

U.N. president from Bahrain receives 2007 Path to Peace Award

UNITED NATIONS (CNS) — Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, the first woman elected president of the U.N. General Assembly since 1969, is the 2007 winner of the Path to Peace Award.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, apostolic nuncio to the United Nations and president of the Path to Peace Foundation, an agency established to carry out projects in support of the work of the Holy See mission to the United Nations, presented the award to Al Khalifa June 12 at U.N. headquarters in New York.

The archbishop said Al Khalifa was being honored “for the graceful and determined way in which she has striven over the last year to forge ‘paths to peace.’”

“She is only the third woman president in 61 years, the last one serving in 1969,” he added. “That alone is an achievement, and she brought to this extremely taxing position at the summit of the world’s premier international body an energy that is as politically effective as it is diplomatically discreet.”

Archbishop Migliore said the Vatican remains “convinced more than ever that if the U.N. did not exist the world’s nations would surely have to invent it or something very like it.”

“While not ignoring its shortcomings, we do appreciate and support the U.N.’s consistent and steady pace toward peace, human rights, humanitarian relief and development,” he said.

Archbishop Migliore also presented the foundation’s Servitor Pacis (Latin for “servant of peace”) Award to Carl Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus, and to Sister Sabina Iragui Redin, a Daughter of Charity who has been working with the poor in Rwanda for 30 years.

A June 4 announcement on the Path to Peace Award said Al Khalifa was the unanimous choice of the foundation’s board and was selected “in recognition of her

dedicated efforts on behalf of peace and development.”

At the time of her election as president of the 61st session of the U.N. General Assembly June 8, 2006, Al Khalifa was serving as legal adviser to the royal court of Bahrain.

One of the first women to practice law in her country, she has held a variety of posts with leading law organizations of the world, including the International Bar Association, where she was vice chairwoman of the arbitration and dispute resolution committee.

Al Khalifa also served as Bahrain’s ambassador to France from 2002 to 2004 and as nonresident ambassador to Belgium, Switzerland and Spain. At the same time she was her country’s representative to the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

She is currently Bahrain’s representative on the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce.

Al Khalifa, who speaks Arabic, English and French, has presented numerous papers at legal conferences on topics such as diplomacy, international arbitration, dispute resolution and the status of women in the Middle East.

The Path to Peace Award is given annually to an individual committed to the development of peace in the national and international arenas. Previous winners include Kofi Annan and Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former U.N. secretaries-general; Cardinal Angelo Sodano, former Vatican secretary of state; and such former national leaders as Xanana Gusmao of East Timor, Corazon Aquino of the Philippines and Lech Walesa of Poland.

Last year the award went to Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, a goodwill ambassador for UNESCO since 1997.