



ARAB INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM

Building bridges through culture

The Arab International Women's Forum in partnership with the Peace and Prosperity Trust and PepsiCo on the special occasion of AIWF's 15th Anniversary Commemoration and Gala Concert at Kensington Palace

Welcome Remarks

Haifa Al Kaylani
Founder Chairman
Arab International Women's Forum

Kensington Palace, London, UK
April 2016

Welcome Remarks & Acknowledgements

Your Royal Highnesses,

Your Excellencies,

My Lords,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies & Gentlemen

It is indeed a great honour and a pleasure for me, both personally and as Founder Chairman of The Arab International Women's Forum, to welcome you this evening on the special occasion of AIWF's 15th Anniversary Celebration and Gala Concert in London.

We are proud and honoured to have the valued presence of HRH The Duke of Gloucester, Patron of the Peace and Prosperity Trust, and HRH The Duchess of Gloucester this evening.

I wish to extend to Their Royal Highnesses on behalf of the AIWF Board and Members our deepest respect and high esteem and take this opportunity to acknowledge their important work on humanitarian issues, youth development, culture and the arts, among many other noble causes. It is indeed a privilege and an

honour to have Their Royal Highnesses grace our special occasion this evening.

Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, My Lords, Ladies & Gentlemen

The AIWF Board joins me in extending to you all our deepest thanks and appreciation for accepting our invitation and we are indeed honoured by your valued presence.

The Arab International Women's Forum acknowledges this evening, with great appreciation, the Peace and Prosperity Trust, our valued partners for the anniversary gala recital, held under the theme Building *Bridges through Culture*, for all its important work to link the Arab and Western worlds through culture and the language of music, bringing together Arab, British and international talent to convey timely messages of reconciliation, harmony and peace. This is a vision that is shared by both our organisations and is truly the keystone in all our work and initiatives.

We are especially proud that the occasion of AIWF's 15th Anniversary can offer a platform for the young and gifted artists of the Trust to showcase their superb talent. We are greatly appreciative of their efforts and dedication in preparing a unique and exquisite performance for us this evening, which we look forward to enjoying.

AIWF: A development organisation leading the way forward

Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, My Lords, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is truly remarkable that a decade and a half has passed since the inception of AIWF in London in 2001 as a development organisation with the clear aim of supporting and enhancing the role of women in the Arab world and beyond.

In this time, AIWF has grown into a truly global network dedicated to giving Arab women leaders a voice and a platform to prosper, linking Arab women not only with each other but also with their counterparts in the international community to exchange knowledge and develop their leadership potential.

We have worked tirelessly across the board, with governments, educators, NGOs and the private sector to advance gender equality, placing special emphasis on the role of women as engines of economic growth realising our founding motto '***Building Bridges, Building Business***'.

We believe, that women hold the key to economic prosperity and social development in the region and that when women prosper, families and communities also prosper.

Since 2001 AIWF has held over 40 important conferences, seminars and networking events in key international business and financial hubs, commencing with London, our headquarters and including **Paris, Brussels, Madrid, Berlin, Cairo, Amman, Washington DC, Sharjah, Beirut, Damascus, Palestine, Dubai, Doha, Italy**, and later this year, **Kuwait**.

It is with deep appreciation that we extend a very warm welcome to Their Excellencies The Distinguished Ambassadors with us this evening, representing the many government partners that have hosted AIWF over the years. With their support, we have been incredibly successful not only in widening opportunities for new business links and partnerships between women in every sphere, but also in developing the skills, capacity and confidence of women leaders.

Our work is distinguished by our valued collaborations with leading organisations and businesses, many also represented with us this evening – starting with the **City of London Corporation** which has hosted AIWF at The Mansion House on four separate and most successful occasions held under the Theme Building Bridges and Building Business between The City of London, The Arab World and The International Community. We have the great pleasure of welcoming tonight three former Lord Mayors of The City of London.

We are very proud to have enjoyed the longstanding support of some of the world's most influential business corporations, many of which are represented here this evening; partners who share our belief that it is only when women are empowered in sufficient numbers in every aspect of Arab society that we can truly create a society that genuinely works for women, a society that works for all.

Acknowledgements and appreciation

Distinguished Guests,

I take this special opportunity to pay tribute to the invaluable support that our Benefactor, Global and Institutional Partners have extended to AIWF in all our dedicated work in the region and internationally, and to acknowledge all who have played key roles in AIWF's unique journey over the last 15 years.

First, We could not have made the lasting impact that we have in the region and internationally without the vision and commitment of our esteemed Founder Board and the support and dedication of the AIWF distinguished current Board, who took forward the AIWF mission on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of AIWF in 2011. I am indeed delighted to welcome many of our **Current and Founder Board Members** present with us this evening, women and men, Arab and international, successful in all fields of business, public life and civil society who have so generously given their support, expertise, time and advice to AIWF over the years.

AIWF's ongoing work and our exceptional impact as a non-profit, non-governmental independent development organisation is made possible with the support of our Global Benefactor Partner, **PepsiCo**, an AIWF partner from Day One with whom we share

common objectives to support and enhance opportunities for women in the region, and with whom we have long enjoyed an elevated partnership.

We are delighted to welcome and we warmly acknowledge the invaluable support of our longstanding Global Corporate Partners, **Pfizer, Shell, Willis, The Dubai Land Department, The Sharjah Business Women Council, PwC, and the Jumeirah Group** and The Greater Paris Investment agency with us on this occasion

Distinguished Guests

We believe that a better future for the Arab world can be achieved; a future marked by economic growth, stability and prosperity. It is only by working together within the region and across borders, building lucrative business links and strong cultural connections, that we can lay the foundations that are essential to lasting peace and progress in the Middle East.

A Special tribute and Concluding remarks

Your Royal Highnesses,

Your Excellencies,

My Lords,

Ladies & Gentlemen

My message tonight and on this special occasion will not be complete without acknowledging the most special and valued partner of all, who inspired me to establish AIWF and who supported, encouraged and endorsed my mission and vision as Founder of The Arab International Women's Forum, my late husband Ambassador Wajih AlKaylani.

Wajih firmly believed in AIWF and its important work in advancing the cause of women in the region enabling them to contribute to the political, social, and importantly the economic growth of the Arab World.

The developments in the region the last five years have made AIWF mission, vision and work more relevant than ever before as we seek to overcome the rising challenges and embrace the many opportunities in the years to come.

Your valued presence and support on this special occasion is a testament to our joint commitment to realising this important and worthwhile objective.

I reiterate my deep thanks for all your valued presence and trust that this evening will be a beautiful and memorable experience for us all.

I thank you for your kind attention