

Speech by Dr Lama Al-Sulaiman
Board of Directors, Jeddah Chamber of Commerce

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

It gives me such pleasure to be here with you today, and I would like to first take the opportunity to thank the Arab International Women's Forum, and Ms Haifa Al Kaylani in particular for facilitating such a valuable meeting and exchange.

We live in a time that is fraught with misunderstanding, miscommunication, and misrepresentation. In such extraordinary circumstances, it is all too easy for the negative outcomes of the increasingly globalised world in which we live, to overshadow and diminish the tremendous potential that exists around us. It is for this reason that organisations such as your own are crucial. Not only do you seek to address issues surrounding the image of the Arab woman, who has so long suffered under the weight of restrictions placed upon her at home, and of stereotypes utilised against her in the outside world, but also to actively promote new ways of working together, across cultures and geographical differences.

Your work is rooted in a belief that change is possible, and that prosperity and well-being for all can be brought about by reaching out, exchanging experience and knowledge, and together building a vision for the future.

Every day, I am personally witnessing some truly positive developments that are taking place in the Arab world. I am pleased to say, that Arab women are playing a pivotal role in this process. Indeed if changes are going to be long lasting and truly successful, then it is essential that Arab women play such a role.

And yet it is impossible to underestimate the vast challenges and problems that we face, at the global, local, and even personal levels. In such complex times, when all the issues are intertwined, it is all the more important that we really reach out to one another to mobilize those resources that we do have, to have a real and lasting impact on the world around us.

Today, I would like to talk briefly to you about the theme of Economic Global Integration. Global Integrations is a term that is frequently utilised,

but the actual practical and necessary steps that must be taken for it to be achieved are often harder to imagine.

In all of our countries, necessary steps include first undertaking certain reform measures. In my own country of Saudi Arabia, this reform process is underway, and I truly believe that future looks bright.

One of the pillars of global economic integration is a respect for diversity and difference. This is very relevant to our own region, and it can insure the participation of all.

Realising the dream of an integrated global economy, will depend largely on a global system in which multiple voices are heard. Otherwise, for those alienated or overlooked, the global dream threatens to become more of a nightmare. The process of global integration and reform must therefore be inclusive, representative and respectful of difference.

In Saudi Arabia we are seeing a growing recognition....

To me, Global INTEGRATION means that the opportunities presented by the Global era must be INTEGRATED into the lives of all our sons and daughters. Equal opportunities in education, the economy, public life and society in general must be given. Not just in Saudi Arabia, but across and between all the members of the Global community.

Now this would be truly GLOBAL. And the future looks bright.

Thank you