



ARAB INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S FORUM
المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

June 2002

Chairman's Report

It gives me great pleasure as Chairman of AIWF to highlight three main AIWF events held in the past six months of this year and to look ahead to AIWF future activities.

On January 30th at a special reception entitled *Building Bridges Creating Partnerships* held in London at the Carlton Tower, the Arab International Women's Forum was officially launched. Board of Trustees and members ~ many of whom flew specially for the occasion ~ welcomed guests from the diplomatic, government, business and leading women's organisations from the international community in the UK. Baroness Christine Crawley, Chairman of the Women's National Commission and Dr. Farkhonda Hassan, Secretary General of the National Council for Women in Egypt, were our honoured guest speakers.

The reception was quickly followed by AIWF's first conference, *Women in the New Economic World Order: The Increasing Role of Arab Women in Business and Society*, which took place 9-10 April. The conference was truly a very special event and considered a success by all. We thank our fellow Board member Debra Davis, conference co-ordinator for her excellent efforts. We are also grateful to HSBC, Christies and Jumeirah International for their valued sponsorship of the Conference.

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, our guest of Honour, was unfortunately unable to join us on the occasion due to the sad and worrying situation in the Middle East at the time, but AIWF is grateful to HM Queen Rania for her valued support and for her valuable message to the conference. At the conference, AIWF Board and members, all joined in expressing concern at the situation in the Middle East and voiced sincere prayers for a comprehensive, just and durable peace for the region.

Following the conference a special general meeting for AIWF members and friends was held to discuss the future plans of the Forum. The constructive discussion was stimulating, illuminating and full of brilliant ideas which will greatly benefit members.

As Chairman of AIWF, it was a great honour and privilege for me to host a luncheon in honour of HE Mrs Suzanne Mubarrak, First Lady of the Arab Republic of Egypt in London on May 16th. At the same time, AIWF was delighted to welcome on this occasion HE Mrs Nazik Hariri, wife of the Prime Minister of Lebanon. Press coverage in the Arab and international media following these main events was superb!

In the same period, and as Chairman of AIWF I was invited to attend a number of important UK events starting with the *Women Into Business Conference* and Awards which took place in London in February, followed by a special UNIFEM UK meeting on March 8th at the House of Lords celebrating International Women's Day. Also in March I attended the annual Luncheon of FIWAL, The Federation of International Women's Associations in London at the Dorchester. I was also invited to attend in March an excellent seminar hosted by the Home Office on Black and Asian women in public life. In April, I attended the special reception held by the British Council launching the "Connecting Futures" excellent initiative and the very successful Veuve Cliquot 30th business woman of the Year Award at the Claridges.

Abroad, and on a visit to Lebanon in February I had a meeting with Dr Mervat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to discuss future cooperation between AIWF and ESCWA. Also I had a meeting with Mrs Bahia Hariri, Member of Parliament, and one of the sponsors of the Arab Women's Council, and honorary ambassador for UNESCO.

Looking ahead, AIWF is proceeding with the setting up of its first chapter in Latin America, to be based in Brazil, followed by a Board meeting in Tunisia in August to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Tunisian Mothers Association (TMA), upon the kind invitation of AIWF Board Member, Mrs Saida Agrepi, President of TMA.

In September, as noted in the Diary, AIWF is hosting a special meeting in London with Dame Rennie Fritchie, The Commissioner for Public Appointments. AIWF is also working on an important conference to be held in Abu Dhabi - a date to be announced soon. AIWF will also be participating in January 2003 in Oman in the Business Women Forum, chaired by AIWF Board member Assilah Al Harthy. For more details on AIWF future activities, please read the relevant articles in this and following issues.

As AIWF is moving ahead, it is important to remind ourselves that AIWF is the only permanent, not for profit organization linking women in the Arab world and the international community. AIWF Board of Trustees are all giving valuable time, knowledge and experience in planning the work and activities of the Forum - all on a voluntary basis. Events using our logo and our name will reflect joint vision and full commitment of AIWF members.

I look forward to welcoming you all to AIWF future activities and to working together to the continued solid growth of our organization.

Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani
Chairman AIWF