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Beirut to host second annual New Arab Woman Forum

Posted on 11 Sep 2008

The Lebanese Information Ministry hosted a news conference in Beirut to announce that it would be hosting the second annual New Arab Woman Forum (MAWF) on October 23-24.

The forum, to be held at the InterContinental Phoenicia Hotel, is organized by Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group and leading woman's magazine Al-Hasnaa, in cooperation with the culture and information ministries, the Arab League, the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia and V-Day Karama. It will take place under the patronage of first lady Wafa Sleiman.

According to the official Web site, "the Arab world today is in the midst of a major process of transformation," with women increasingly playing a role "as business leaders and executives, political and social activists, wealth holders and investors, consumers, and mothers."

MAWF executive chair Nadine Abou Zaki said she expected over 600 people to attend the conference. According to the press release, she added that "the agenda will mainly focus on the changing and developing role of Arab women" and examine the challenges they face. The forum will also discuss Arab women in politics and other leadership positions, how men view the "changing role and status" of women, and the influence of technology on forging the identities of Arab women.

Delivering a welcoming speech, Information Minister Tarek Mitri said: "We are in a region that is increasingly convinced ... that there can be no real renaissance without the full role of women and an appreciation of the importance of women in our cultural and public life."

Raouf Abou Zaki, general manager of Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group, said the forum was not only an event for women "but a vital platform for Arab society in all its diverse and active components."

In the Gulf Cooperation Council countries alone, wealth controlled by women in 2007 stood at around \$346 billion.

The UN Development Program's 2002 Arab Human Development Report identified women's empowerment "as one of three main 'deficits' in the Arab region," although Arab women have made significant headway in the non-governmental and educational sectors.

However, a report issued jointly by the UN and the Arab League, "The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: A Youth Lens," said "the considerable strides women have taken toward gender parity in education have not been mirrored by noteworthy increases in rates of economic and political participation."

The Daily Star

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