

## ***Chairman's Report –January 2005***

I wish at the outset to extend to you all the very best for a happy, successful and peaceful New Year.

The second half of 2004 was a very busy period for AIWF with continuous engagements, as our work goes expands into new and exciting areas in London, Europe, the Arab world and internationally.

In London, we moved into our new offices on Albermarle Street in August. We are most grateful to the Beidas family for their support in this move. Many of our members and partners have visited us since then and we look forward to welcoming many more of our members in the months ahead. The AIWF UK Chapter Get Together in September was combined with the inauguration of the new offices and was a great success. The final Get Together of 2004 in December at the Carlton Tower was a wonderful opportunity to, again, catch up with AIWF members and friends. I am delighted that AIWF membership is constantly growing and we want to welcome our new members from all around the world.

In October, I participated in the Malaysia-UK Business Forum which was addressed by HE the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Later that month it was a special occasion to attend the excellent conference hosted by the Commission for Africa and the Commonwealth Business Council and held at the Treasury on the subject of African Business Development. Also in October, participating at the Global Opportunities Fund seminar on “Engaging with the Islamic World: Women’s role in Decision Making” at the Foreign Office provided the opportunity to learn more about this valued initiative by the FCO.

I was delighted to accompany AIWF Board Member Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi in October to an awards ceremony in recognition of her achievements at the House of Lords where she was presented with an award by Lord Ahmed of Rotherham.

Shortly after this, AIWF was very pleased to be able to share the news of **Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi's** recent appointment as the United Arab Emirates Minister of Economy and Planning. She is the first female cabinet minister ever to have been appointed in the UAE. We wish Lubna every success with her new and important appointment.

In December, AIWF Board Members participated in the All Partners Meeting of the Women’s National Commission in London which was another successful day. Also in December, I was very pleased to attend the “US Ambassadors to the Baltics Trade and Investment Mission” conference hosted by US State Department in London, bringing together the leaders of the three Baltic States: Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. Truly an inspiring event which was most informative about the growth and development of this important region.

AIWF has also been very active in Europe. In September, I addressed the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture’s seminar on “Co-existence in the Euro-Mediterranean Sphere 2004” hosted by the Spanish government in Madrid on the theme of *Migrations, Micro-Finance and Education and the role of the Euro-Arab Woman*.

In October, it was indeed a valuable occasion to participate and address the Women's International Networking conference in Geneva on the subject of "*Women Leading Global Change*". The conference brought together 450 professional and business women from Europe and America and was a excellent opportunity to raise the profile of AIWF.

In November, with several AIWF Board Members and Members, I was delighted to participate in the International Conference on *Women Defending Peace* in Geneva. This was chaired by **HE Mrs Suzanne Mubarak**, and co-hosted with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

Also in November, I visited Boston, USA to attend the board meetings of the Women's Leadership Board at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. I am delighted to join this exceptional group of women leaders, all committed to positive change on a global scale and look forward to working with them in the future on all matters of mutual concern.

In the Arab world, our members represented AIWF and addressed meetings in Jordan, Morocco, the UAE and Egypt hosted by WHO, the Arab Labour Organisation and the Middle East Centre for Culture and Development.

AIWF remains appreciative of the support of its partners. We welcome as new partners IBM, HSBC and General Motors and we reiterate our thanks and appreciation to our annual partners Shell, P&G and PepsiCo. We remain most grateful for the valued support lent to AIWF by the F. Beidas family and Jumeirah International.

AIWF has received a great deal of media coverage in recent months in Arab and international media. The Financial Times featured an article on AIWF Board Member Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi on her recent appointment as Minister of Economy and Planning. There were also pieces on AIWF in several Arab newspapers. Shell included a special article in their company magazine, highlighting the 2004 Annual AIWF conference in Cairo and their continued support for AIWF and its work.

AIWF is honoured, following its collaboration with the League of Arab States in Cairo in June 2004, that the AIWF logo remains on a section of the website of the League. We are looking forward to continued collaboration with the League of Arab States in 2005.

My last trip before the holidays was to Brussels for meetings at the European Commission and the European Parliament to plan AIWF's valuable agenda for 2005 with the theme ***Women as Engines of Economic Growth***. The main thrust of the AIWF Programme over the coming year is to promote women's role as agents of economic growth in the Arab region. This will be AIWF's significant contribution to economic and social development of the region with conferences planned in Brussels at the European Parliament and in Cairo at the League of Arab States in the first half of 2005.

We look forward to having your continued support and to welcoming you all to AIWF events in the New Year.

**Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani**