

**Special Message
from His Excellency Mr Amre Moussa
Secretary General of the League of Arab States**

on the occasion of the

**Launch of the AIWF 2005 Programme
Report & Recommendations**

**29th September 2005
at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London**

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First allow me to apologize and at the same time express my deepest regret for not being able to attend this conference in person. It's always a pleasure and an honour to participate in such significant and momentous events, which in fact, have contributed to and continue to contribute to the progress of human social systems worldwide.

This conference marks a significant milestone in the progress made by the Arab International Women's Forum since its foundation in 2001. The progress of its work in both east and west has confirmed the vital role that non-governmental organizations play in the human developmental process.

I must express my deep appreciation for the distinguished efforts made by Mrs. Haifa Al Kaylani and her colleagues. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for its remarkable support in hosting this conference and seeing to its success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The deep-rooted conviction that has crystallized around the vitality of women's roles in facing the challenges of development, made governments acknowledge the importance of eliminating any obstacles that limit the participation of women in any developmental process.

This conviction made the Arab League pay full attention to Arab women's affairs since 1971 through the establishment of:

- The Arab Women's Committee, followed by the establishment of
- The Women's Affairs Unit

to act as a coordinating body between authorities concerned with women's issues in Arab countries. It is also important to mention that working hand in hand with organizations such as the UNDP and the AIWF has enabled us to put in practice strategies and programs that aim to encourage the continuing advancement of women's status in our societies.

The conviction in connection with the need to make advances on the empowerment of women was also endorsed by the Arab leaders in their last summit held in Algeria in March 2005 through confirming:

1. the importance of encouraging women's empowerment and encouraging their playing a prominent and full role in all fields of public life through the launching of realistic initiatives to achieve total equality between genders.
2. the importance of reinforcing the awareness of Arab Islamic values that guarantee women's rights.

3. the importance of enacting necessary legislation for women's protection and for eliminating any forms of discrimination against women.
4. And finally, the importance of guaranteeing women's participation in the decision-making process on an equal footing with men in all the social, economic and political activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure to say that from the very outset the Arab League has been one of the first to realise that the empowerment of women in Arab public life is one of the pivots of progress for the whole region, and to this end has made no little effort to ensure that it becomes one of the forerunners of governmental organisations in supporting the empowerment of women in public life.

It gives me pleasure to say that over the past few years there have been significant and weighty changes throughout the Arab world in connection with women's rights, and that these changes have been manifest in alterations to the law to enable women to have more of a say in public life, and to have more freedom of independent movement and decision-making at all levels of social intercourse and transaction. Empowerment in the fields of civil and political rights for Arab women has been on the increase of late, and this has reflected itself, not least, within the revised structure of the Arab League itself. Today women direct some of the key departments in the Arab League, including the department for Social Affairs, and women are now enabled to head missions abroad, with at least one Asiatic mission headed today, by a woman.

It gives me pleasure to say that the Arab League hosted the first Arab Women's Conference in Cairo in 2002 - a real testimony to the will of the Arab people to enable the empowerment of women politically, economically, socially, and across the whole spectrum of life.

I have no doubt that the empowerment of women in the Arab world will continue to reflect in the most positive way possible on Euro-Mediterranean relations and on the development of the democratic process in southern Mediterranean countries, which in its turn will enable the wheels of economic progress in the region to roll on ever more smoothly.

The recognition which has become clearly manifest in the Arab world, that the region can better keep pace with global developments by empowering that half of its population which has previously not been as fully empowered in terms of civil and political rights, is a factor which will obviously lead to a fuller participation of all sectors of society in the wheel of progress and sustainable development, and is in my view the greatest guarantee that Arab relations with the rest of the world, particularly with our neighbours on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, will continue to thrive and prosper.

Thank you.