

September 2008

**Statement by Mrs. Valerie Cliff, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kuwait at Egyptian Coptic Church Ghabka in Kuwait**

Father Pigol, distinguished guests,

Thank you so much for giving me this honor to address this big (and hopefully very hungry!) group here tonight.

One of the aims of the United Nations, the organization that I'm very proud to represent, is quite simply but also quite profoundly to improve understanding and cooperative relations not only among nations, but also among peoples, across cultures and religions. And, in the process of doing so, to help counter negative forces that can so tragically and unfortunately fuel mis-understanding, polarization and extremism.

Inter-faith dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect and admiration among religious communities are essential dimensions of a genuinely peaceful and secure world where everyone is guaranteed their fundamental dignity, and all of the many basic human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Tonight's Ghabka, so kindly and warmly hosted by Father Pigol and the members of the Egyptian Coptic Community in Kuwait, is an opportunity where all of us from all religious beliefs and backgrounds can feel welcome, at ease, and most of all at home. It's an event that our Kuwaiti friends, our Kuwaiti brothers and sisters so genuinely treasure, support, and look forward to participating in each year. Indeed tonight's Ghabka is an opportunity to celebrate our deeply-held and widely-shared values that together aspire to lead to a more peaceful and inclusive world.

Father Pigol, it's my pleasure to be here tonight to share the company of your community and all of the guests that are here.

Thank you very much.