

October 21-22, 2007

500 high-profile delegates and speakers from 30 countries dialogued together during **The New Arab Woman Forum (NAWF)** held in Dubai- UAE.

In one of Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel halls as a venue, more than 500 high-profile delegates and speakers from 30 countries, women in their majority including women government ministers and parliamentarians, businesswomen, media and social figures, attended “The New Arab Woman Forum” organized by Al Hasnaa magazine and Al Iktissad Wal Aamal Group under the patronage of **HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, Wife of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE Ruler of Dubai.**

The speakers at the opening session were Dr. Nadine Abou Zaki, Editor-in-Chief of Al Hasnaa magazine and NAWF Executive Chair, Mrs. Rajaa Isa El Gurg, president of Dubai businesswomen Council, representing HH Princess Haya and Mr. Mazen Hayek, MBC Group Director of Marketing, Public Relations and Commercial.

On this occasion, Al Iktissad Wal Aamal Group and Al Hasnaa magazine gave “The New Arab Woman Award” to HRH Princess Haya in appreciation of her patronage, efforts and accomplishments in the field of Arab women development. With the participation of HRH Princess Haya, the forum honoured eminent female figures. Raouf Abou Zaki, general manager of Al Iktissad Wal Aamal Group and Dr. Nadine Abou Zaki gave the awards to:

From Kuwait: Mrs. Souad Al Humaidi, President of Souad Al Humaidi Group of Companies.

From UAE: Eng Fatima Al Jaber, Chief Operating Officer, Jaber Group. From KSA: Mrs. Al Jawhara Al Angari, Vice President of The National Association for Human and Family Rights, and Dr. Lama Abdul Aziz Suleiman, Board Member, Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, received the Award on her behalf.

“The New Arab Woman Award” was presented to Mrs. Nadine Labaki, the Lebanese director and actress for her film “Caramel” that was screened in the conference room.

### **The forum panels discussed women in different fields**

#### **Panel I: Women in Public Affairs**

Topics of the first day included “Women in public affairs” and each panelist gave her opinion and exposed the experience of her country as regards the topic of the session. The journalist Giselle Azzi in Al Arabia TV was the moderator of this session. Among the participants, H.E. Mrs. Sarah Al Jariya, Minister of Women's Affairs, Family, Children & the Elderly, (Tunisia); HE Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne MEP, Vice President-Foreign Affairs Committee-European Parliament (UK); HH Sharifa Zein Al Sharaf Bint Nasser, Assistant for Youth, Women, Education and Development/ Tribal Affairs Advisory, The Royal Hashemite Court in Jordan and Advisor & board member of the Hashemite Fund for development of Jordan Badia (Jordan); H.E. Dr. Amal Qobeissi, Member of the Federal National Council (UAE); H.E. Mrs. Dona Turk, Consul General, Lebanese Consulate of Dubai (UAE); Mrs.

Nawal Saleh Chalhoub, President, Diplomatic Ladies Association, Dubai, Wife of the Consul General of Saudi Arabia (UAE).

The main points that were discussed:

- 1- The Personal Status Code in order to establish equality of rights and obligations between women and men.
- 2- Importance of applying the laws that serve women, considering that “conferences are not enough to pass laws that help women achieve their rights. It is vital to draw application mechanisms of laws and to monitor their execution (CEDAW Convention)”.
- 3- The Quota concept in parliaments and governments in order to promote the access of women to high-level public appointments.

### **Panel II: Women in Media and Communication**

The second session discussed the issue of “Women in Media and Communication”. Mrs. Muna Abu Suleyman, Executive Manager, Kingdom Holding Company, Saudi Arabia and Anchor at the Middle-East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) was the moderator of the session and the panelists were Mrs. Anette Halabi, Executive Vice President, Acceleration, (UK); Mr. Samir Attallah, Lebanese Journalist and Author; Mrs. Caroline Faraj, Dubai Chief Operations Director and Arabic Editor, CNN, (UAE) and Mrs. Najwa Kassem, Journalist, Al Arabiya TV.

The main points that were discussed by the participants:

- 1- Women in the field and men for decision-making, since the extensive presence of women in the media field is not equal to their presence as decision-makers in the media.
- 2- Competition for decision-makers appointments equals between men and women.
- 3- The woman to prove herself in the press and media since the TV screen in particular brought extensively the woman to light and she made a good progress in this field.
- 4- Media level in decline: it was shown that the decline in the profession is a general fact and is the same between women and men, and it cannot be said that this decline is for women in the press.
- 5- A question was raised for discussion: Did the increase of women’s presence in the media reflect well or badly on their image in the media? Is this image marginalized, or meant for advertising, marketing and promotion more than being the reflection of reality?
- 6- The impact of media business on the personal life of the woman.

### **Panel III: Women and Education**

“Women and Education” session showed to what extent the private sector is capable of promoting awareness, education and eliminate illiteracy.

During this session, the launch of ALFA B TV, specialized in eliminating illiteracy was announced. The moderator of the session was Mr. Walid Chmeit, Vice President of ALFA B TV in France and the panelists were Mr. Ali Faramawy, President of Microsoft Middle East & Africa and Vice President of Microsoft International, (Turkey); Mr. Hosam A. Al Qurashi, Pantene Brand Manager, Procter & Gamble, Arabian Peninsula; Mrs. Aysegul Ildeniz, Regional Director Middle East, Turkey & Africa, Intel Corporation, (Turkey); Mr. Rui Sancho Fernandes, President, ALFA B TV, (France); Dr. Haifa Reda Jamal Allail, Dean, Effat University, (Saudi Arabia) and Dr. Salwa Khoury, Adjunct Associate Professor, American University of Dubai, (UAE).

Many issues were tackled during this session:

- 1- Illiteracy in technology era.
- 2- The existence of a real education gap between men and women.
- 3- Difference in educational orientation between genders.
- 4- The relationship between the education of the woman and economical and humanitarian development and elimination of illiteracy.
- 5- The use of IT technology in education is a chance to our children, to turn them from passive recipients of programs to researchers seeking knowledge and science.

#### **Panel IV: Motherhood: Same Fight, Different Weapons**

Many issues were discussed during the session “Motherhood: Same Fight, Different Weapons”. Mrs. Suheir Azzouni, Director of the Centre for Women, UN – ESCWA was the moderator and the panelists were Hon Saida Agrebi, Member of Tunisian Parliament; Dr. Deisi Noeli Weber Kusztra, President of the World Family Organization, (Brazil) and Mr. Khalifa Al Mahrzi, President of Family Affairs Center, (UAE).

The main topics that were tackled during the session:

- 1- The woman as a mother or the woman as a wife! Is the role of motherhood an additional role for women? Is there a conflict or complementarity between the two?
- 2- CEDAW Convention to fight discrimination against women, and reservations of Arab states as regards clauses related in their majority to the Personal Status Code.
- 3- Differences between men and women considering that motherhood is a plus, since motherhood is a recognition of a socio-economic job. There is the mother who delivers and the future mother who takes up the torch from the first one. The mother is a human being. Consequently, special attention must be given to lay down laws that protect her rights.

- 4- The basic definition of the woman and the mother is combined with choice and challenge and coupled with respect to the opposite sex. All these elements are to be brought together in order to obtain a partnership between both men and women.
- 5- Women and men form an interactive circle while searching for their roles as mother and father.
- 6- Suggestion to work on promoting the important role of motherhood. How can the woman be a woman, a mother and a worker and bear the load and responsibility of more than one job playing a pluralistic role? Such fact necessitates considering motherhood as a job by itself and encouraging fathers to play an equal role as women in bringing up their children.

#### **Panel V: Women and Beauty**

The forum, on its second and last day, discussed the issue of “Women and Beauty”. The moderator of this panel was Ms. Norma Naoum, Miss Lebanon 1999 and the panelists were Mr. Samer Jabr, Market Research Manager Procter & Gamble; Dr. Heba Kotb, Member of the American Academy of Clinical Sexologists, Egypt; Mrs. Khadija Chahine, Lancôme Regional Director, UAE; Mr. Ahmad Qobeissi, Beautician, Lebanon and Dr. Buthaina Al Shunnar, Plastic Surgeon, UAE.

The session discussed:

- 1- The relation between the woman and her body: how it is sometimes reflected on her self-confidence.
- 2- The beauty obsession and its psychological impact on the woman while trying sometimes to please the man before pleasing herself by resorting to plastic surgeries that might be unnecessary or that might not lead to the expected results defined in psychology as self-satisfaction and increased self-confidence.
- 3- The importance of the psychological factor in the question of beauty; remarks about the increasing number of plastic surgeries to the extent that all girls are looking alike. Such a reality highlights the importance of awareness as regards the concept of beauty that raises the issue of “the beauty culture”
- 4- The following question was raised: “to whom the woman does herself up?” to her husband or herself?
- 5- The most important factor in beauty is the woman’s feeling of self-confidence.
- 6- Middle East and Gulf countries are the heaviest consumers of beauty products and cosmetics; Saudi Arabia is at the top of the list followed by the UAE.

#### **Panel VI: Women and Money: investing in social change**

Mrs. Abby Disney, Founder of the Daphne Foundation was a keynote speaker.

The session discussed:

- 1- Examples on how to use money to help women.
- 2- Volunteering culture based on the awareness as regards the problems of society and difficulties encountered by people in their living.
- 3- Money is not enough to change the world and make it a better place. Consequently, pointing out the necessity to join efforts in order to make any change.

### **Closing Session: Women and Business**

The closing session discussed the issue of “Women and Business”. The moderator of the session was Mrs. Nabila Al Anjari, businesswoman, (Kuwait) and the panelists were Dr. Lama Abdul Aziz Suleiman, Board Member, Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (Saudi Arabia); Mrs. Elaine Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Asteco Property, (UAE); Eng. Fatima Al Jaber, Chief Operating Officer, Jaber Group, (UAE) and Ms Khalidah Ahmed Al-Qatami, Arab International Women Forum Founder Board Member, (Kuwait).

Of the main topics discussed:

- 1- Effectiveness of the woman in economy and business and the role she plays in the economic change and her independence that is linked to the economic factor, and how to promote her role in this field and remove obstacles that impede her progress.
- 2- The feminine presence in the economic world and obstacles to women in the economic field that are rooted in general mentalities and cultures, obstacles in minds not in texts.
- 3- The necessity to help women reveal themselves and communicate with their environment, basing on their experience and weight in the business world.
- 4- Increase of women presence in many fields that were in the past monopolized by men.
- 5- Women in the Arab world have money but do not invest it, due to obstacles in some Arab countries impeding the free investment of women’s assets that are kept frozen in banks.
- 6- Competition in the economic sector is tough and is not exclusive to women when it comes to high managerial positions as decision-makers.
- 7- The choice of profession must be claimed by women so that they satisfy their desire by choosing themselves their own career.
- 8- A general observation in the world of business and the market: women are mainly recruited in marketing to the detriment of their other potentials and real competences that are mainly neglected.
- 9- The fear of women to adventure in the business world even if such an adventure is limited to small private projects.

**The Forum continuity: “The New Arab Woman Forum” to become an institution**

The forum was closed, and in light of its huge success, at the level and number of invitees and attendees and its echoes in the media, the organizing committee announced that the **Second New Arab Woman Forum** will be held in Dubai on November 2008 under the patronage of **HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, Wife of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE Ruler of Dubai.**

Mr. Raouf Abou Zaki declared that Al Hasnaa Magazine, the tiller of Al Iktissad Wal Aamal Group as regards women’s issues, will turn this Forum into a permanent gathering dedicated to dialogue. He also announced that this Forum will become an institution.

A consulting committee stemmed from this Forum. A closing statement was drafted to record interactions, discussions, encounters and dialogue in order to achieve expected results.