

Opening Remarks by Nadereh Chamlou, Senior Advisor, Middle East and North Africa Region, The World Bank June 23, 2008  
Joint Conference between the World Bank and the Arab International Women's Forum

Excellencies, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen,  
colleagues,

I am Nadereh Chamlou, Senior Advisor in the Middle East and North Africa Region. For the past six years I have led the World Bank's Gender agenda for this region.

Today it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the World Bank and to this conference on "Partners for Change: Realizing the Potential of Arab Women in the Private and Public Sectors" which we are proud to host in partnership with the Arab International Women's Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world is a changing place and our needs are changing with it. Change is also about developing new ideas that will make our lives better and more fulfilled. Today one sentence, one idea may change attitudes AND aptitudes.

The challenges we face today can only ultimately be met by the world of business, which has to come up with viable and effective solutions to issues such as climate change, food production, energy efficiency, and social inclusion. In an ever more competitive and changing environment, we cannot afford to throw away ideas – be they from men or women, as the latter make up a large and growing share of the intellectual talent pool of our societies.

In the words of Gary Becker, the 1992 Nobel Laureate, modern economies are about people. People are the ones

that generate ideas; successful economies are less and less about natural resources or physical power.

The most successful economies are those that can let all people come up with new ideas and provide the environment for all to translate ideas into businesses opportunities.

One of the most important aspects of this conference is to discuss how to enhance women's role in the Middle East and North Africa region to precisely benefit from this still underutilized potential. It is also a great opportunity to meet with like-minded people, to share problems, to discover solutions together.

I am sure that you will hear very interesting speakers as they present new and different perspectives. And it is your interest in the Gender equality in the Middle East that will make this conference all the more worthwhile.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With respect to women's empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa region, we are not where we were, we are not where we want to be...

With this, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you

**Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani MA, Economics  
Founder & Chairman Arab International Women's Forum**

Haifa Al Kaylani is well known in international government and business circles as a high-impact change agent focusing on leadership in cultural and gender issues. A graduate of the American University of Beirut and University of Oxford, she brings a wide range of skills and experience to her personal mission of encouraging greater cultural understanding between Arab and international communities, supporting a strong role for women in that process. Fluent in five languages, Mrs Al Kaylani holds senior roles

in several organizations in the UK and internationally as well as seats on the boards of charities, cultural institutions and NGOs. In 2006, Haifa Al Kaylani received recognition as one of 21 Leaders for the 21 Century by Women's eNews in New York. In February 2007 Haifa Al Kaylani was named as one of The Muslim Power 100 Leaders in the United Kingdom and received the Education Excellence Award. Mrs. Al Kaylani has been named recipient of the 2008 World of Difference Achievement Award presented by The International Alliance of Women.

Some of Mrs Al Kaylani's other roles are Vice President International *The Women's Leadership Board at Harvard University*; Advisory Board Member *The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement*; Member International Advisory Board *Khalil Gibran Chair at University of Maryland*; Member Advisory *Board Middle East Institute, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*; Member of the Advisory Board of *Tanaka Business School, Imperial College, London*, Member of The Board of Trustees of *The British Edutrust Foundation*.

Please join me to welcome Mrs. Al-Kaylani and our distinguished panel of Ministers.

Thank you.