



ARAB INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S FORUM
المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Building Bridges – Building Business'

ARAB INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM

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BUILDING BRIDGES – BUILDING BUSINESS

Building Bridges – Building Business has been the guiding principle of the Arab International Women's Forum (AIWF) since it was set up in early 2001 as the first non – profit organisation of its kind, promoting cross cultural diversity and creating greater public awareness of women's success and prospects in the Arab world.

As an international networking organisation, with members and contacts from over 45 countries, AIWF links Arab business and professional women with each other and their counterparts in the international community to exchange knowledge, experience and develop their business potential.

AIWF has built a strong foundation in a very short period of time and is recognised for its connectivity and ability to operate successfully at various levels. By bringing together civil society organisations, the corporate sector and governments, AIWF has created an unrivalled forum for dialogue and growth.

The Board of Trustees consists of successful women giving voluntary support and advice to AIWF.

MEMBERS

AIWF has a growing membership of women involved in key positions in business and professions and women in community leadership, public and political life – all of whom have vast experience in their respective countries.

The membership is drawn from women who are owners, directors, managers and consultants and the fields they represent are engineering, information technology, e-business, textiles, banking, financial planning and investment, accountancy, development and marketing of property, hotels, fashion, publishing, health and medical services, journalism, the media, training and the design and manufacture of diverse items from marine parts and engines to silverware, porcelain and glass. Other members contribute their experience as parliamentarians, diplomats, leaders in government linked and non-governmental organisations and economic, trade and social forums.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS and COOPERATION

Working at the highest levels, the growing role of the Arab International Women's Forum is acknowledged by collaboration with many leading Arab and international organisations - among them, the League of Arab States, the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Ministry for the Economy, Industry and Employment, France, the World Bank, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Commission and European Parliament, The Greater Paris Investment Agency, as well as UN agencies, NGOs, academic, economic and trade institutions.

AIWF has a very special cooperation with two very respected institutes with which they will be carrying through programmes of training and skills building. The partnership with the Hawkamah Institute of Corporate Governance serves to advocate corporate sector reform and strengthen corporate governance for women entrepreneurs with business and investment in the MENA region. The partnership of cooperation with Mudara, Institute of Directors is vested in encouraging professional directorship, the training capacity of institutions, good corporate governance regimes and communication strategies.

Contact with those in positions of responsibility in government in most of the countries in which AIWF is represented has developed strongly over the last eight years. At every conference and at many events, the programme has always included participation by a senior government minister.

AIWF has a standing invitation to attend with observer status the Economic and Social Commission set up by the League of Arab States.

AIWF has actively supported the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement since its launch in 2002.

The Arab International Women's Forum is known for its open communication and its capacity for building contacts throughout the international community. AIWF works closely with and partners a number of institutes and NGOs and is represented at meetings and conferences of international organisations and forums. The lists on pages 7 and 8 illustrate the diversity and scope of the organisations with which AIWF cooperates.

GLOBAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

AIWF has forged valuable partnerships with global corporations. As a Global Partner of AIWF, companies and corporations can take advantage of linking marketing and governance strategies with education and skills training programmes directed towards Arab women. Partners can showcase corporate diversity and support for community development. They can also profile the corporate brand to a large international network using AIWF corporate and government communications and outreach.

AIWF has a track record of significant introductions that have led to meaningful relationships and cooperation. Specifically the Forum offers:

- Long term partnership cooperation with the Forum as a conduit for business contacts
- Extension of arena of public awareness with media attention and company identity acknowledged in all AIWF materials
- Sharing of learning experiences with business leaders and international organisations
- Creating greater awareness of company social responsibility
- Accessibility for partner company employees to the work of the Forum, with significant role models highlighted

- Collaboration in schemes for training and empowering women
- Link to local women associations for their cooperation in local projects
- Annual programme of high-level activities in unique locations with opportunities for corporate guest speakers and role models featured.

In making these valuable partnerships, AIWF ensures their cooperation is with companies that are deeply engaged with the region, with strong diversity policies and from a different sector of trading or interest. AIWF has the support of an impressive list of Global Annual Partners:

Shell International, PepsiCo International, Manpower Inc, General Motors, DLA Piper, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Merrill Lynch & the Jumeirah Group.

In support of the high profile relationship that AIWF enjoys with the responsible media AIWF is proud to partner with ***Weber Shandwick MENA*** as its Global Communications Consultant.

AIWF has also enjoyed the support of ***Abraaj Capital. TOTAL, Crescent Petroleum, Hildon Ltd, HSBC, IBM, Orascom, Commercial International Bank, Egypt, Procter and Gamble and MBI International.***

The Global Partner relationship is greatly valued by AIWF and this category of support has provided cooperation and mutual benefits. Opportunities exist for global partners to present their company's performance and policies through presentations at events/conferences and profiles on the website and written materials.

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

Since its inception, AIWF has hosted a series of conferences and initiatives exploring timely themes, building from one to the next - that promote the role of women in the economy and in public life. We have explored issues relevant in local communities, as partners on the world stage, in rural economies and in corporate life. AIWF has provided a programme that focused on capacity

building, training and skills development, human resource developments and empowering women in the region.

AIWF has built a very strong liaison and is acknowledged as a hub with the serious print and broadcasting media in the UK and the Region. Requests for interviews and assistance with media projects are frequent. AIWF is also pleased to have an ongoing strategic partnership with The Financial Times and has enjoyed media partnerships supporting specific events.

TAKING AIWF FORWARD

AIWF has carved a space in the arena public policy and contributed to the gender equality debate in the Arab world. AIWF is continuing to promote programmes that focus on the role of business women in igniting growth and development and gearing its activities to the enhancement of women's role in "*Building Bridges, Building Business*".

Two very successful years have set the foundation for an enterprising programme in 2009. The 2007 programme examined the elements for creating an enabling environment for overcoming the challenges and barriers to greater female participation in the Arab economies. In 2008, the programme ***Partners for Change, Realizing the Potential of Arab Women in the Private and Public Sectors*** had its focus on the opportunities for women to progress within both the private and public arenas. The key event in 2008 was the first AIWF conference in the USA which was hosted by the World Bank in Washington DC and promoted women's entrepreneurship and financial positions within the private sector but also highlighted the importance of women in decision-making roles in Arab governments.

In 2009, the AIWF focus has been on strengthening existing channels of partnership between the Arab World and France to create new avenues for viable business opportunities; to promote business growth, innovation and intercultural collaboration between prolific and accomplished women two of the world's most dynamic economies – Europe and the Middle East.

AIWF held its first conference in Paris from 03 – 05 March 2009 entitled **From Partnership to Prosperity: Women in the Arab World, France and the International Community**. The invitation to host this important conference was received from Her Excellency Madame Christine Lagarde, France's Minister of Finance, to host this event in collaboration with the Greater Paris Investment Authority.

On 1 July 2009, AIWF signed a landmark agreement with the Arab – British Chamber of Commerce, a Memorandum of Understanding creating a powerful coalition to jointly promote trade and intercultural exchange within UK and the Arab world with a special emphasis on fostering women's entrepreneurship. Both the AIWF and the ABCC and their global partners will be able to benefit from the MOU through fostering new opportunities for trade and expanding our outreach and partnership with key players and stakeholders with special emphasis on women-led businesses as key to social and economic development. Events supporting this initiative and the 2010 theme are currently being planned.

AIWF INSTITUTIONAL, NGO AND OTHER ORGANISATIONAL PARTNERS

AIWF works closely with / partners the following:

The Arab Women Organisation

The Women's Leadership Board at Harvard

The Women Leaders Intercultural Forum

National Council of Women in Egypt

The World Family Organisation

Femmes Africa Solidarite

The International Alliance for Women

City Women's Network

Dubai Business Women Council

GCC Business Women Council

The Center for Diversity in Global Management, Instituto de Empresa

Fundacion Social de la Cultura

Women's International Networking

No Peace without Justice

The Women's Strategy Group of Egypt's International Economic Forum, Cairo

Abu Dhabi Business Women Council

The Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport,
Alexandria Egypt

Women without Borders

The Arab British Chamber of Commerce, London

The National US Arab Chamber of Commerce, USA

Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Exeter University, UK

Saudi Business Focus

**AIWF HAS BEEN REPRESENTED AT
MEETINGS/CONFERENCES OF**

Arab Labour Organisation
The World Economic Forum
The Gorbachev Foundation
The OECD
The Arab US Economic Forum
The Council of Europe
The Jeddah Economic Forum
The Arab Women's Organisation Summit supported by the First Ladies of the Arab World
The Middle East Association
The Arab Business Council
The Arab Financial Forum
The Arab Strategy Forum
The Evian Group
Forbes Middle East CEO Forum
Zayed University - Global Leaders
G8 Dialogue with Civil Society
The Global Summit for Women
Economist Government Roundtable Conferences in Greece
World Maritime University
Tunisian Mothers Association
World Islamic Economic Forum
Middle East Regional Forum of Local and Regional Women Entrepreneurs
IESE Business School, Madrid
German- Arab Business Forum, Berlin