



November 2002

Chairman's Report

It gives me great pleasure as Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum to highlight this years AIWF activities and look ahead to 2003.

Following a very successful launch reception in January with the reception title "Building Bridges Creating Partnerships" addressed by Baroness Christine Crawley, then chairman of the Women's National Commission and Dr Hassan, Secretary General of the National Council for Women in Egypt. AIWF held a most stimulating conference in April with the title "Women in the New Economic World Order, The Increasing Role of Arab Women in Business and Society", under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan.

The conference was followed in May by a meeting and a luncheon in honour of Her Excellency Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of the Arab Republic of Egypt; during which Mrs Mubarak delivered a most inspiring key note address.

Following these launching events, in August the Arab International Women's Forum was officially invited to attend in Tunisia, the celebrations surrounding Tunisian National Women's Day and to address the conference held on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Tunisian Mother's Association, both events held under the patronage of His Excellency President Ben Ali and Mrs Ben Ali. Four board members and four members from AIWF attended.

In early September the Arab International Women's Forum was invited to attend the special meeting organised by the World Economic Forum in Geneva titled, Arab World Competitiveness 2002. As chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum I was invited to address and chair the special session on the role of women in Arab economic and social development, a session well attended by more than seventy delegates, including two AIWF board members.

On the 21st and 22nd September, the Arab International Women's Forum was invited to participate in the launch of the Women for Peace : Dialogue for Action initiative, chaired and hosted by Her Excellency Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt. We are pleased to report that AIWF was involved with this excellent initiative from the beginning, assisting in developing the two-day programme and recommending participants that could contribute to the plan of action. Over one hundred women leaders concerned with peace from the Arab world, Britain and the international community attended the launch including members of the board of AIWF.

Also in September the AIWF received an invitation to present a paper at the special meeting held in Damascus by the Arab Labour Organisation on the value of vocational training for the Arab working woman. The Arab International Women's Forum's contribution to this meeting was jointly presented by two of our members from Syria and the Lebanon.

On the 15th October the AIWF hosted a meeting with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in the United Kingdom, with the title "Arab Women in the UK in Public Life". The meeting was attended by representatives of fourteen Arab communities in the UK, supported by the Council of Arab Ambassadors and held at Shell Conference Centre. It was a landmark meeting and the first of its kind between members of the Arab communities in the UK and the leading British public institutions, signalling greater integration and cooperation in the future.

Moving next to our forthcoming plans, we are currently preparing the next issue of the Arab International Women's Forum Newsletter and finalising work on our website, which will be in both Arabic and English.

In early February 2003, AIWF's first annual lecture will take place. We have invited Patricia Hewitt MP, Minister for Women, Secretary for Trade and Industry and Minister for E-Commerce, to be our guest speaker. In late February the first AIWF chapter in Latin America will be established in Brazil.

In March AIWF is participating in Dubai with the Dubai Business Women's Association Conference.

Our first conference in the Arab world will be held in April in Abu Dhabi, under the patronage and with the full support of Her Excellency Sheikha Fatima, wife of His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan, the enlightened and much loved leader of the United Arab Emirates. We are working now on the program of the conference, which will be a very high level Arab/International event.

Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani
Chairman AIWF