



AIWF NEWS

Arab International Women's Forum

المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

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Left to right: Ambassador WS Al Kaylani, HH Sheikh Lubna Al Qasimi, Her Majesty Queen Rania, The Lord Mayor, Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, The Lady Mayoress, Dr Gavin Graham.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It was a great honour for AIWF to mark its 5th Anniversary in April, in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, at the Mansion House kindly hosted by The Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman David Brewer CMG. The celebration dinner brought together AIWF members, partners and a distinguished gathering of guests to celebrate this special event and AIWF achievements to-date.

AIWF Board and Members acknowledge with appreciation the attendance of Her Majesty Queen Rania as the Guest of Honour on this occasion.

We would also like to extend our deep thanks to the Lord Mayor of the City of London for welcoming AIWF to the Mansion House. We acknowledge with appreciation the valued address of Her Highness Sheikh Lubna Al Qasimi, the Minister of the Economy and Planning in the United Arab Emirates, AIWF Founder Board Member, on this special occasion.

The 5th Anniversary celebration was supported by AIWF Annual Global Partners, Shell, who generously hosted a Business Forum on April 19th. Both the Business Forum and the dinner carried the theme 'Building Bridges, Building Business, Increasing Business Links Between the City of London, the Arab World and the International Community'. We are grateful to the distinguished Guest Speakers who addressed the Business Forum on this theme. (For full details, please see the article on this event).

AIWF acknowledges with appreciation the support of all our Annual Global Partners and it is a pleasure to welcome DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary as a new and valued Global Partner.

AIWF is poised to encourage wider links, foster closer co-operation and remain engaged with all members and partners to push the agenda for business growth and development. Looking ahead, the AIWF programme continues with several activities and collaborations planned with other organisations for the second half of 2006 and into 2007. We look forward to your continued support and participation.

Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani
Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum

CELEBRATING 5 YEARS OF AIWF BUILDING BRIDGES, BUILDING BUSINESS BETWEEN THE CITY OF LONDON, THE ARAB WORLD AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The Arab International Women's Forum 2006 Programme was launched with two important events. The Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman David Brewer CMG invited AIWF to celebrate their 5th anniversary at the Mansion House, in the City of London at a dinner. This special occasion, held 20 April 2006, brought together AIWF multinational and international partners, members and other supporters from government, business, academic, professional and diplomatic circles from 35 countries.

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah was the Guest of Honour. Ms Cherie Booth, QC was a guest at the reception.

In his address, the Lord Mayor highlighted the achievements that women are making in the Arab world and paid tribute to the work of AIWF.

HH Sheikh Lubna Al Qasimi, Minister of the Economy and Planning, United Arab Emirates and AIWF Founder Board Member, gave an animated address which highlighted the theme for the 5th anniversary. The Minister said, "to build bridges between the Arab world and the international community, I think we need a new outlook to cultivate the tremendous untapped opportunities which exist for us. The competitiveness of the Arab world is being tested". To allow links to be fostered, she recommended, "keep an open mind about the region, which is incredibly diverse and has a changing economic landscape: know your industry and how it relates to the Middle East. Recognise the need for fundamental courtesy and respect for tradition."

HH Sheikh Lubna Al Qasimi's success in becoming the first woman to be appointed to this important cabinet post is an achievement of which AIWF members feel very proud.

Dr Gavin Graham, Vice President New Business Development, Middle East, Shell, offered his congratulations. He spoke about the need for sustainable development – of people and skills requiring a particular focus on the promotion of issues championed by the AIWF. He said, "there is growing confidence that we are witnessing a period of rapid – and largely positive – change in the region. To maximise the benefits of this change requires extensive dialogue. AIWF is to be commended for continuing to provide a forum for such dialogue".

Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, AIWF Chairman recorded the achievements of the first five years. She said the AIWF plan was to face the challenges ahead exploring how to turn those challenges into opportunities for the future growth of the region. "The future growth of the region must be built on making better use of all its resources, human and natural with women as an integral force", said Mrs Al Kaylani. "AIWF is well placed to pursue this. Linking the Arab world, the City of London and the international community is part of the strategy for the 2006 programme, regarded as a force for positive change."

The full speeches and photographs from the 5th Anniversary Dinner can be found on the Arab International Women's Forum website www.aiwfonline.com.

Sylvia Perry,
AIWF Finance Director

ARAB WOMEN AS ENTREPRENEURS



Left to right: HH Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, The Lord Mayor, H.M. Queen Rania Al-Abdullah

AIWF 2006 BUSINESS FORUM A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Held on April 19th and hosted by AIWF annual partners Shell, AIWF welcomed more than 70 guests for a business forum "Building Bridges, Building Business: Increasing Business Links Between the City of London, the Arab World and the International Community". The four guest speakers on the panel were Dr Mohammed Smadi, Secretary General and Chief Executive, The Arab British Chamber of Commerce, Dr Assia Bensalah Alaoui, Ambassador at Large of HM, the King of Morocco, Ms Roxanne Decyk, Corporate Affairs Director, Shell and Mr Jeremy Carver, Consultant and Head of International Law, Clifford Chance with concluding remarks by Dr Gavin Graham, Vice President New Business Development, Middle East, Shell.

Their diverse comments on the aspects of global influences, reform, diversity and economic stability brought forward spirited discussion from the audience as our distinguished speakers approached the theme from different angles. It was truly a discussion on global citizenship and its responsibilities in today's society, regardless of the sector, gender or sect that was represented.

AIWF looks forward with great enthusiasm to other activities in the year ahead to enhance the message of building bridges, building business and continuing with a focus on the role of business women in igniting growth and development. The AIWF activities will include developing business initiatives and cooperating with our valued global partners, leading international organisations such as The League of Arab States, the European Commission as well as governments, the corporate sector and public policy institutions. The AIWF strength for networking, connectivity and building partnerships is particularly relevant to the interaction with business and trading communities in the UK that reach out to the Arab and international markets.

Sylvia Perry,
AIWF Finance Director

When a woman wants to start a business in the Middle East, what challenges does she face? This question and others about starting and operating a business are important to prospective women entrepreneurs. The path of entrepreneurship for Middle Eastern women differs in many ways from those of women in other parts of the world. For the last few years, Dr. Asya Al-Lamky, Professor of Management at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, and I have been conducting research in Bahrain and Oman aimed at understanding the unique world of Arab women entrepreneurs.

What have we found thus far? Women are motivated to start a business because they see an opportunity; they have a need for achievement; or they want to help others. This last reason is a particularly strong motivator for Arab women.

In Bahrain and Oman, as in most countries, the preponderance of women-owned businesses are in the service sector, largely due to the traditional separation of occupations by gender. This separation is much more rigid in some Arab cultures.

Unlike the West, Arab women rely almost entirely on their savings or family help for start-up capital. Indeed, most are reluctant to seek capital from public sources. Such a perspective restricts the possibility of growth and expansion. However, most women prefer to keep their businesses small, regardless of their capital resources. Why? Women often try to build cultures which are expressions of themselves. As a result, they are unlikely to grow their companies preferring to evolve their organizations at their own personal pace.

Arab business women in Bahrain and Oman rarely sought help from standard networking associations such as the Chamber of Commerce or the local federations for crafts and trade because these organizations were largely comprised of men who are more comfortable networking among themselves. The lack of networking and professional support can be a distinct disadvantage to Arab women business owners. They require support in the form of education, information, and consulting. To the extent that such resources are made available in the community or by the government, the path to small business ownership is made easier.

While women recounted any number of obstacles, they were all happy they had chosen to start their own businesses. In doing so they found fulfilment, received a sense of accomplishment, and were able to make a difference in their communities.

This summer we are continuing our study in the UAE.

Dr. Kathleen Dechant
University of Connecticut School of Business
AIWF Member



Left to right: Ms Roxanne Decyk, Dr Mohammed Smadi, Mrs Haifa Al Kaylani, Mr Jeremy Carver, Dr Assia Bensalah Alaoui

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON AIWF ACTIVITIES

Since the beginning of 2006, AIWF Board and Members have attended several important conferences and meetings.

In February, I addressed the 7th Jeddah Economic Forum 2006, on *Seeding Potentials for Economic Growth: Honouring Identity and Celebrating Common Grounds* and in March, I participated in a video presentation at the 2nd International Symposium, *Women, Business and Society in the 21st Century* hosted by the IESE Business School in Madrid.

Continuing to build on our programme of 2005 on *Women as Engines of Economic Growth in the Arab World*, in February I was delighted to participate in a round table, in Washington DC, hosted by the World Bank on the *Role of Women in the Development of the Private Sector in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region*. Our collaboration on the same theme continues with the OECD and their initiative in *Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship*.

Of particular importance was the AIWF collaboration with the International Trade Centre in Geneva in co-hosting a two day round table event in Cairo, in March, titled *Bridges Across Borders*. This event brought together 40 business women entrepreneurs from Egypt, Tunisia, Palestine and Jordan to focus on economic empowerment for women,

creative leadership and competent management. It was followed by another meeting on the theme *Gender Equality, Export Performance and Competitiveness*, co-hosted with the Egyptian Business Women Association.

Other events attended by AIWF members during this period included the World Economic Forum Middle East Summit, held in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt in May, the 8th German World Bank Forum held in Hamburg also in May, and The World Summit on Innovation and Entrepreneurship held in Oman in April.

In the UK, AIWF participated at events organised by UNIFEM UK, The London Middle East Institute, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, The Council for Arab British Understanding and The Middle East Association.

As this issue goes to print, AIWF will be represented at the Arab - US Economic Forum to be held in Houston this month, at the conference organised by the European Commission in Rabat entitled *Strengthening the Role of Women in Society*, the Tallberg Forum 2006 to be held in Sweden and the Women's Conference on *Gender, Peace and Security in Africa* to be held in Mali and organised by Femmes Africa Solidarite.

Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani
Chairman

**"BRIDGES ACROSS BORDERS"
INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING MEETING
FOR BUSINESSWOMEN IN THE SERVICE SECTOR**

Globally, more women work in the service sector than in any other sector. Significant export opportunities particularly exist for providers of business and professional services, such as consultancy, accounting, education, health, information technology and others. One of the most effective market entry strategies is to work with a local partner in targeting export markets.

The Geneva-based International Trade Centre (ITC) is an agency of the UN which provides technical cooperation assistance to developing and transitional economies. ITC's Trade in Services Section, in partnership with the AIWF, organized a 2-day event which brought over 20 women entrepreneurs together from several Arab States to explore networking and partnering opportunities and to learn about key export success strategies and best practices. AIWF assisted with the logistics and recruiting, while ITC coordinated the programme and international experts who provided training and counselling sessions on export-readiness, gender and trade constraints. A customized programme of appointments was included in the programme and, as a result, over 71 bilateral consultations took place among participants who attended from Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia and Jordan.

The services provided by the companies included trading/trade facilitation, market research, legal, finance, advertising, communication, printing/publishing, design, translation, education, tourism and health. Exchanges among participants during the bilateral consultations primarily focused on sharing their experiences on marketing, pricing their services, branding, and expanding their business to other countries. For instance, two organizations from Tunisia and Palestine, providing loans to women entrepreneurs and shared techniques used to increase the reimbursement rate. A Jordanian jewellery designer benefitted from the extensive experience of a trading company to assess the value of the design in the price of the final product.

Financial support for travel expenses was provided by the ITC, through the funding of the project by the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID).

Given the common interests and objectives of AIWF and ITC, it is hoped that funding can be identified so that this partnership can continue and this successful programme expanded further in the region.

Doreen Conrad
International Trade Centre, Geneva

DLA PIPER JOINS AIWF AS PARTNER

DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary ("DLA Piper") is a global law firm with offices across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the US. With over 3,100 lawyers across 59 offices and 22 countries, it is the second largest law firm in the world, providing a wide range of services including real estate; corporate, finance, restructuring / bankruptcy and taxation; commercial/project finance; franchise and distribution; litigation; intellectual property; technology, media and communications; human resources/labour; and regulatory and legislative law.

DLA meets the ongoing legal needs of clients wherever they choose to do business. They are culturally attuned to the business demands and legal requirements of particular countries or states. Through their award-winning client relationship management programme, DLA strives to find new and better ways so that clients can benefit. Their geographic reach allows DLA Piper lawyers to serve clients globally and advise international organisations working in multiple jurisdictions.

The firm's commitment to the Middle East region is comprehensive. DLA Piper opened their Dubai office in January 2006, now with 20 lawyers. In March 2006 they entered into an affiliation with leading Saudi lawyer Abdulaziz Al Fahad following the launch of DLA Matouk & Bassiouny in Egypt in 2005. Their Middle East team includes lawyers qualified in a wide range of international jurisdictions and offering services in Arabic, English and French.

DLA Piper also has a dedicated Africa practice, with lawyers who understand the dynamics of working on the continent. DLA Piper has a strong presence in sub-Saharan Africa including DLA Piper Group Firms in South Africa, Zambia and Tanzania as well as close links to leading practitioners in the other important African jurisdictions.

For more information please visit their website: www.dlapiper.com or contact **Helena Samaha**, AIWF Member helena.samaha@dlapiper.com or **David Church** david.church@dlapiper.com

**IMPORTANT DATES
FOR YOUR DIARY 2006**

29th June / 25th September / 18th December

AIWF UK Chapter Get Together
at the Jumeirah Carlton Tower, Cadogan Place, London

Further information on the AIWF Programme for 2006-2007 will be available on our website soon.

*For more information contact AIWF offices
or email info@aiwfonline.com www.aiwfonline.com*

**OECD TO LAUNCH PILOT PROJECT FOR WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS IN THE MENA REGION**

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth in OECD member and non-member economies with women's entrepreneurship representing an untapped "reservoir". The creation of women's micro enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) facilitates economic development and diversification, creates jobs for women entrepreneurs, makes the family unit more financially stable and results in the improvement of both the health and education of children. However, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, deficits in female education, lower participation rates of women in the labour force, and cultural and societal obstacles are significant barriers to women's entrepreneurship.

The OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs & Local Development (CFE) is developing a pilot project for fostering women's entrepreneurship. This new pilot project will tap into the reservoir of women interested in starting or building a new business. This project will be divided into two phases.

Until May 2007, the CFE will carry out a mapping survey on present and future activities related to women's entrepreneurship that will decipher the needs of the individual MENA countries and better coordinate efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship. The responses to this survey will be used to develop a database of the main actors working towards fostering women's enterprise creation and further tailor activities to be carried out in phase two.

Between May 2007 and May 2009, the CFE will implement activities covering the spectrum of business development, from potential to nascent women entrepreneurs, to established and growth-oriented women entrepreneurs. The first module will be *Training the Trainers for Mentoring Potential and Nascent Women Entrepreneurs* and module two, *Building Networks, Business Partnerships and Trade Linkages for Established Women Entrepreneurs*.

The OECD CFE pilot project will concentrate its efforts, first, in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

www.oecd.org or contact SME.Division@oecd.org.

Marie-Florence Estime,
*Deputy Director OECD & Centre for Entrepreneurship,
SMEs and Local Development, Paris*

**AIWF WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE
WITH APPRECIATION THE VALUED SUPPORT
OF AIWF CORPORATE PARTNERS.**



EMPOWERING WOMEN

Alongside my Arab Business Women Consultancy (www.abbw.biz), I am president of a national women's political organisation campaigning to see more women hold public office in national and local governments. The organisation – as in all political parties - promotes policies which empower women socio-economically and politically. These two core objectives are also at the heart of AIWF's successful international work.

On a recent visit to Washington DC, my colleagues and I had State Department briefings on Iraq and Afghanistan and the involvement of women. It is interesting to note that 75% of USAID loans for new business/entrepreneurial training in Afghanistan go to women, for instance. In addition we discussed the importance for women to hold peacekeeping roles and helping to solve the growing problem of human trafficking.

We attended a USAID reception meeting women MPs from Iraq and Afghanistan. Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Karen Hughes, spoke about women who are now raising their profile and contributing to their local and international societies despite economic and political obstacles.

Our meetings with the State Department highlighted the particular role women have to play in their communities both economically and politically. We discussed the relative importance of group rights and basic human rights – collective rights versus individual rights – noting that basic human rights took precedence and that focussing on 'gender' rights is only one part of the social context. Fostering democratic societies and developing strong and vibrant economies for communities will help to achieve peace and prosperity in our homelands and across the world.

For more information contact pamelaparker@btconnect.com

Pamela Parker
AIWF member

WATCHING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRESS

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a relatively recent business development where private companies, NGOs and local authorities integrate social and environmental concerns in their business activities and operations and in their interaction with their respective stakeholders.

CSR is about organizations deciding to go beyond minimum legal requirements and obligations in order to address societal needs. Through CSR, organizations of all sizes help to reconcile economic, social and environmental ambitions related to different issues such as the marketplace, environment, workplace and community.

Corporate social responsibility has become an increasingly important concept both globally and within the EU. It is part of the debate about globalisation, competitiveness and sustainability. A definite shift is taking place in Arab countries as well as CSR takes on a more meaningful role.

Today CSR is shaping the identity of organisations and is increasingly integrated into the business strategy of successful organizations: the field of responsible business practice is one of the most dynamic and challenging subjects corporate leaders are facing today. It is possibly one of the most important ones for shaping the future of our world.

For every entrepreneur the quest for profit and responsible conduct is not only compatible with an enlightened outlook, but is in line with the new social commitment which global society requires. The dual aim of making a profit and respecting stakeholder expectations unite a conscientious community.

Today's world needs a public climate in which entrepreneurs are appreciated not just for making a profit but also for making a fair contribution to addressing certain societal challenges. Corporate social responsibility offers concrete, practical ways for actively building what UN Secretary General Kofi Annan refers to as the "human face of globalisation".

Paola Gennari Santori
CSR Consultant OFFICINA ETICA – AIWF Member
www.officinaetica.org

HAIFA FAHOUM AL KAYLANI HONOURED

Haifa Al Kaylani, AIWF Chairman, was honoured as a Women's eNews "21 Leaders for the 21st Century 2006" at a gala dinner in New York City in May. Mrs. Al Kaylani received the recognition for the creation of AIWF.

Each year, Women's eNews presents awards to 21 individuals who make groundbreaking news, often at great personal risk, by confronting issues of particular concern to women. This prestigious awards ceremony, "21 Leaders for the 21st Century," is now in its sixth year.

Women's eNews, at www.womensenews.org is a prize-winning nonprofit daily Internet-based news service supported by its readers, events, foundations and re-sales of its content. It is fully translated into Arabic at its sister site: www.awomensenews.org. The sites archive all articles and access is free. Women's eNews and Arabic Women's eNews have a combined readership of over 4 million per month.

Launched in 2000, the independent Women's eNews and Arabic Women's eNews are the definitive source of substantive news – unavailable anywhere else – covering issues of particular concern to women and their allies.

"In a year where many believe there has been a profound scarcity of leadership, it is thrilling to find so many women and men who are dedicated to expanding values cherishing the lives of women," says Rita Henley Jensen, editor in chief, Women's eNews.

In previous years, the 21 Leaders honorees included two Nobel Peace Prize winners, Wangari Maathai, Shirin Ebad and Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi. For more information on the 2006 award winners and their accomplishments please visit our website.

Rita Henley Jensen
Editor – Women's eNews

LANDMINE ACTION IN THE WESTERN SAHARA

The disputed territory of the Western Sahara represents a forgotten conflict. Since 1975 and the withdrawal of Spanish colonial forces from the country, its sovereignty has been contested. Fighting between Moroccan forces and the Polisario - the Western Saharan independence movement - ceased in 1991 with a UN-brokered ceasefire. However, subsequent disagreement over the eligibility of voters has prevented a referendum taking place on whether the country be granted independence or integrated into the Kingdom of Morocco. Moreover, prior hostilities have left a destructive legacy of landmines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO) that continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of local communities.

Landmine Action UK is the first international NGO to partner with MINURSO - the UN mission in the Western Sahara - and take practical measures to reduce and remove these threats. In autumn 2006, Landmine Action staff will start training demobilised Polisario engineers and work alongside them to carry out minefield survey and ordnance disposal in the Polisario-controlled zone. A local capacity will be developed in the process committed to tackling the mine and UXO problem longer term and ready to assume independent and overall responsibility for humanitarian mine action in that part of the Western Sahara.

For further information, donations and requests for presentations, please contact Charlotte McAulay, Landmine Action Western Sahara Desk Officer at cmcaulay@landmineaction.org

Charlotte McAulay
AIWF Member

HOW TO JOIN AIWF

AIWF welcomes members in three categories:
Individual, association and corporate.

To receive a membership form, kindly contact:

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