

Arab International Women's Forum Dinner  
Mansion House  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2007  
The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor  
Alderman John Stuttard

Chairman, Your Excellencies, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Delighted to have the AIWF here to Mansion House for dinner again this year.

Welcome Chairman and welcome guest speakers who will be speaking after we have eaten:

1. HH Sheikha Hanadi bint Nasser bin Khaled Al Thani –  
Vice Chairperson & Managing Director Amwal
2. Mr Hamid Jafar – Chairman Crescent Petroleum &  
Chairman Dana Gas
3. Mr Willem Brocker – Partner PwC

I have followed the work of AIWF with interest over several years. It was set up in 2001 as a non-profit organisation to link Arab business and professional women in 22 Arab countries with each other and with their counterparts in the international community.

Through AIWF, members have the opportunity to widen key contacts and friendships, foster cooperation, enhance their business skills and keep up-to-date with current issues.

The organisation has been in the mainstream of creating an environment for growth, accessibility and collaboration in the 22 Arab nations. This has led to investment, prosperity and employment opportunities.

AIWF plays an important role in enhancing and supporting the role of women in business and public life.

Such work is very important as women's contribution to the world economy is growing and female participation in the workforce is increasingly a driver of economic growth, across the world.

Additionally, it is clear that good role models help change attitudes and that societies do change over time. Perhaps one day more countries will be like Finland (a country where I have lived and worked) which has more female than male MPs.

Equally, AIWF's work is important in enhancing relationships between East and West and between Islam and other faiths.

As Lord Mayor a large part of my role is as the Ambassador for Financial Services. Like all Lord Mayors I will undertake some 90 days of travel to 22 countries, representing UK -based financial services and accompanied by strong business delegations. The Arab nations are an integral part of the Mayoral Visits programme and I and my predecessors as Lord Mayor are delighted at the very warm relations that exist between the City and the Arab nations.

I have just returned from the Gulf, visiting Qatar, Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

- Large business delegation
- Saw the key Ministers in all three places, including the Amir of Qatar with whom we had lunch
- Based on oil and, particularly gas reserves, Qatar is the richest country in the world per capita. Qatar is of crucial importance, and a strategic partner, to the UK, as it will supply 20% of the UK's gas needs in future
- Abu Dhabi also has large oil reserves and is an extremely wealthy country
- The City of Dubai has grown and continues to grow at an extraordinary pace
- All three places are seeking to diversify and develop other industries in addition to oil and gas
- All three wish to develop a financial services centre
- As a result, there are huge opportunities in all three places in the financial sector in the field of banking, securities, insurance and re-insurance, maritime services, as well as the construction industry
- Close cooperation in the field of regulation
- Considerable opportunities in the field of business education and the development of professional skills. Witnessed the signing of three MOUs with Cass Business School and the SII. More to come
- Conference on Qatar in London in mid March

I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet two really impressive female ministers in very senior government roles in Qatar and Abu Dhabi:

HH Sheikha Mozah, wife of the Amir of Qatar

HH Sheikha Lubna, Minister of Finance and Economics, Abu Dhabi

I discussed "City of London – City of Learning" with both of them. I am promoting UK business and professional education – the gold standard.

Education – my theme for the year. A theme for all of us.

By working together in education, working together across our societies, we can help each other to develop.

Chairman, this event is a wonderful opportunity to bring together a diverse group of people to push forward the agenda for business growth and development in the Arab world. May I thank all in AIWF for their hard work in organising this evening – it is an undoubted success and will prove highly productive. Thank you.