country is of the view that in the context of pursuing the objectives and purposes of the Charter, it is imperative to avoid double-standards; emphasizing that this should be coupled with credibility and seriousness through respecting the principles of international legitimacy, the provisions of international law and the requirements of international justice. One of the important reforms in this area should be restricting the use of the veto power through a commitment from permanent members not to use it towards actions that are intended for the implementation of already adopted resolutions of the Security Council. It is also crucial to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council; and to support coordination among United Nations funds, programs and activities.

Mr. President

The Arab - Israeli conflict still predominates and overshadows all issues of the Middle East. No other regional conflict is more influential upon world peace. What exacerbates the problem is the absence of the Israeli Government's good intentions. It still proceeds with the acquisition of more Palestinian land, still builds colonies to create facts on ground and still continues the killing and displacement of Palestinians and confiscation of their land and properties.

The Israeli colonies undermine the possibilities of creating a contiguous and viable Palestinian state; make it difficult for any Palestinian government to function effectively or to persuade the Palestinians about the possibility of achieving peace. It is unethical to impose siege stressing and sanctions on people suffering under occupation, while the occupying authority continues its settlement activities free from any accountability and in defiance of Geneva Conventions. It is understood that peace is the only way to achieve security for Palestinians and Israelis; but we must doubt the Israeli intentions when it fails to offer any serious peace initiatives. Actually, it rejects the proposed initiatives and continues to hamper the negotiations by taking unilateral actions that undermine the chances for peace. The time has come for Israel to know that it cannot proceed with ignoring international legitimacy emanating from international law. Yet, states in the Security Council, including permanent members, have unanimously and repeatedly issued statements against the continuation of Israeli settlement activities.

The Arab states have clearly expressed, through the Arab Peace Initiative launched by Saudi Arabia and adopted by the Beirut Arab Summit in 2004, their commitment to achieving just and comprehensive peace based on the rules of international law. However, we were not met by any reciprocal commitment from Israel. It is crucial that the international community takes a clear position that reflects its consensus on taking concrete actions to revive the peace process; alongside with decisively urging Israel to deal with the issue with honesty and seriousness by immediately ceasing settlement construction, dismantling instead of expanding them, recognizing the right of Palestinian people to establish their independent state on the borders of June 4, 1967 with Jerusalem as its capital as well as reaching an equitable solution to the refugee's issue in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions.

As a result of the continued Israeli intransigence and disrupt of the peace process, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls upon all Member States of the United Nations to recognize the State of Palestine on the borders of June 4, 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital; and to grant it full membership of the United Nations.

Mr. President

The situation in the besieged Gaza Strip is another factor that exacerbates the problem as Gaza became a huge prison due to the unjust blockade imposed by Israel that causes grave humanitarian consequences. Furthermore, Israeli occupying forces continued atrocious military attacks against the Palestinian people demonstrate that Israel, by committing these aggressions and repeated transgresses, is a state above the law which disregards the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Geneva Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War; and taking advantage of the international community's silence and negligence towards Israel's war crimes. In this context, we urge the United Nations, particularly the Security Council and the Quartet, to assume their responsibilities to stop the Israeli persistent aggression, to work on providing international protection for the unarmed Palestinian people in Gaza, to end the Israeli blockade and open the crossings from and to Gaza Strip.

The kind of peace that we seek to achieve is a just and comprehensive peace. It will not be achieved without the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, including occupied Golan and Lebanese territories. Accordingly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls upon the Security Council to act without delay to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East as provided in Security Council resolutions 242, 338, all relevant UN resolutions and decisions of Madrid Conference, in particular the principle of "Land for Peace" as well as the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. President

The events and changes taking place in the Arab region require a responsible position that maintains the stability of the region, the unity of its territories, its territorial integrity and civil peace within the scale of people's legitimate demands in the region. While the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen not to interfere in internal affairs of states, its leadership expresses its deep sorrow and sadness for the many civilians casualties, including women, children and the elderly, due to the crises and transitions taking place in the Middle East. The Kingdom has called to give priority to the voice of reason and wisdom in addressing these crises, to avoid violence and further bloodshed and to resort to serious reforms that ensure the rights and dignity of the Arab human being while ensuring the security and stability in the Arab homeland and preserving its unity and independence. In this context, we renew our condemnation to military operations against the defenseless people in sisterly Syria; and call for an immediate cessation of those operations pursuant to the latest Arab League decision and to implement comprehensive reforms that meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people without reluctance or delay. Similarly, we call upon all parties in brotherly Yemen to clearly announce their full commitment to implement the peaceful transition of power as stipulated in the Gulf Initiative in order to swiftly end the serious Yemeni crisis.

Mr. President,

The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gives close attention to the efforts aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals, focusing on poverty reduction and efforts to eliminate the infectious diseases that are unremittingly claiming heavy toll of human lives. In this regard, the Kingdom calls upon capable states to honor their pledges and submit their quotas determined by the United Nations. The Kingdom has helped in reducing the consequences of natural disasters and fight against poverty and diseases through its contribution to the World Food Program in addition to the aid presented by the Saudi Development Fund during the past three decades amounting to US \$100 billion which benefited more than 90 developing countries. In the sphere of debt relief, Saudi Arabia waived about US \$6 billion of debts owed by least developed countries. Furthermore, the Kingdom fulfilled its full share in the Debt Relief Initiative Fund of the International Monetary Fund. Once again, the Kingdom calls upon the developed industrial states to meet their obligations, whether in the area of proportionate direct aid, debts' relief for the neediest countries or opening their markets to exports from developing countries without unjustified restrictions.

Mr. President

Climate change is an integral part of the sustainable development theme in its three dimensions: Economic development, social development and environmental protection. They should be addressed in an integrated manner. In this context, the issues of climate change and sustainable development fall in general within the competence of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their relevant subsidiary bodies including the Committee on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Environment Programme. Any intervention from the Security Council in this matter will lead to an unjustified conflict of competence which could affect the chances of success in reaching international agreement in this sphere. It is critical for all Member States that sustainable development would be strengthened by adhering to Rio principles, particularly the principle of common but differentiated responsibility; the full implementation of the 21st Century Agenda; and other obligations related to the provision of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building of developing countries, which have been undertaken in Rio, Johannesburg and other relevant conferences convened by the United Nations in both economic and social fields.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the appropriate forum to consider the risks associated with climate change as well as the needed actions to be taken to address climate change in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Convention. The Kingdom is of the view that developed countries should take swift actions in order to meet their obligations on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol; and that the countries which have not yet acceded to the Protocol should do so. It is imperative that we work to reach an agreement that guarantees the continuity of adherence to the principles of the Kyoto Protocol and its provisions.

The urgent issues facing the world such as climate change, food security and rising in commodity prices require the joint cooperation of international community with all its components in order to find equitable solutions that take everyone's interests into consideration. Emanating from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's keenness to assume its international responsibility, it announced during the OPEC Summit in Riyadh a contribution of US \$ 300 million to establish a special fund for research on energy, environment and climate change. In addition, the Kingdom contributed US \$500 million for the World Food Programme to offset the rising food prices; which helped 62 developing countries around the whole globe.

Mr. President

Strengthening cooperation and interaction between the Member States of the United Nations on the one hand, international organizations and regional agencies on the other to face the phenomenon of terrorism will lead to combat terrorists and their plans which cannot be justified or linked to any race, religion or culture. In fact, it contradicts all teachings of divine religions which call for tolerance and respect; and prohibit killing of innocent people. In this regard, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has followed with great concern and sadness the events that took place in the Kingdom of Norway and claimed the lives of many innocent people. While we share with the Norwegian People its sadness and offer condolences to the families of the victims, we note that this criminal incident is evidence that terrorism is not related to religion, nationality or race. Emanating from this perspective, we can say that there is grave injustice committed against Islam when some people tend to brush it with terrorism; while this religion calls for tolerance, coexistence and applying its principles to achieve its objectives.

The Kingdom has made several contributions in the field of combating terrorism such as hosting the Counter-Terrorism International Conference of 2005 held in Riyadh. Many conclusions and recommendations emanated from this conference, most notably the call of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, to create an international center to combat terrorism under the umbrella of United Nations to coordinate international efforts and early exchange of information to anticipate and forestall terrorist's plans before they occur; with a view that this center will strengthen the role of the United Nations and its committees on counter-terrorism. Few days ago, the United Nations responded to the idea by signing the agreement to establish the United Nations Center for Counter-Terrorism (UNCCT) here in the headquarters of this organization. Moreover, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pledges to support the efforts of the UNCCT in pursuing its objectives as a token of the Kingdom's contribution in consolidating and restoring international security.

Mr. President,

Protection of human rights, the rule of law, promoting the culture of peace and initiatives on dialogue among cultures and peoples are key elements to any effective strategy to combat terrorism and extremism.

In this connection, it may be noted that the rapid development of transportation, communications, computers and media sectors had a critical impact on facilitating and intensifying communication and interaction among people of the world irrespective of their religions, beliefs, culture and languages. No member of the human family, in all its diversity and plurality, can live in isolation from the means of affecting or being affected. Therefore, we are required to concert serious cooperation, under the umbrella of the United Nations, to create a healthy environment to promote the values of dialogue, tolerance and moderation; and to build cooperation and peace relationships between cultures, peoples and nations. Based on our keenness to achieve these noble objectives, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques initiated the launch of his sincere and comprehensive approach to dialogue between all the followers of religions and cultures. In this context, several meetings were organized and were crowned by convening the High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in its sixty-third session in 2008, with a view to provide the highest possible political support to all initiatives on dialogue, understanding and promoting the culture of peace.

Currently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is working, in cooperation with Austria and Spain, on establishing King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Center for Dialogue among Religions and Cultures followers in Vienna; and we hope that the Center will be able to commence its activities later this year.

Mr. President,

We reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations and to multilateral international system. Our international community is in dire need to unity and synergy in order to develop equitable solutions to aggravated international problems through serious respect to what is established in human consciousness in the form of values, norms and principles that strengthen constructive cooperation and achieve security, peace and prosperity for all nations.

May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.