



ARAB INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S FORUM  
المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

**Arab International Women's Forum**

*Partners for Change: Realizing the Potential of Arab Women in the  
Private and Public Sectors*

**22 - 24 June 2008**

**US Book Launch Welcome**

Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani

Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you this morning as we mark the official US launch of *Domains of Influence: Arab Women Business Leaders in a New Economy*.

*Domains of Influence*, which was produced in partnership with the World Bank, is a unique testament to the impact of Arab women in today's global environment of entrepreneurship and empowerment, and to the vast economic reform that has revitalized Arab nations in recent years.

It depicts the dual role of the modern, accomplished Arab woman, both at home and at work, and provides a welcome antidote to current negative trends of marginalization and misrepresentation of Arab women in the contemporary media.

The book profiles 36 of the region's most successful and enterprising women from 20 different countries, many of whom are present in Washington DC with us and are participating in this morning's special panel, *Visions of Entrepreneurship*, commemorating the launch of this very special book.

*Domains of Influence* is the first book of its kind on women entrepreneurs in the Arab world, and aims to change the prevailing stereotypical images of Arab women whilst creating greater public awareness of their achievements and participation in all sectors throughout the Arab world.

Recognition of the value of women's contribution to the economy is central to the Arab International Women's Forum programme. We firmly believe that women are engines of economic growth, and that when women in the region prosper, their families and communities also prosper.

Coming from across the Arab world, each of the 36 women featured in the book have made a great contribution to their businesses, organisations and communities. Each has demonstrated exceptional skill, business acumen and leadership, motivating others in her sphere. Each is an inspiration to colleagues, family and friends and others who will follow her. Collectively they are encouraging role models for a younger generation of women.

These women are but a selective representation of the many women in the Arab world who work tirelessly in their homes, in their communities, in academia, and in their places of work, whether small, entrepreneurial businesses or large corporations. A significant number volunteer in community organisations and many now hold positions at various levels in public life and government.

In growing numbers, women are present across all sectors of Arab society; as lawyers, accountants, architects and engineers, in medicine, the oil and energy field, IT, media, retail, manufacturing and public administration. The opportunities are endless and the benefits are demonstrable.

The women profiled here are pioneers and it is to their credit that they are working to remove the economic, financial, social and political barriers to increased participation for women in business and public life.

Through the publication of this book, the Arab International Women's Forum hopes to inspire a larger movement towards greater equality in the Arab world. There is still much to be done.

*Domains of Influence: Arab Women Business Leaders in a New Economy* is the combined contribution of the Arab International Women's Forum and the World

Bank towards a better understanding of the changing realities of the Middle East, and the impact of the vast economic and socio-cultural change that has irreversibly transformed the financial, social and family lives of Arab women.

We believe that the significance of this book reaches far beyond the commemorative. I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the valued collaboration of Ms Jacqueline Hassink, world-renowned photographer and Professor at Harvard University, with the preparation of the book. Ms Hassink is internationally recognised for her representations of economic power, and we truly appreciate her valued interest in the growing role of Arab businesswomen.

We acknowledge the collaboration of IB Tauris, the book's publishers, as well as the contributions made by Ms Irma Boom, award-winning book designer, and the introduction by leading photography critic Charlotte Cotton.

We acknowledge with appreciation the valued contribution of Dr. Heba Handoussa and the World Bank for their contribution of two important essays to the book.

We very much hope that you will all enjoy *Domains of Influence*.

Thank you for your kind attention.