



# AIWF NEWS

## Arab International Women's Forum

المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

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### CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

As AIWF moves ahead with its AIWF 2008 Programme, we are widening our debate to include the growing role of Arab women in public and political life. Hence our initial conference of the year, in June 2008, will be *Partners for Change: Realizing the Potential of Arab Women in the Private and Public Sectors*.

The AIWF conference, the first to be held in the USA, in Washington DC, from 22 – 24 June 2008 will be hosted by the World Bank. It will feature plenary sessions that will stimulate essential dialogue between Arab and international policymakers and entrepreneurs to remove roadblocks to women's gainful participation in Arab politics, Arab economies, and Arab societies. Arab women leaders from the region will meet up with their Arab-American and international counterparts to exchange experiences and promote initiatives. Towards the end of the year, a linked conference will be held in Abu Dhabi.

Ahead of the conference, there has been much activity in promoting the AIWF theme, that the participation of Arab women in both the private sector and in public life is essential to empower them to become agents for positive, sustainable growth in Arab economies. For true and sustained empowerment, governments and society must eliminate discrimination at grassroots-level, pledging full support and funding to initiatives that promote the importance of public-private partnerships, exchange programmes, and initiatives that teach women how to advocate, manage, vote and govern.

In my participation as a Guest Speaker invited to address the Opening Session of *Women as Global Leaders 2008: Learning Leadership*, a major initiative by Zayed University, the United Arab Emirates, I was able to emphasise the importance of women emerging as strong leaders in all sectors in the region for the benefit and success of their societies.

On a recent visit to Athens, Greece, where AIWF was invited to be a partnering organisation at the Economist Government Roundtable Conference, I was delighted to speak on the value of private-public partnerships. A future notable example is the new Union of the Mediterranean Partnership, the relaunched, rejuvenated agreement formerly known as the Barcelona Process, expected to have significant funding from the global private sector in addition to support of the European Union, the European Investment Bank and the World Bank. Its success will depend on Arab governments implementing regulatory frameworks and large-scale, trade related policy reform, conducive to integration into global markets.

In Tunisia, where the constituency was the Tunisian Mothers Association and their global guests, my speech pointed out

### PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

*Realizing the potential of Arab women  
in the private and public sectors*

شريك في التقدم

تفعيل قدرات المرأة العربية في القطاع العام و الخاص

**AIWF Conference**

**22 - 24 June 2008**

**Hosted by the World Bank  
in Washington DC, USA**

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that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab world, by the target date of 2015, would depend on strategic efforts to improve education, health, job creation, environmental sustainability and gender equality. This is why the drive to educate, employ and ultimately empower women in the Arab world, now well underway, is not just as a matter of political correctness but also an economic imperative.

I greatly appreciate the representation of other AIWF Members at regional and international events, enhancing the AIWF links with organisations with which we have a shared vision.

In harnessing the power of partnership AIWF has succeeded in contributing to the gender equality debate in the Arab world whilst facilitating collaboration between civil society, governments, and leaders in global business. Great strategic importance is placed on the development of our international networks at all levels and all sectors, particularly the longstanding alliance with the World Bank and the key alliances with our global partners. AIWF acknowledges with great appreciation the continuing support of all our Annual Partners, gladly welcoming Abraaj Capital as a new and valued Global Platinum Partner.

AIWF relationship with responsible media is being strengthened all the time with key partnerships facilitating the message we have to promote, attracting attention to the advocacy, values and responsibilities that we share with our international partners.

The AIWF Washington conference brings all these important concepts under the spotlight, explores the opportunities and challenges for women to share and excel in political, entrepreneurial and educational success. I look forward to welcoming you there.

*Haiifa Fahoum Al Kaylani  
Chairman AIWF*

## **PARTNERS FOR CHANGE**

### **AIWF MAJOR CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE WORLD BANK**

AIWF will hold a major international conference at The World Bank in Washington, DC on 22 – 24 June 2008.

Entitled *Partners for Change: Realizing the Potential of Arab Women in the Private and Public Sectors*, this important event represents the continuing commitment of the Arab International Women's Forum to the promotion of cross cultural diversity and of increasing connectivity and information exchange between Arab and international business communities.

This two-day initiative, the first held by AIWF in the United States, will bring together AIWF partners and members, government representatives, business leaders, academics and professionals. Opening with a welcome address from the President, the World Bank, Mr Robert Zoellick, it will focus on the development of private enterprise and the importance of education, overcoming socio-economic challenges and barriers, and correcting negative stereotypes of Arab women in the global media.

Eminent regional and international speakers invited to address the conference include: **HH Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi**, Minister of Foreign Trade, UAE; **HE Mrs Suhair Al Ali**, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan; **HE Dr Maryam Al Roomi**, Minister of Social Affairs, UAE; **Baroness Vadera**, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Competitiveness, Deregulation and British Business Council, UK; **HE Dr Sharifa Khalfan Al Yahyai**, Minister of Social Development, Oman; **HE Dr Nada Haffadh**, Former Minister of Health, Bahrain; **HE Hala Bsesio Latouf**, Minister of Social Development, Jordan; **HE Dr Fatima Al Balooshi**, Minister of Social Affairs, Bahrain; **HE Dr**

**Nada Haffadh**, Former Minister of Health, Bahrain; **Dr Fakhria Diari**, Former Member of the Shura Council, Bahrain; **Ms Maha El Ghunaim**, Vice Chairman & Managing Director, Global Investment House, Kuwait; **Ms Pernille Spiers-Lopez**, President IKEA, North America; **Ms Marilyn Carlson Nelson**, Chair of the Carlson Companies, USA; **Dr Afnan Al Shuaiby**, CEO, Arab British Chamber of Commerce, UK; **Ms Holly Taylor Sargent**, Founder and Director Women's Leadership Board John F. Kennedy School of Government USA; **Ms Hanifa Mezoui**, Chief Non Governmental Organisation Section, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations; **Mrs Nadereh Chamlou**, Senior Advisor, MENA Region; **Mr David Arkless**, Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Manpower Inc; **Ms Roula Khalaf**, Financial Times Middle East Editor, UK; **Ms Hdeel Abdelhady**, Senior Associate, DLA Piper, UAE; **Dr Edward Montgomery**, Dean of the College of Behavioral & Social Science, University of Maryland, USA; **Mrs Patricia Harrison**, CEO, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, USA and **Mrs Elham Hassan**, Senior Country Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Bahrain.

The guest speaker will identify the key issues of contributions that women in business make to global economic growth and their increasing engagement in political and public life. The conference also presents an unparalleled forum in which a first-hand understanding of the challenges, successes and opportunities of Arab women in business can be defined, opening doors for essential dialogue on the roles they may take in building a global infrastructure and making the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals a reality.

## **TUNISIAN MOTHERS' ASSOCIATION**

### **HOSTS OUTSTANDING FORUM ON**

### **IDENTITY, MODERNITY AND SOLIDARITY**



*The Tunisian Mothers Association ATM - Mrs Saida Agrebi MP  
President ATM, with conference guests Mrs Haifa Al Kaylani,  
Dr Deisi Kusztra and Mrs Amany Asfour*

Under the Patronage of His Excellency President Zine El Abadine Ben Ali, The Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM) convened for its 3rd General Convention (21 - 23 April) in Tunisia under the theme: *Tunisian Mother: Identity, Modernity, and Solidarity*.

International guests from 50 different countries attended the official opening, which was addressed by AIWF Chairman Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, together with AIWF Board Members Benita Diop, Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarity (FAS), Geneva and Dr Deisi Weber Kusztra, President of World Family Organisation (WFO), Paris.

In her address, Mrs Al Kaylani paid tribute to Tunisia as a country that is widely recognised in the international community as one of the most progressive and accomplished of Arab States for its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women. She also commended the Tunisian Mothers' Association for their many programmes and research initiatives, which have vastly improved

conditions and enhanced opportunities for Tunisian mothers and children in need across the world.

In addressing the issue of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab world, Mrs Al Kaylani stated: "We firmly believe that if the Arab world is to fulfil its commitment to the MDGs, governments must further focus their efforts towards promoting gender equality and empowering women with the firm understanding that these issues are principal elements of the sustainable development process."

The conference was an opportunity to build bridges and learn from one another's best practices towards an effective civil society, a peaceful world and sustainable development. Mrs Saida Agrebi, Chairperson of ATM, said: "It is now, more than ever, that we need to link in partnership and cohesion, thinking global and acting local. If we join efforts, we will enable mothers of the world to raise their children without the threats of terror and wars, and allow for the well being of future generations."

The Tunisian Mothers' Association is determined, through its work and with its partners and networks, to contribute towards a world of tolerance, peace and solidarity.

*Mrs Saida Agrebi MP  
The Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM)  
and AIWF Board Member*

## **JORDANIAN ENTREPRENEUR WINS**

### **UNCTAD BUSINESS AWARD**

Sana Zaal Burgan, founder of a business that caters to international "medical tourism" clients seeking treatment in Jordan, won the inaugural UNCTAD Women in Business Award at a ceremony Monday at the UNCTAD XII quadrennial conference in Accra, Ghana. Ms. Burgan's firm, called Med Grant, was begun with US\$3,000 and is now worth an estimated \$450,000. A panel of experts in entrepreneurship, which included Haifa Al Kaylani, selected Sana from the ten women entrepreneurs who were in the final. They had all participated in Empretec, an UNCTAD-run programme that trains promising entrepreneurs in developing countries.

## ZAYED UNIVERSITY'S WOMEN AS GLOBAL LEADERS 2008 CONFERENCE A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Zayed University, the premier women's institution of higher learning in the United Arab Emirates, hosted a unique international event in March, designed to empower and educate a future generation of women leaders. Over 1,000 delegates from more than 60 countries and 200 institutions gathered in Dubai for this inspirational student leadership conference, which was held under the Patronage of HH Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, President of the Family Development Foundation, the General Women's Union and the Arab Women's Organization. The theme of this year's conference was *Learning Leadership*.

Opening the three day initiative, HH Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and President of Zayed University, encouraged the delegates to seek opportunities for change and to mobilize their resources to bring about change. He stated, "Leaders are self-motivating and are committed to a cause that is larger than themselves."

The conference was also addressed by Her Highness Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Women's Establishment and President of the Dubai Ladies Club; Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimy, UAE Minister of State.

Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, AIWF Chairman was invited to address the Opening Session of the conference. Other guest speakers were Jane Fonda, Sarah Ferguson and Dr. Hubertus Hoffman, Founder and President of the World Security Network Foundation; Carol Bellamy, former Executive Director of UNICEF and former Director of the US Peace Corps; Anousheh Ansari, co-founder and chairman of Prodea Systems and the world's first female space tourist.

This conference is the third to be held by Zayed University, designed to empower and educate a future generation of women leaders.

## EXETER UNIVERSITY WELCOMES AIWF

AIWF Board Member, Sylvia Perry was welcomed to the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Exeter University when she represented Haifa Al Kaylani AIWF Chairman in delivering her address on *Powering the Future: The Role of Arab Women in Development and Peace*.

This occasion was one of the evenings in an interesting programme organised by the non-profit student society whose objective is to provide an insight into Arab culture within the University framework. Attending on the evening, when Sylvia introduced AIWF and its programme of advocacy, education and capacity building, was a large gathering of students, lecturers and external guests.

Many in the audience were captivated by the statistics and examples given of the participation and success of Arab women in society, business and public life. The speech also revealed the AIWF outlook on how globalisation has impacted on business, politics and the social spheres in the Arab world and went on to stress the importance of the growth of education which, in Arab countries, has a GNP percentage spend of over five per cent.

Turning then to the role of women in peace, the emphasis was on giving them active roles in peace building. Women, often the targets and victims of war and civil unrest, bring to the peace table distinctive experiences and perspectives. As negotiators, they are often good listeners, more concerned about finding a resolution than proving a point.

The visit established a new link, with AIWF offering to provide the students with communication with its activities and its networking opportunities. Within a month that had been put into good effect, with AIWF connecting an Exeter student, who was to go on a work study tour in Syria, to AIWF individual contacts and the Damascus Chamber of Commerce Women's Business Committee.



*Dr Laza Kekit, HE Mrs Suhair Al Ali, Mr Dimitrios Pazaitis, Mr Alexandros Lykourazos and Mrs Haifa Al Kaylani at the 12th Economist Roundtable with the government of Greece*

## AIWF PARTNERS AND PARTICIPATES IN THE 12TH ANNUAL ECONOMIST CONFERENCES GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE IN GREECE

In April, AIWF was invited to be a Partnering Organisation for the 12th Annual Economist Conferences Government Roundtable, entitled *Driving the Global Agenda through 2020: Brainstorming with World Leaders for Political & Economic Prosperity*. This high-level, two-day event was hosted in Athens, Greece.

The Prime Minister of Greece, Dr. Kostas Karamanlis, joined distinguished world class leaders as they addressed the geopolitical, economic, business and environmental dilemmas that the globe is facing, with the US presidential election at the forefront of the debate on world affairs for 2009. The global energy landscape also took precedence, as did the growth-oriented economies of the Arab world.

The conference was attended by HE Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Greece; Ivailo Kalfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Romania; Vuk Jeremić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Romania; and the Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik.

Mrs. Haifa Al Kaylani, Chairman AIWF, presented a key address on *Strengthening Business Ties Between the Middle East and SE Europe: The Investment Outlook*. She provided a comprehensive overview of the current Arab business climate, highlighting private sector growth, education, governance, investment, and the political and economic empowerment of Arab women.

Mrs. Al Kaylani also examined key opportunities for enhanced trade and investment between the Middle East and Southeast European regions, and reiterated AIWF's strong support for this summer's forthcoming re-launch of the Barcelona Process as the Union for the Mediterranean.

AIWF played a key role in the planning and development of this programme session. Mrs. Al Kaylani was joined on the panel by distinguished guests Mrs. Suhair Al Ali, Jordan's Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, and Mr. Naguib Sawaris, CEO of Orascom Telecom (by video link).

## EMPOWERING PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE MARITIME WORLD

The World Maritime University in Malmo, Sweden (WMU) held a three-day conference in early April on 'Empowering Professional Women in the Maritime World'. AIWF member, Sally Azarmi, a shipping and international trade lawyer represented the Chairman of AIWF, Mrs Haifa Al Kaylani, and presented a speech entitled 'Opportunities for Arab Women in Business and in Maritime'.

The aim of the conference was to encourage the employment of women in the maritime industry, which is traditionally heavily dominated by men throughout the world and is an industry, which is in great need of good new recruits.

The conference was attended by women, and a few brave men, from 30 different countries across the globe, including women who have against all odds, carved out successful careers in maritime

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in the Middle East, being in many respects pioneers. There were women in port management, naval architects, engineers, coast guard officers, maritime administration and many more. Other representatives were from, amongst others, the UN, the IMO and the World Bank.

Throughout there was an emphasis on empowering women to promote new thinking within the industry, encouraging not just the employment of women in secondary roles but also true equality of opportunity for women.

The AIWF speech was warmly received. A great deal of interest was shown by many participants who were surprised and encouraged by the statistics demonstrating the increasing number of Arab women taking part in business and commerce, a great contrast to the stereotypical portrayal of Arab women that many said they were used to seeing.

A parallel can be drawn between women in the Middle East and those across the world in the maritime industry. There are many hurdles to overcome but there are many women who through their skills and sheer determination are facing up to the hurdles. They are proving daily that not only can they do the job but that often they excel at it, particularly if they are given the slightest support and encouragement from the organisations in which they work.

#### **POWERING CHANGE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP: AIWF REPRESENTED AT WIEF BUSINESS WOMEN FORUM IN KUWAIT**

AIWF Board Member Mrs Khaleda Al Qatami represented the Arab International Women's Forum at the WIEF Businesswomen Forum, hosted by the Government of Kuwait and organized by the World Islamic Businesswomen Network (a project of the World Islamic Economic Forum).

Entitled "Capacity Building & Synergistic Linkage - The Way to Success", the conference explored female entrepreneurship, market creation and innovation, examining the characteristics of effective business partnerships and highlighting the importance of networking in regional and international contexts.

The Arab International Women's Forum shares with WIEF the same objective of promoting synergy and solidarity in the current economic climate of rapid growth, globalisation, and widespread economic reform; and of building bridges across cultures and across nations to create an environment that will enable development, peace and prosperity in all our societies.

#### **SYPRO LAUNCHED IN LONDON**

It is with great pleasure and pride that I announce the launch of The Syrian Professional Women's Society (UK), SyPro. This will serve the growing community of professional Syrian women living and working in the UK by bringing them together and promoting their interests and roles within British society and in the work environment. It also aims to create strong networking opportunities with other like-minded organisations and individuals in the UK and worldwide.

The Society was launched at a lunch party on 16th March 2008 at the Royal Garden Hotel in Kensington, London, also celebrating International Women's Day and Mother's Day. Over 70 professional Syrian women attended the party, and Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum, was one of the guests of honour.

Mrs. Al Kaylani expressed her full support of SyPro's objectives and promised good future working relationships between AIWF and SyPro to achieve their mutual goals.

SyPro's interim Board currently consists of 13 members responsible for the establishment and running of the affairs of the Society, some of whom are also members of AIWF. SyPro is planning many social, cultural, educational and mentorship activities for members, friends and guests that will fulfil the aims and objectives highlighted at the launch and published on its website ([www.sypro.org.uk](http://www.sypro.org.uk)). SyPro extends a warm invitation to AIWF members to these events, and looks forward to collaborating closely with AIWF in the near future.

*Dr. Rim El-Rifai  
Consultant Pediatrician and Neonatologist  
and AIWF Member*

## **AIWF IN THE MEDIA AND PUBLICATIONS**

### **SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND**

In February AIWF was invited to contribute an article to the Search for Common Ground news service. The article, entitled *Women are Agents of Change*, appeared in both English and Arabic and was reprinted in publications and on websites across the Middle East, Indonesia, Pakistan, and France.

The Common Ground News Service, headquartered in Washington and Brussels, seeks to promote mutual understanding and offer hope, opportunities for dialogue and constructive suggestions that facilitate peaceful resolution of conflict. It publishes and promotes articles by local and international experts on current Middle East issues and the relationship between the International and Arab communities. Today, it has 20,000 subscribers, an active network of media outlets, policy makers, scholars, think tanks and interested readers worldwide.

### **EUROMED RWEL PUBLICATION**

In April, AIWF contributed a piece for a Euro-Med RWEL Programme publication, *The Role of Women in Economic Life*. The piece, entitled *Experience in Enhancing the Role of Women in the Economy: Achievements and Strategies*, documents AIWF's long history of cooperation with the European Union and the success of our 2005 Programme, *Women as Engines of Economic Growth in the Arab World*. The Programme was launched to mark the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and featured two linked conferences held at the European Parliament in Brussels and the League of Arab States in Cairo.

RWEL's commitment to building a common understanding of the economic empowerment of women is equally at the heart of the mission and vision of the Arab International Women's Forum. Launched in 2005, the Euromed RWEL Programme aims to promote women's role in the economy and strengthen cooperation between the EC and Euro-Med Partner countries, which include Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

### **THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA IN FOCUS**

AIWF is participating with an article in an upcoming publication, *The Middle East & North Africa in Focus*, a World Bank publication that outlines the role of The World Bank as a catalyst for growth. The publication has a particular emphasis on the integration of the MENA region within global investment streams, and is designed to connect policy and decision makers, public and private sectors, and civil society.

#### **Other Media Coverage:**

- Pan-Arab media – *Gulf News*, *Zawya.com* and *Asharq Al Awsat*, among others – reported extensively on the Dubai December 2007 Conference *Powering the Future: Arab Business Women in a Modern Economy* and on the special reception hosted at 10 Downing Street by Mrs. Sarah Brown, wife of British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.
- AIWF was featured in a prominent article that appeared in *Hia* magazine (January 2008 issue) and was also profiled in the April 2008 edition of *Saudi Business Focus*.

#### **HOW TO JOIN AIWF**

For further information on AIWF kindly contact:

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#### **DATE OF NEXT ISSUE:**

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