



ARAB INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S FORUM

المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

Arab International Women's Forum

From Partnership to Prosperity: Women in the Arab World,

France and the International Community

Paris, France

March 2009

Gala Dinner Concluding Remarks

Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani

Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum

Gala Dinner Remarks

Your Excellency Madame Christine Lagarde, Minister of the Economy, Industry and Employment;

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure indeed for me as Chairman and on behalf of the Board of the Arab International Women's Forum to reiterate our welcome and to address this distinguished gathering at the splendid Jacquemart Andre Museum, at the culmination of a very successful first day of our conference, *From Partnership to Prosperity: Women in the Arab World, France and the International Community*.

I believe that we have all found today's deliberations to be most rewarding and inspiring, thanks to the valued contributions of all our distinguished guest speakers and participants.

Allow me at the outset to give our deepest thanks and appreciation to HE Madame Christine Lagarde, France's Minister for the Economy, Industry and Employment. On behalf of the Arab International Women's Forum, I extend our gratitude to Madame Lagarde for her invaluable support of our initiatives and our mission, and for sharing her much sought-after expertise and insight with us this evening.

Your Excellency, you are a true role model to us all and we remain inspired by your knowledge and experience, and certainly the wise leadership that you have demonstrated throughout, and certainly not least of all, in addressing the global economic crisis. We thank you for inviting us to Paris to build closer ties of business and knowledge between France and the Arab world.

On behalf of the Board of the Arab International Women's Forum, it gives me great pleasure to reiterate our welcome to our distinguished Ministerial Guests, HE Mrs Anne Marie Idrac, Minister of Foreign Trade, France; HE Ms Fayza Abounaga, Minister of International Cooperation, Egypt; and HE Mrs Suhair Al-Ali, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan.

We are also delighted to welcome HE Mrs Bahia Hariri, Minister of Education and Higher Education, Lebanon; HE Dr Fatima Al Balooshi, Minister for Social Development, Bahrain; and HE Dr Diala Al -Haj Aref, Minister of Social Affairs & Labour, Syria.

Over the course of today's proceedings, we were very proud to welcome Mme Nicole Ameline, Former Minister of Equality and Member of the National Assembly of France

Your Excellencies, we are most appreciative of your valued presence and participation. Our very special thanks are expressed to all our distinguished Guest Speakers for lending their valuable time and tremendous knowledge to enrich our debate, and to all the valued participants at the conference.

I wish here to express our deep gratitude to Monsieur Thierry Jacquillat, Chairman of the Greater Paris Investment Agency, for his generosity and hospitality, and the support and assistance of Mrs Chaiara Corazza and her esteemed colleagues.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation our Global Corporate Partners for their crucial cooperation in hosting this conference - our Principal Partner, **PepsiCo International**; and our Programme Partner **Total**.

We reiterate our deepest appreciation for the generous support and hospitality we have so gratefully received from our partners here in France and from those who are so graciously hosting tomorrow's business to business visits.

Last but not least, I extend my personal gratitude to Mrs Sylvia Perry and the team at AIWF, for their diligent cooperation with all our French and international partners to make this conference a true success.

Building Bridges, Building Business

Distinguished Guests,

AIWF was established as a non-profit organization in the United Kingdom in 2001 to bring women together – from the Arab world, the UK, Europe, the US, and the international community.

It is through 'Building Bridges, Building Business' that AIWF contributes to peace, progress and prosperity in the communities of its members, bringing together international members, corporate partners, governments, civil society organizations and other key stakeholders to promote and enhance the leadership capacity of Arab women.

Now, more than ever, the inclusion of women in international discourse and decision-making is vital if we are to find our way towards a sustainable recovery from the global recession, from which the Arab world is by no means insulated. Regional growth is expected to slow to an average of 3% in 2009 from almost 6% in 2008.

However, there are findings that suggest that the Middle East is well placed to experience a strong recovery, if urgent measures are implemented. These measures run parallel to AIWF's mission and objectives for this very conference; successful implementation will greatly influence the region's prospects for full and true global integration, and will effectively determine the Arab world's future sustainability in the recovered global economy.

- 1) It is important that we continue to strengthen ties between governments, private sector and civil society
- 2) It is vital that we maintain a strict focus on capacity-building to prepare our economies for economic recovery
- 3) Governments must focus on reform in order to attract more future foreign investment that is so vital to the recovery effort
- 4) Job creation is paramount to preventing social unrest
- 5) It is critical that we lend strong support to the small and medium business sector, particularly supporting women's entrepreneurship
- 6) It is crucial that we continue to work across borders and with our partners in the International Community to realise that the economic challenges we face are truly global, and that recovery must be shared in order to be sustainable.

Conclusion

Madame Christine Lagarde, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests;

In these uncertain times of global economic crisis, we believe that responsibility for the recovery effort must be global. We also believe that recovery must be shared in order to be sustainable. Our conference in Paris, today and tomorrow, is but a manifestation of that collaboration.

It is about forging a real partnership for progress and prosperity.

Thank you all for your kind attention. On behalf of the Board of the AIWF, it gives me great pleasure indeed to invite Madame Lagarde to present her with a token of our appreciation for her invaluable support.