



ARAB INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S FORUM  
المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO



## THE ARAB INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM AND THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO JOINT CONFERENCE

### **Women as Engines of Economic Growth:** *Empowering women innovators, entrepreneurs, executives and educators towards fulfilment of the SDGs in the MENA Region*

The American University in Cairo, Egypt  
September 16 - 18, 2019

### **SPECIAL REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## 1. Conference Partner Messages

### 1.1 Message from the Arab International Women's Forum



**Message from Haifa  
Fahoum Al Kaylani**  
*Founder & Chairman, Arab  
International Women's  
Forum; Fellow, Harvard  
Advanced Leadership  
Initiative 2017*

As Founder & Chairman and on behalf of the Board of the Arab International Women's Forum (AIWF), it was my great privilege and pleasure to chair AIWF's milestone conference on *Women as Engines of Economic Growth: Empowering women innovators, entrepreneurs, executives and educators towards fulfilment of the SDGs in the MENA Region*, which we were most proud to hold in Egypt in partnership with the American University in Cairo and with the valued support of PepsiCo as Lead Conference Partner and PwC Middle East as Conference Supporting Partner.

*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* represented a unique opportunity for women leaders in diverse sectors to convene at the American University in Cairo, a leading hub for academic excellence, innovation and research in the Arab world, to share perspectives on opportunities and challenges for women's leadership, and examine current and emerging 'future of work' barriers to women's participation in the economy, sustainability, political life and public service, in Egypt, the broader MENA region and internationally.

*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* brought into focus the vital contributions of women leaders to economic growth across the MENA States, and the importance of supporting their development in key positions in public institutions and companies, which is a key national priority in Egypt. Women's leadership is at the core of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, a rights-based approach grounded in the SDGs and Egypt's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, endorsed by the President in March 2017.

The conference therefore elaborated on critical themes around women's leadership in the economy, entrepreneurship and SME growth, on corporate boards and in family business, executive leadership, innovation and economic development. The programme also recognised women's valuable contributions to the rural and agricultural sectors and identified successful strategies to strengthen women's engagement in political life and public service, whilst emphasising the vital role of women in achieving legislative reform and gender balance in policy formation.

Our conference concluded with the reflections of women leaders on future of work challenges and opportunities in the MENA region and globally, which I was proud to

chair both as Founder & Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum and as the only Commissioner from the Arab world to have served on the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work.

The themes of this conference are at the heart of what AIWF has been leading with at the Arab and international levels for over 18 years as a development organisation invested in creating a better future for women and young leaders in the MENA region and internationally. Since inception in 2001 AIWF has been at the forefront of action in the region addressing women's leadership barriers and challenges, especially in public service, entrepreneurship and social enterprise, in executive leadership, and in the critical STEM sectors.

AIWF is proud to have had the opportunity to partner with the American University in Cairo as part of AUC's Centenary Celebrations in 2019 on the *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* initiative, providing a vital and powerful platform for women leaders to be empowered to support regional achievement of key SDGs. Our joint conference, which was deeply enriched by the partnership of PepsiCo Egypt as Lead Conference Partner and the invaluable support and expertise of PwC as Conference Supporting Partner, was an opportunity to move momentum forward on women's economic empowerment in Egypt and the wider Arab world.

Our Guest Speakers were all prominent and accomplished thought leaders, women's advocates and change agents, entrepreneurs, social enterprise founders, senior professional women and policymakers representing non-profit organisations, international development agencies, academic institutions and private sector corporations. These included the International Labour Organization, the League of Arab States, The World Bank, the American University in Cairo, the Arab Women Organisation, the Egyptian Parliament, the National Council for Women in Egypt, PepsiCo, PwC Middle East, The GCC Board Directors Institute, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Anna Lindh Foundation, AFI Malaysia, Ashoka Arab World, the University of Geneva, and Cairo University, among others.

We were also delighted to welcome a distinguished and exceptional calibre of delegates and participants to *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* who truly helped bring our conference objectives to life by sharing their knowledge, learnings and expertise, representing the private and public sectors, civil society and NGOs, women's networking organisations, and academia. We were especially proud to welcome young women leaders to our conference, many of whom were students and PhD / early career researchers, and trust that the experience was highly inspirational and engaging for all our distinguished speakers, members, partners, and guest delegates.

As with all AIWF conferences, all four panels in the *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* programme were designed to be highly interactive and discussion-based, and to deliver key recommendations and impact-driven action points which AIWF is pleased to share in this Special Report & Recommendations, and which shall be followed up on in future programmes and initiatives in collaboration with our Conference Partners and all AIWF Global and Institutional Partners.

## 1.2 Message from the American University in Cairo



**Message from  
Francis J Ricciardone  
President, American  
University in Cairo**

One hundred years ago, a young American named Charles Watson helped establish a new kind of school in Egypt, one that he hoped would be “different both in degree and kind from what has hitherto been attempted.” He envisioned a school that would offer advanced training in a range of fields, from education to engineering to journalism to law. A school that would serve ambitious Egyptian students who otherwise had no option but to travel abroad for advanced studies. A school whose inquiry-based education would set it apart from its peers.

From his vision rose the American University in Cairo – a school built on fresh perspectives.

Our students have gone on to become leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs, drawing deeply on the “Four Cs” of our unique liberal arts curriculum. These four pillars – critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration – enable our students to thrive in a dynamic world of accelerating and disruptive change. Our emphasis on change led directly to a milestone of particular pride: By 1929, AUC had admitted its first female students, decades before the Ivy League allowed women to apply.

Today, we live in a country that embodies this change, a country that seeks urgently to unleash the economic potential of all its people – especially its women. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Monetary Fund estimate that increasing gender balance in the Egyptian economy could boost GDP by up to 34%. At AUC, we strive to contribute to this advancement; 57% of our students and 51% of our faculty are women. But the presence of so many accomplished and visionary women in the Arab International Women’s Forum is a far greater indicator of progress – not just in Egypt, but in the region at large.

Hence, we were delighted to host *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* in partnership with the Arab International Women’s Forum on our New Cairo campus. We were honoured to join these inspiring women in their search for innovative solutions to overcome persistent barriers. And we are proud to work towards our common goal: gender equality in Egypt and around the world.

### 1.3 Message from PepsiCo Egypt



**Message from  
Mohamed Shelbaya**  
*Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo  
Egypt*

Throughout history, the central role of women in the Egyptian society has ensured stability, progress and long-term development. We are proud that Egypt is supporting women empowerment as a top priority of the national agenda that is witnessing a rise, with eight female ministers in the Egyptian cabinet.

We at PepsiCo, and as part of our belief and commitment to Egypt, support a diversity of sustainable programs to reinforce women empowerment in several sectors with an aim to increase their vital role. Also, we are honoured that more than 40% of managerial roles in PepsiCo are held by women.

Women are the seeds of our society, and we are ready to support and give the needed care for them to grow and shed our lives with success and prosperity. While there is still much to do to address the region's pressing empowerment issues, we feel that the region is on the right track.

On behalf of PepsiCo, we commend the Arab International Women's Forum and the American University in Cairo for this worthy and timely initiative and wish all participants of *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* continued success in their contributions to the future growth and economic prospects of the Middle East.

## 1.4 Message from PwC Middle East



**Message from  
Hani Ashkar**  
*Middle East Senior Partner,  
PwC Middle East*

The world today is changing at an unprecedented pace, brought about by a whole set of intertwined, large-scale trends, which include demographic changes, shifts in global economic power, natural resource consumption patterns, rapid urbanisation and technological disruption. These changes bring with them a set of new challenges and opportunities for both private industry, governments and policy makers across the region.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says the Middle East and North Africa collectively is losing an estimated \$575 billion a year due to the legal and social barriers that exist for women's access to jobs and careers. Less than a quarter of women in the region overall are employed, which is one of the lowest rates in the world.

A gender imbalance in the workforce doesn't just represent a missed opportunity for the region, it also creates an unstable foundation for our future.

Increasing gender diversity would mean adding to and enriching the talent pool, a vital requirement, particularly for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries if they are to succeed in industrial diversification and create flourishing sectors other than oil and gas.

The past few years have seen increased recognition of the economic and human cost of women's lost potential and of ways to address the issue. We believe there is no one-size fits-all approach to promoting gender diversity in the Middle East. Any initiatives need to take into account the specific histories, cultures and levels of development in each country.

Our Women In Work Index - Insights from MENA survey of more than 3,000 women and men across the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Egypt provides insights on the regional workforce and where we can improve gender diversity. This information can help policymakers in the public and private sectors to create tailor-made initiatives to foster diversity.

The three countries we surveyed have varying histories of national programmes to boost the number of working women. There is high awareness and support for such initiatives, showing that timely government intervention is often welcomed. Our research shows that 66% of all

respondents believed that governments should intervene in private-sector companies and set targets for gender diversity.

While it's encouraging to see governments putting in place initiatives to improve diversity in the workplace, leaders need to prioritise and take action to close the gender gap to make a real impact. The reasons to act are overwhelming and go beyond the moral argument for equality:

- Evidence shows that more diversity improves financial performance. PwC's latest Women in Work Index estimates that improving female participation in work across the OECD to the level achieved in Sweden could boost total OECD GDP by US\$6 trillion.
- Across the Middle East, and particularly in GCC countries, adding more female employees expands the talent pool for companies to tap into as they seek to accelerate their industrial diversification.
- There is growing evidence in countries such as KSA, UAE and Egypt that the gender equality agenda is progressing, despite challenges including lack of support after a career break, deep-seated social norms, and gender stereotypes and bias.

Based on our experience and tactics, we've identified four main tactics to help tackle this issue:

Firstly, raise awareness and transparency to alter mindsets, dismiss gender stereotypes and bias in organisations and encourage cultural change with the right tone that starts at the top. This can be done at many levels - when conducting annual appraisals, for example, or as part of the induction process for juniors, and by hosting workshops.

Secondly, flexible working should be embedded in all organisations, and offers benefits for male and female employees. While this is important for women returning to work after maternity leave, it is particularly important for the new generation of employees that are joining the workforce. Companies should also consider reviewing their paternity leave policies; having paternity leave policies closely aligned with maternity leave ensures companies are setting a level playing field for both genders. These policies could also be extended to help new or former employees who for personal reasons have been out of the labour market for many years, rejoin successfully.

Thirdly, apply a data driven approach. Organisations need to track promotions to monitor progress and workforce surveys that track the career paths of high potential individuals. Exit surveys can also help to gauge why talent is progressing or leaving. Being transparent about the findings is another key cultural change.

And lastly, accountability is needed. Organisations should appoint someone within the leadership team to be accountable for driving the diversity and inclusion agenda and ensure this responsibility cascades down through all tiers of the business. Accountability however should sit at each level of the organisations. It should be embedded in the culture.

At PwC, we are proud to support the Arab International Women's Forum and the American University in Cairo working together towards creating a more sustainable, brighter future for our region.

## 2. Conference Background, Concept & Objectives

The Arab International Women's Forum (AIWF) was proud to partner with the American University in Cairo on *Women as Engines of Economic Growth: Empowering women innovators, entrepreneurs, executives and educators towards fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals in the MENA Region*. The AIWF / AUC conference programme commenced with the President's Reception on the evening of the 16 September 2019 at Watson House, the private residence of AUC President Francis J Ricciardone, and continued for the main conference day at the American University in Cairo's New Cairo Campus on 17 September 2019.

### Conference Themes 17 September 2019

The conference objectives and programme for *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* were developed by the Arab International Women's Forum in full partnership with the American University in Cairo towards the joint AIWF / AUC mission to inspire, inform, engage and interact with women leaders from Egypt, the Arab region and globally. The programme also benefited greatly from the valued input of Conference Lead Partner PepsiCo and Conference Supporting Partner PwC Middle East. Panel sessions of the conference were aligned with the core priority policy areas of AIWF, AUC, PepsiCo and PwC, and included:

- 1 **Advancing women's leadership and gender diversity on corporate boards and in family business: Best practices from Egypt, the broader MENA region and internationally**
- 2 **Women in entrepreneurship and SME development, the rural / agricultural sectors and the informal economy**
- 3 **Women in public service and leadership: Towards gender parity in parliament and women's inclusion in policymaking**
- 4 **Reflections on the future of work for women and young people in the MENA Region**

### Conference Concept

*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* was designed to deliver a unique opportunity for women leaders in a diverse range of sectors and from all spheres to come together at the American University in Cairo, a leading hub for academic excellence, innovation and research in the Arab world, to examine emerging opportunities, ongoing challenges to women's leadership and persistent barriers to their full and meaningful engagement and participation in business and entrepreneurship, in society, in political life and in public service in Egypt, the broader MENA region and internationally.

Arab and international women leaders convened at The American University in Cairo, a leading hub for academic excellence, innovation and research in the Arab world, to share perspectives on opportunities and challenges for women's leadership and examine current and emerging 'future of work' barriers to women's participation in the economy, sustainability, political life and public service, in Egypt, the broader MENA region and internationally.

*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* brought into focus the vital contributions of women leaders to economic growth across the MENA States, and the importance of supporting their development in key positions in public institutions and companies, which is a key

national priority in Egypt. Women's leadership is at the core of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, a rights-based approach grounded in the SDGs and Egypt's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, endorsed by the President in March 2017.

The conference elaborated on critical themes around women's leadership in the economy, entrepreneurship and SME growth, on corporate boards and in family business, executive leadership, innovation and economic development. The programme also recognised women's valuable contributions to the rural and agricultural sectors and identify successful strategies to strengthen women's engagement in political life and public service, whilst emphasising the vital role of women in achieving legislative reform and gender balance in policy formation.

The conference concluded with key reflections on future of work challenges and opportunities in the MENA region and globally which was chaired by Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, Founder and Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum, who in 2017 was appointed as the only Commissioner from the Arab world to serve on the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work.

Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, Founder & Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum, said: "*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* comes at a pivotal time for women leaders in the MENA States and in Egypt, when we are witnessing greater involvement of women in the economy and in public office. We are all exceptionally proud of women's achievements in these and all spheres, and we see their successes as key to addressing the empowerment challenges that remain. This is why AIWF is leading on this initiative: to bring into focus the unprecedented opportunities for women to lead as drivers of economic change and growth in the Arab world and elaborate on how to develop those opportunities by working together to specifically address and overcome the challenges that remain. In doing this, we can open doors even wider for women's economic participation across the region."

Mrs Al Kaylani continued, "AIWF was exceptionally proud to have the opportunity to partner with The American University in Cairo as part of AUC's Centennial Celebrations in 2019 on *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* which we saw as providing a vital and powerful platform for women leaders to be empowered to support regional achievement of key SDGs. Our joint conference, which was deeply enriched by the partnership of PepsiCo Egypt as Lead Conference Partner and the invaluable support and expertise of PwC, was an opportunity to move momentum forward on women's economic empowerment in Egypt and the wider Arab world. At the same time, we aimed to collectively deliver a robust strategy and framework of recommendations to support women in reaching their full leadership potential, in all sectors and spheres – and in this report, we are most proud to have achieved this."

Ehab Abdel-Rahman, Provost of The American University in Cairo, said: "We were so fortunate to partner with AIWF to convene this conference on AUC's Centennial Celebrations. Promoting an inclusive and empowering environment for women-led innovation and leadership is the core of what we do at AUC. As a Provost, empowering women has been a top priority both in terms of my work at the university, and in terms of my outreach at the national level. For me, the empowerment of women cannot be achieved without women assuming leadership roles in all aspects of society, and no society has ever liberated itself economically or socially without a sound base of educated women. Indeed, joining the AIWF reflected our conviction in this much-needed initiative which brought into focus key challenges and opportunities for women's leadership in the economy in Egypt and the MENA region."

## Conference Speakers, Participants & Format

The international partners and participants of *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* benefitted greatly from the valuable exchange of knowledge between Arab and international leaders. *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* was proud to welcome Distinguished Guest Speakers representing the International Labour Organization, the League of Arab States, The World Bank, the American University in Cairo, the Arab Women Organisation, the Egyptian Parliament, the National Council for Women in Egypt, PepsiCo, PwC Middle East, The GCC Board Directors Institute, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Anna Lindh Foundation, AFI Malaysia, Ashoka Arab World, the University of Geneva, and Cairo University, among others.

*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* engaged 150 delegates and stakeholders from various backgrounds including the public and private sectors, academia, policy makers, industry, social enterprise founders, civil society and NGOs, students, PhD researchers and others. All four Panel Sessions were highly interactive in format and discussions resonated deeply with the young leaders attending from across the Arab world (from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Palestine, Morocco, Oman, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon) and internationally (with delegates representing Spain, Switzerland, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Austria and Cyprus). All participants engaged with the conference key themes and tracks through frank discussion in a supportive and inclusive environment, ultimately contributing actionable insights and concrete recommendations for women's leadership, economic inclusion, innovation, education and political engagement to directly address economic and empowerment challenges that are prevalent in the MENA Region and elsewhere in the world.

Valued delegates attending represented AIWF Global Partners PepsiCo, PwC, Pfizer, and Northern Trust, as well as the European Bank of Reconstruction & Development (EBRD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, the Arab Network for NGOs, the Arab Water Council, T20 Egypt, the Emirates Investment Authority, George Washington University USA, Credit Agricole Egypt, UN Women, The Library of Alexandria, the Egyptian Competition Authority, the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, the Women's Forum for the Economy & Society, the Egyptian Woman Foundation for Law & Peace, Johnson & Johnson, Olayan Financing Company, Nestle Egypt, the Mediterranean Growth Initiative, BBC Arabic, Unilever Mashreq, and Procter & Gamble, among others.

The valuable insights and recommendations that emerged from the Conference are documented in this Special Report for action and future follow up by the Arab International Women's Forum, the American University in Cairo, Conference Lead Partner PepsiCo and Conference Supporting Partner PwC Middle East, as well as all key corporate, academic and institutional partners in AIWF's regional and international advocacy networks.

### 3. Conference Programme

#### The Arab International Women's Forum and The American University in Cairo Joint Conference

**Women as Engines of Economic Growth:** *Empowering women innovators, entrepreneurs, executives and educators towards fulfilment of the SDGs in the MENA Region*

The American University in Cairo, Egypt | September 16 - 18, 2019

#### 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

0730 - 0900

**Registration & Coffee Networking**

0900 - 1000

#### OPENING SESSION

##### AIWF Chairman's Welcome & Keynote Address

**Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani**

Founder & Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum, United Kingdom & Fellow, Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative 2017

##### Guest of Honour Keynotes

**Francis J Ricciardone**

President, American University of Cairo, Egypt

**HE Dr Hala El Said**

Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, Egypt

**Mohamed Shelbaya**

Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo Egypt

**HE Dr Maya Morsy**

President of the National Council for Women (NCW), Egypt

1000 - 1130

#### PANEL 1

Advancing women's leadership and gender diversity on corporate boards and in family business: Best practices from Egypt, the broader MENA region and internationally

##### Panel Chair

**Dr Ghada Howaidy**, Associate Dean Executive Education and External Relations, School of Business, American University in Cairo, Egypt

##### Guest Speakers

**Mona Al Moayyed**, Managing Director, YK Almoayyed & Sons, Bahrain

**Lilia Hachem Naas**, Director of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Office for North Africa, Morocco

**Elisabeth Guigou**, President, Anna Lindh Foundation, Egypt

**Jane Valls**, Executive Director, The GCC Board Directors Institute, UAE

1130 - 1200

### **Networking & Refreshments**

1200 - 1330

### **PANEL 2**

Women in entrepreneurship and SME development, the rural / agricultural sectors and the informal economy

#### **Panel Chair**

**Nada El Agizy**, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation Director, League of Arab States, Egypt

#### **Guest Speakers**

**Fatma El Zahraa Aglan**, Agricultural Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, The World Bank, Egypt

**Dr Iman Bibars**, Vice President, Ashoka Global & Regional Director, Ashoka Arab World, Egypt

**Dr Salwa Bayomi El Magoli**, Professor, Department of Food Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Cairo University, Egypt

1330 - 1430

### **Buffet Lunch & Networking**

1430 - 1600

### **PANEL 3**

Women in public service and leadership: Towards gender parity in parliament and women's inclusion in policy-making

#### **Panel Chair**

**HE Mervat Tellawy**, Former Director General, Arab Women Organisation & Former Ambassador to Japan and Austria, Egypt

#### **Guest Speakers**

**HE Jan Thesleff**, Ambassador of Sweden to the Arab Republic of Egypt

**Dr Heba Hagrass**, Member of Egyptian Parliament, Egypt

**Natasha Carmi**, Lead Water Specialist, Geneva Water Hub, University of Geneva, Switzerland

**Almas Jiwani**, President of Emeritus UN Women Canada NC & CEO Almas Jiwani Foundation, Canada

**Frida Khan**, Senior Specialist, Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality International Labour Organization Regional Office for the Arab States, Lebanon

**Helen Walbey**, Head of Gender Inclusive Finance, AFI Malaysia

1600 – 1630

**Coffee & Networking Break**

1630 – 1755

**PANEL 4**

## Reflections on the future of work for women and young people in the MENA Region

### Panel Chair

**Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani**, Founder & Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum, United Kingdom & Commissioner of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work

### Guest Speakers

**Deborah Greenfield**, Deputy Director General for Policy, International Labour Organization (ILO), Switzerland

**Dr Afef Haddad**, Deputy to the Country Director, Country Program Coordinator Maghreb and Malta, The World Bank, USA

**David Suarez**, People and Organisation Middle East Leader, PwC Middle East, UAE

**Dr Haleema Al Sabbah**, Associate Professor & Chair of the College of Natural and Health Sciences, Zayed University, UAE

**Dr Nagla Rizk**, Professor, Department of Economics & Founding Director, Access to Knowledge for Development Center, American University in Cairo, Egypt

1755 – 1800

**Closing Remarks delivered by Rania Rizk**, SVP & General Counsel PepsiCo AMENA & Co-Chair and Board Member, Arab International Women's Forum

1830 – 1930

**Cultural Performance**

1930 – 2130

**Official Conference Dinner with Closing Remarks delivered by Dr Sherif Kamel**, Dean of the School of Business, American University in Cairo, Egypt

## 4. List Of Speakers & Report Contributors

The Arab International Women's Forum and the American University in Cairo were especially proud to bring world class specialists in public service, entrepreneurship, the private sector, business leadership, finance, innovation, and government together with representatives of leading international development organisations, NGOs, academia, and research institutes.

Opening session Keynote Speakers included Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, Founder and Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum; Francis J Ricciardone, President, American University of Cairo, Egypt; HE Dr Hala El Said, Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, Egypt; Mohamed Shelbaya, Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo Egypt; and HE Dr Maya Morsy, President of the National Council for Women (NCW), Egypt. The full list of speakers who contributed to the compilation of this report includes:

### 17 APRIL 2019 CONFERENCE

#### OPENING SESSION CONFERENCE PARTNERS & GUEST OF HONOUR SPEAKERS

##### **Mrs Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani**

Founder and Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum, United Kingdom

##### **Francis J Ricciardone**

President, American University of Cairo, Egypt

##### **HE Dr Hala El Said**

Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, Egypt

##### **Mohamed Shelbaya**

Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo Egypt

##### **HE Dr Maya Morsy**

President of the National Council for Women (NCW), Egypt

#### DISTINGUISHED GUEST SPEAKERS

*(In alphabetical order)*

##### **Nada El Agizy**

Sustainable Development and International Cooperation Director, League of Arab States, Egypt

**Fatma El Zahraa Aglan**

Agricultural Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice,  
The World Bank, Egypt

**Dr Salwa Bayomi El Magoli**

Professor, Department of Food Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Cairo  
University, Egypt

**Mona Al Moayyed**

Managing Director, YK Almoayyed & Sons, Bahrain

**Dr Haleama Al Sabbah**

Associate Professor & Chair of the College of Natural and Health Sciences,  
Zayed University, UAE

**Dr Iman Bibars**

Vice President, Ashoka Global & Regional Director, Ashoka Arab World, Egypt

**Natasha Carmi**

Lead Water Specialist, Geneva Water Hub, University of Geneva, Switzerland

**Dr Salwa Bayomi El Magoli**

Professor, Department of Food Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Cairo  
University, Egypt

**Deborah Greenfield**

Deputy Director General for Policy, International Labour Organization (ILO),  
Switzerland

**Elisabeth Guigou**

President, Anna Lindh Foundation, Egypt

**Dr Afef Haddad**

Deputy to the Country Director, Country Program Coordinator Maghreb and  
Malta, The World Bank, USA

**Dr Heba Hagrass**

Member of Egyptian Parliament, Egypt

**Dr Ghada Howaidy**

Associate Dean Executive Education and External Relations, School of  
Business, American University in Cairo, Egypt

**Almas Jiwani**

President Emeritus UN Women Canada NC &  
CEO Almas Jiwani Foundation, Canada

**Frida Khan**

Senior Specialist, Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality International Labour  
Organization Regional Office for the Arab States, Lebanon

**Lilia Hachem Naas**

Director of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Office for  
North Africa, Morocco

**Dr Nagla Rizk**

Professor, Department of Economics & Founding Director, Access to  
Knowledge for Development Center, American University in Cairo, Egypt

**David Suarez**

People and Organisation Middle East Leader, PwC Middle East, UAE

**HE Mervat Tellawy**

Former Director General, Arab Women Organisation & Former Ambassador to  
Japan and Austria, Egypt

**HE Jan Thesleff**

Ambassador of Sweden to the Arab Republic of Egypt

**Jane Valls**

Executive Director, The GCC Board Directors Institute, UAE

**Helen Walbey**

Head of Gender Inclusive Finance, AFI Malaysia

## 5. Report Of Conference & Workshop Proceedings

### 5.1 OPENING SESSION

#### Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani

Founder and Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum, United Kingdom

In commencing the Conference proceedings in the Opening Session with a Welcome Address and Keynote, AIWF Founder & Chairman Haifa Al Kaylani thanked distinguished guests, speakers, and participants and reiterated what a great honour it was to be at the American University in Cairo on the special occasion of AUC's Centenary Year, and how proud AIWF was to be affiliated with AUC on this path-breaking initiative that brings into focus vital contributions of women leaders in the economy, entrepreneurship, public office, in Egypt, broader Arab region and the international community.

Mrs Al Kaylani expressed sincere appreciation to Francis J Ricciardone, President of AUC, for the valued partnership of the university, and to Dr Sherif Kamel, Dean of the School of Business, American University in Cairo, and Dr Ghada Howaidy, Associate Dean of the School of Business, American University in Cairo, for their outstanding support and that of all valued AUC colleagues in the preparations for this major conference.

Mrs Al Kaylani noted how proud AIWF and AUC were to welcome HE Dr Hala El Said, Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, a prominent Egyptian economist, academic, author and outstanding role model for young women leaders aspiring to careers in public office, who is leading administrative reform aligned with Egypt Vision 2030. AIWF and AUC were also delighted to welcome HE Dr Maya Morsy, President of the National Council for Women in Egypt.

Mrs Al Kaylani paid tribute to the longstanding partnership and relationship between AIWF and Global Benefactor Partner PepsiCo, welcoming Mohamed Shelbaya, Chairman & CEO of PepsiCo Egypt as Lead Conference Partner, who would share the PepsiCo strategy for empowering and supporting the next generation of women leaders. The AIWF Chairman also extended the deepest thanks to PwC Middle East, and all other Global Partners present on the day including Northern Trust and Pfizer. AIWF was especially proud to be welcoming women and global leaders from 21 countries in business, finance, civil society and academia, from across the Arab world, the European Union, the United States, and as far afield as Mauritius, Malaysia and South Africa. AIWF was also delighted to welcome students, PhD researchers and Fellows on this special occasion.

Mrs Al Kaylani said: "Sustainable and inclusive economic growth is a clear priority for the MENA States but will be only be achieved with the full engagement of young people, the rightful social, economic and political participation and the valuable contributions of women who make up one half of the Arab population. The region faces considerable and highly unique demographic, economic and resource-driven challenges. As a result, many Arab governments have prioritised within their national economic development agenda the following key parameters: sustainable economic diversification and development; meeting core SDGs on poverty, water and food security, and humanitarian obligations towards refugees and the internally displaced; addressing youth unemployment in the region; and improving low rates of women's participation in the economy and in parliament.

Mrs Al Kaylani continued: "*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* comes at a pivotal time for women leaders in the economy and in public office in the Arab world. Throughout the MENA Region, women are increasingly taking on high-level leadership positions in business, public service, the judiciary and the legislature, advancing rapidly in professions previously dominated by men, including finance, aviation, business, technology, academia, research and

STEM careers, and challenging gender bias in nearly every sector and sphere. Arab women are commanding a greater presence on corporate boards, in senior executive leadership positions, and in the top jobs at multinationals and family-owned businesses.”

“In most Arab countries, women are also successfully assuming positions of leadership in public service and international relations, and are increasingly being elected and appointed to political, diplomatic and development roles, giving women a greater voice in legislative reform throughout the region. The overall rate of parliamentary participation of women in the Arab States is, as of April 2019, 18.1% (up from 13% in 2012 and 9% in 2010, according to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union),” she said.

In June 2018, for the first time in Egyptian history and under the inspired leadership of the President of The Republic, the Egyptian Cabinet had announced the appointments of eight female ministers, a landmark achievement for Egyptian women leaders in political and public life. And in addition to senior cabinet positions, more Arab women than ever before are serving as Governors, Ambassadors and leading diplomatic figures, and are also levelling the playing field in law, breaking new ground in practice and at the highest levels of the judiciary.

Mrs Al Kaylani said: “The Arab and international business communities are taking note of women’s remarkable progress, their energy and their aptitude for contributing meaningfully to the economic prosperity of the region. Leveraging these valuable achievements is key to addressing the empowerment challenges that remain for many women throughout the region. This is why AIWF is leading on this initiative: to bring into focus the unprecedented opportunities for women to lead as drivers of economic change and growth in the Arab world; and to develop those opportunities by working together to specifically address and overcome the challenges that remain. In doing this, we can open doors even wider for women’s economic participation across the region.”

There were four key challenges for women’s economic empowerment in the region which Mrs Al Kaylani said the conference programme had been designed to address:

Firstly, bringing to light challenges and opportunities for women’s leadership and gender diversity on corporate boards and in family business.

Secondly, addressing women’s inclusion and participation in the MENA economy, with emphasis on women’s entrepreneurship and SME development, women in the rural / agricultural sectors and women in the informal economy.

Thirdly, women’s critical role in public service and policymaking to advance legislative reform and societal progress, in order to effectively address the issue of women’s under-participation in this sphere.

And finally, elaborating on future of work challenges for women and young people in the MENA region.

Turning to Egypt as a regional leader for women’s empowerment in the economy and in public service, Mrs Al Kaylani noted that the conference was taking place at a time when an unprecedented number of Egyptian women were leading in the private sector, in entrepreneurship, and in Cabinet, government and the public institutions. She said: “Strong Egyptian women’s voices have always resonated throughout the region, from the days when Huda Shaarawi advocated for women’s suffrage, education and freedom of movement, famously removing her veil upon disembarking a train in Cairo in an act of protest in the 1920s. Egypt has always had a tremendous amount of cultural and economic influence in the region and beyond, with an enlightened leadership that recognizes the need to empower women to contribute effectively to economic growth. Women’s economic empowerment is

a central tenet of Egypt's ambitious agenda that, when fulfilled, will truly boost the economic inclusion of women at all levels of society." To date, significant progress has been made in the implementation of Egypt's 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, which has set gender targets to reduce female unemployment and increase female formal labour participation. Notably, the President of Egypt and the President of the NCW declared 2017 the Year of Egyptian Women.

In closing, Mrs Al Kaylani said: "In all spheres, it is Egyptian women themselves who are playing the most dominant roles in shaping a better future for all Egyptian women and youth. Women are fully engaged with the inspired economic reform plans of the Egyptian leadership which recognises in policy and in practice. Women, youth, jobs and prosperity are at the heart of Egypt's strategy for national growth and Egyptian women are ready to play their rightful role in taking Egypt forward into a peaceful, prosperous future. There are windows, indeed doors, of opportunity now opening for Egyptian women that would have been unattainable and unimaginable just a generation ago. AIWF stands ready to support our partners in all their valuable efforts to move momentum forward on women's economic empowerment in Egypt and the wider Arab world."

### **Francis J Ricciardone** **President, American University in Cairo**

Francis Ricciardone began his Keynote Address by stating that it was an honour to be hosting the AIWF conference at the American University in Cairo: "I can think of no prouder way at AUC to be advancing through our Centenary Year than by marking it in our century of service to this country and the region with special emphasis on this topic of the conference, promoting men and women in equal measure as engines of national service, growth and development."

President Ricciardone thanked and welcomed distinguished guests Dr Hala El Said, Dr Maya Morsy, and HE Ambassador Mervat Tallawy. President Ricciardone also welcomed two distinguished trustees of AUC to this major joint conference, Richard Bartlett, Managing Director of Resource Holdings Ltd, and Hosna Rachid, Chairperson, Unilever Mashreq. He extended the warmest welcome of AUC to Mohamed Shelbaya, Chairman & CEO of PepsiCo Egypt and national basketball star of Egypt, noting that conference delegates would have entered the AUC campus via the Pepsi Gate, which was a testament to PepsiCo's role in establishing excellent initiatives and supporting good causes in Egypt with focus on women and youth.

At the President's Reception the previous evening, President Ricciardone conveyed how proud he had been to welcome distinguished partners, speakers and guests coming from Egypt, the UK, the US, Oman, the Emirates, Kuwait, Lebanon, France, Switzerland, Mauritius, Malaysia, South Africa, Jordan, Palestine, Canada, Cyprus, and Iraq, noting that it was "quite a United Nations here at AUC" and reiterating how proud he was of AUC's role as Egypt's global university.

Egypt, he stated, is a wonderful dynamic country populated by warm people, a rich cultural heritage, and economic dynamism, and AUC plays an important role in preparing young Egyptians to go into the world but also hopes to bring them back as well to contribute to Egypt's long-term economic growth and prosperity. Egypt has a long history of women's empowerment and has long seen women as engines of economic growth. AUC doors were opened to women in 1928, he said, less than ten years after AUC's founding and decades ahead of Dartmouth, Yale, or Harvard.

Today, at AUC, 51% of Faculty and 57% of students are women. AUC's male Faculty and students are enlightened men who are proud to be working with women. As President Ricciardone said: "We graduate men who understand what gender equality means, not as a political nicety but a requirement of the success of society." He referred to the eight female ministers recently appointed and noted that of those women, four are alumni of AUC. He said: "We are very proud of our tradition of developing men and women to have a consciousness of the role of each other and the role of women in society moving forward," citing AUC's involvement in specific programmes over the years, including the Women on Boards observatory which is an important initiative of the AUC School of Business in collaboration with UNDP. He also mentioned AUC's support in 2008 to 2016 for the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women programme which boosted entrepreneurship among women in the School of Business.

AUC is preparing students for an unpredictable future of work and social development and is committed to helping people "learn how to learn", a statement which deeply resonated with many of the conference participants and several of the speakers who referenced these words in their later interventions throughout the day. AUC sets out to "unleash creativity" as this is necessary for entrepreneurship and critical thinking and learning to "value the penetrating question over the right answer", to communicate across cultures, and collaborate across the divisions and diversity of humanity". President Ricciardone also restated the importance of connectivity, given AUC's ethos as a global university and AIWF's prominence in the international community as a truly international forum for women leaders.

## **HE Dr Hala El Said**

### **Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, Egypt**

HE Dr Hala El Said, Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, commenced her Guest of Honour Keynote Address by stating what a pleasure it was to have the opportunity to engage with AIWF and AUC partners, speakers and guests on the region's greatest economic opportunities. Striving for gender quality, Her Excellency said, is more than just an admirable cause but a sensible economic policy of our time. Gender equality and empowerment of women lie at the heart of the SDGs, and it is a core issue under SDG 5 (Gender Equality), with the 2030 Agenda recognizing that achieving SDG5 would have a "multiplier effect" across many other SDGs including ensuring equal access to decent work, full and productive employment. It is also a prerequisite to achieving half of the remaining SDGs towards tackling poverty, improving education, bettering health outcomes, promoting innovation, and crucially, driving economic growth.

To some degree or other, Her Excellency said, women everywhere face barriers to achieving their potential. Gender gaps in labour force participation exist all over the world, ranging from approximately 12% in OECD economies to about 40-50% in MENA countries. But over the past decade the MENA region has made commendable strides in the health and education domains, particularly as they relate to gender equality. "We should be proud", said Dr El Said, "of the fact that three Arab countries now have over 60% of tertiary education for women, another seven have over 50% enrollment rates and four more at 45+%. This includes the Arab world's most populous countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Saudi and Morocco."

These countries are also prioritizing a wider range of social issues that are crucial to empowering women. This encompasses equal access to services including health care, people with disabilities and social protection programmes. Egypt has been at the forefront of empowering women and ensuring their equality within society, and this is reflected in efforts to improve the representation of women at all levels in order to attain gender parity, promote gender equality, and the empowerment of women at all levels. With great political direction from the President of Egypt, the government has taken unprecedented steps to increase the representation of women and their leadership responsibilities, both within the public sector and across society at large.

The number of women employed within Egypt's civil service has been increasing while the overall size of the civil service at large is decreasing. The share of women within the public sector has risen from below 21% to over 26% accounting for half of the female employees in Egypt. At senior leadership levels, Egypt's recent Cabinet reshuffle increased the number of women ministers to eight; however, it is not only the number but the portfolios that these ministers are handling that is significant. The share of women representatives in the Egyptian Parliament has also increased to a record 15%, which is a giant leap from the 2% representation in 2012, so women have moved forward with considerable momentum from 2% in 2012 to 15% in 2017.

Women's economic empowerment is at the heart of Egypt's Vision 2030 which recognizes that women's full and equal participation in economy is a vital step to achieving sustainable development. Egypt's aim is to increase engagement with the workforce, and limit women's unemployment which has dropped from 24% in 2011-2017 to (for the first time) 19%. The Egyptian leadership is concerned with ensuring that 50% of Egypt's microfinance activities target women and aims to increase the number of women with bank accounts to keep improving financial inclusion, which has gone from 9% to 27% in 2018.

Egypt is also prioritizing a wide range of social issues that are crucial, Her Excellency said, "to our daughters and granddaughters, including equal access to all services including health and social protection programmes. Investing in people is at the core of the government's agenda." To this end, Dr El Said said: "We have launched the first programme in the region in the public sector for executive women's leadership in the public sector with Missouri State University and UN Women which focuses on capacity building for women in the civil service, with the clear objective of increasing representation across senior management including Board of Directors of public companies and governments at large." It is worth noting that half of capacity building programme beneficiaries are women.

Her Excellency highlighted the hard work and success of Egyptian women leaders already bearing fruit, noting that "we still face challenges in the region" and that the "agenda among us must focus on dual key issues of employment and employability. Women make enormous contributions whether in businesses, on farms, entrepreneurship or as employees, or even through unpaid work at home, yet approximately only one out of every four women are participants in the labour force across the region. In several countries across the region there is an inverse correlation between educational attainment and employment prospects - with women graduates less successful in finding employment than peers in primary education or no education at all, in fact over half of job-seeking women with a university degree do not find work within a year of graduating or even more. So, we must continue to invest further in our women's human capital to ensure that we benefit from high returns to our efforts to develop the labour market."

The question has undoubtedly shifted to 'how can we as a region afford not to take action on this issue?'. "The multiplier effect," said Dr El Said, "would be transformational for our economy, with profound effect on spending, production and GDP across the region. Women are the ultimate agents of aggregate demand accounting for 70% of global spending - for economic growth this is a positive. If we want growth, and I quote Christine Lagarde, let's put women in the driving seat."

Empowerment also helps to create a globally competitive private sector capable of success in an increasingly globalized economy and improve companies' access to much stronger talent pools. Dr El Said said: "We should build on this and not be ashamed to recognise where more work is needed. Our goals and aspirations must go beyond numbers and check boxes. We should accept no less than transforming institutional culture so we can access and capitalize on our full potential, creating an environment that embraces equality and is inclusive towards all our citizens."

So, what needs to be done? Firstly, Dr El Said said: “We need collective action for and by women. Mobilizing around common and shared concerns is key. First, access to education alone is not enough – there is an urgent need to focus on improving education quality, as that has a proven impact on women’s self-esteem and desire to achieve decision-making autonomy. Women are found to benefit more than men from higher education in terms of improving their labour market conditions. In addition, there is a positive correlation between mothers with higher levels of education and her daughter’s chances of access to school so we can see a domino effect here.”

Secondly, said Dr El Said, supporting women’s organizational capacity and women’s access to paid work transforms the economic pathway, empowers collective empowerment, active citizenship, entrepreneurship policy, access to finance and a variety of other non-financial services. Third, encouraging more women to use information and communication technology as it is a promising field for improving women’s engagement in the labour market and is an empowering agent in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. “Our daughters,” said Dr El Said, “must grow up in a region where opportunity, access to resources and services is equal in every sense. This is a moral imperative and also the greatest potential economic stimulus in our economic future.”

### **Mohamed Shelbaya** **Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo Egypt**

Mohamed Shelbaya, who graduated from AUC, conveyed how honoured he was to be part of the Women as Engines of Economic Growth programme at AUC with PepsiCo Egypt as Lead Conference Partner. He shared how proud PepsiCo are to be the Global Benefactor Partner of the Arab International Women’s Forum, calling the conference a “great forum to express thoughts and ideas on how to elevate women in Egypt. We are very proud of our partnership with the Arab International Women’s Forum that has continued for nearly ten years now. What has made the partnership so successful is that our goals are similar, and we share a common determination to break stereotypical views about women and bring greater public awareness of their capabilities and their potential in society and the workplace.”

Mr Shelbaya said: “We are here today to achieve in Egypt what we have achieved in PepsiCo as Egypt deserves this from us. Women as Engines of Economic Growth – what a powerful theme. This theme,” he continued, “is very close to my heart and is more personal than business-driven as I was raised by a single mother who never let circumstances stop her – she challenged the status quo, and was the first Egyptian woman to graduate in Mechanical Engineering. She became the first female educator in a male dominated environment at the Faculty of Engineering in Cairo, paving the way for women to follow in her footsteps, breaking this stigma about male dominance in academia and STEM.”

Mr Shelbaya said: “Egypt today has placed women’s empowerment as a top priority in the national agenda, recognizing that women are a resource and a powerhouse that can really change the economy. We have eight ministers who are powerful women ministers changing the future of Egypt, and their appointment was a statement from the country that women deserve to be in that Cabinet not only playing a minor or token role but playing their full role in the future prosperity of Egypt.”

At PepsiCo, Mr Shelbaya said: “Our Head of Legal is a woman, our Head of Procurement is a woman, our marketing lead is a woman, our HR lead is a woman, all women leaders who are managing large teams of men and women who are really making an impact”. Despite five years of tough economic conditions PepsiCo Egypt was nominated twice as the best PepsiCo company within the group globally, and as Mr Shelbaya shared, has also successfully launched numerous CSR programs focused on youth and women. There is still, Mr Shelbaya said, much

more work to be done, as many women remain invisible, unrecognized and not equal, but that is changing and changing fast, with organisations like the Arab International Women's Forum working closely with corporate partners to bring women into the workforce.

Mr Shelbaya ended his Guest of Honour Keynote by addressing women entrepreneurs, mothers, daughters, wives and sisters directly: "You all make a considerable impact on the economy and on the productivity of this country. You are the other half of the equation that cannot be ignored. Women are the "designated new engines of economic growth, the rising new stars of our company and our economy. I would encourage you to challenge the status quo, continue to strive for what is yours, develop yourself and have a 'can do' attitude. There are always going to be obstacles, it's never an easy road, some of these obstacles can be overcome with ease and others will be challenging. Never give up."

### **HE Dr Maya Morsy** **President, National Council for Women, Egypt**

Her Excellency Dr Maya Morsy began her Guest of Honour Keynote Address by commending AIWF Founder & Chairman Haifa Al Kaylani for being a longstanding supporter of the National Council for Women for the last 20 years and commended Dr Hala El Said as a valued "friend, leader, champion and a real believer in empowering women."

Dr Morsy's Keynote Address was centered on mainstreaming strategies in all aspects of women's empowerment. She said: "Women are the powerhouse because they are changing the mindset and the whole setup. Women have set the stage with key messages on the SDGs." Dr Morsy shared that over 175,000 people had participated in the formulation of the women's strategy for Egypt, with 180 civil society and more than 5000 experts represented in a very participatory way, taking it to the highest level in the country by having the strategy endorsed by the President and taking it to Cabinet.

Dr Morsy said: "Egyptian legislative reform is extremely important to ensure that women are in the agenda of the legislation, as well as the implementors on the ground. New investment must, for the first time, mention equal opportunity. We have new bankruptcy law, because women are sometimes afraid to enter into new ventures because of entrance and exit. We now have sexual harassment law in the workplace, new inheritance law, a new labour code for the first time, giving women in the government maternity rights. We have prioritized policies for childcare and elderly care, with Her Excellency Dr Ghada Wali leading as Social Solidarity Minister. Women's financial inclusion is also a key priority of the Central Bank in Egypt."

In addition, "Egypt's strategy for women is highly focused on entrepreneurship, mentorship, financial literacy, innovation which is critical for the digital economy, advocacy and campaigns." For the NCW, Dr Morsy reported, "social media was a powerhouse, allowing us to talk to girls and women on social media being a real success story, reaching 121 million to address norms and behaviours that negatively impacted their ability to play an active role in society."

The new generation are facing challenges due to economic factors and family / work constraints, because men formulate the rule of the ecosystem in business. Dr Morsy said: "I am so happy to see a gender champion in the private sector" and paid tribute to PepsiCo Egypt and specifically Mohamed Shelbaya for bringing men's voices into the conversation, saying: "A lot of time we don't evaluate men in our mindset. Very often we judge women in leadership positions, but we don't judge men in the same way. In doing this, we are putting the load onto women and the younger generation. Power is in numbers and we need to push for more women in the business sector. Power is involvement, more multitasking, more collaborative. Power is less confrontational, more supportive, more participatory. Women have power in their presence."

Dr Morsy said: "Real equality does not mean valuing women in the same terms as men – they have different values and they should be evaluated differently, they should be respected and if they want to stay home and work from home encourage them, if she wants to have a business encourage her. Policy change should be at the forefront, and culture and behavior can be changed. If family comes first it does not mean work comes second. Motherhood should be respected, so recruiters should not be asking women if they are engaged, or married (in order to calculate how long until she is pregnant), or if she has children what are the ages (to calculate whether she will be out of work because of a sick child)."

"My message to the private sector," Dr Morsy continued, "is firstly that equality means business, and not including women in all sectors is not just harmful to women but bad for your business. Secondly, low female participation imposes costs on the economy and efficiency alone – it is essential to tap into and capture underutilized resources. Three, the principle of equality and its application constitutes one of the fundamental rights that are internationally recognized, so equality in the workplace should therefore be recognised as a basic principle and a right in all countries and workforces."

"The fourth point is that gender sensitive policies must to be adopted by the private sector and women must have equal treatment from announcement to hiring to promotion, and enjoy equal opportunity at all levels, with part-time and flexible working hours encouraged. Fifth, a cost benefit analysis for childcare systems and services should be tested by the private sector, and maternal leave and maternal support is not a waste of investment, so women must be treated fairly."

To women directly, Dr Morsy said: "A strong woman is one determined to do something others are not to do, to break the glass ceiling shatter and the walls that constrain you. Power will never be given to you. You must use your power and presence to claim it."

## 5.2 PANEL DISCUSSIONS

### Panel 1: Advancing women's leadership and gender diversity on corporate boards and in family business: Best practices from Egypt, the broader MENA region and internationally

#### Panel Chair

**Dr Ghada Howaidy**, Associate Dean Executive Education and External Relations, School of Business, American University in Cairo, Egypt

#### Guest Speakers

**Mona Al Moayyed**, Managing Director, YK Almoayyed & Sons, Bahrain

**Lilia Hachem Naas**, Director of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Office for North Africa, Morocco

**Elisabeth Guigou**, President, Anna Lindh Foundation, Egypt

**Jane Valls**, Executive Director, The GCC Board Directors Institute, UAE

Strategies to increase women's representation on boards have gained considerable momentum in the last few years, which include "implementing quotas, setting voluntary targets, disclosing and increasing transparency in director appointments, and addressing unconscious bias". There is less emphasis on regulation and quotas in corporate governance reform in the region, and more on developing Arab women to take on future board leadership roles, with some countries in recent years legislating to improve women's participation on corporate boards and in executive leadership.

There are also numerous NGOs and organisations in the region that are working closely with the private sector to strengthen corporate governance and promote the role of female leadership on corporate boards. The Women on Boards consortium is one such initiative created by the American University in Cairo School of Business, with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2014. This first session was accordingly dedicated to examining strategies for building awareness, educating, promoting opportunities and enhancing positive change in the community towards greater acceptance of women in business and corporate reform that brings more women leaders into the Boardroom.

Dr Ghada Howaidy, Associate Dean Executive Education and External Relations, School of Business, American University in Cairo, Egypt, introduced all Guest Speakers on this first interactive panel an "embarrassment of riches". Dr Howaidy started her Panel Chair Keynote with a quote from Victor Hugo: "You can resist an invading army; you cannot resist an idea whose time has come." Women's empowerment on boards, she said, was an idea whose time had come.

Dr Howaidy began with an overview of the situation for women on corporate boards and in family business in Egypt, in order to demonstrate why women must be better represented in leadership positions and more specifically on corporate boards. An informational video on the *Women on Boards Observatory*, established in 2017 at the AUC School of Business, was played, summarising the main activities of the observatory which include issuing an annual

monitoring report of representation of women as Members of Boards of Directors in Egypt and creating a database of qualified women who can serve on Boards.

Dr Howaidy talked about Egypt's 2030 Vision which had been endorsed by the Egyptian President in 2017 and adopts a rights-based approach in line with SDGs. The strategy, she explained, promotes and recommends women for 30% leadership on Boards by 2030. The Observatory, she shared, brings together a unique gathering of governments, civil society, institutions, and their report produces the national indicator for women on boards, identifying the gaps that need to be addressed to meet the 2030 goals. The key 2018 findings were: listed companies have 10.2% women on the Board, 46% listed companies have at least one woman on the Board, and 59% of banks have at least one woman on the Board. The National Indicator for Women on Boards in 2018 was 9% for sectors represented in the monitoring report. She said: "International research shows that one female member of the Board is token, two is presence and three is voice."

Dr Howaidy introduced Ms Mona Almoayyed, the Managing Director of one of Bahrain's biggest family businesses established 80 years ago by her father, and asked her about specific challenges faced to protect the family business. Ms Almoayyed began her panel intervention with a picture of Bahrain today, where women occupy all sorts of senior leadership positions, as Ambassadors, lawyers, doctors, auditors ... "there is no ceiling for women," she said, "as 40% of labour are women, and 20% of Parliament are women." This, she said, was good for Bahrain compared to the 1970s when she graduated from university and women's senior leadership was unheard of, with women only taken on for lower jobs with a clear glass ceiling in place that women simply couldn't break through. Ms Almoayyed told of how she graduated and joined her father's business but was told from day one that her brother would become manager of the business and was instead given administrative roles. Ms Almoayyed recalled that her father had said: "You are married and have children; you have to take care of them"; however, "I wanted to join the business and I wanted to work hard and prove to him that I was dedicated and as good as my brothers. A few years before he died, he said I had gained his confidence and appointed me as Managing Director of the business."

Lilia Hachem Naas was then asked about the challenges that women on boards face in Africa. Ms Hachem Naas, representing the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Office for North Africa, said that the critical figure of 30% had been defined in the Beijing platform as part of the Beijing Declaration 25 years ago. "This was back in 1995 and we are still far from reaching the 30% representation for women. Based on IMF statistics, Africa today is home to 6 out of 10 of the fastest-growing countries in the world and has the greatest potential and opportunities for growth. It is estimated that by 2050 one quarter of the world's population or 1 of 8 people on the planet will be an African woman."

"On that basis," Ms Hachem Naas said, "women have the greatest contribution to make to economic growth, as where companies have women on their board they perform better financially. In addition, women manage 80% of household spend and are greatest contributors to economic dynamic. Women have come a long way in Africa, where 22% Cabinet members and 25% of Parliament are women. Where Africa is weak is on corporate, as women on boards in African companies are only 12.7% of Board Members." Southern Africa is the best faring region, with 20% of representation, and North Africa having 9% of representation of companies' boards. North Africa has reached and exceeded gender on education, where women are highly educated but aren't reaching managerial roles or directorship roles. In Egypt, there is low representation of women across industries compared to health and pharma which is more traditionally female.

As Ms Hachem Naas explained: "The weak percentage of women on boards is a result of leakage along the career path – 47% of women are in non-management position, and as we move towards middle and senior management the proportion drops so there are less women prepared to join boards." Dr Ghada pointed out that this is a pattern seen across many countries, not just in Egypt, with it being a "systemic issue" to have pipeline issues with women dropping out from the management path along the way.

Jane Valls was invited to share the situation for women on boards in the GCC and was asked whether the low representation of women on boards is specifically affecting corporate governance. Ms Valls explained that she is focused on the six GCC countries, where there are indeed women on boards but unfortunately lagging behind with latest research showing that just 2% of Board positions are held by women in the Gulf region (a very low figure), 42% of barriers are cultural, 22% organisational and 36% self-imposed. She said: "There is still a lot of gender bias in the region as there is elsewhere in the world, but key in the GCC is the issue that there aren't enough women in senior executive positions to provide critical mass."

Awareness of the issue is high, she said, with the World Economic Forum, the UN, World Bank, and IFC all heavily involved in raising issues of gender parity and women on corporate boards as an economic imperative. Ms Valls said: "There are a lot of initiatives taking place to improve the situation and there is always going to be a lag between the impact of new initiatives and change, but if you look at the UAE, the regulator mandates that at least one member of the corporate board must be a woman. It might be a token, but it is a start." There are nine women in the UAE cabinet, and policy makers are very aware of the gender situation and are trying to improve it, with a Gender Balance Council providing guidelines for companies to improve gender balance throughout organisations. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have become more progressive more women in business, with Saudi in particular making good strides. The 2030 Vision for Saudi raised the bar with 30% of women in the workforce, the target previously being 20%. Ms Valls shared that Princess Nourah University in Riyadh is the largest university for women in the world, producing more women graduates than anywhere in the world. There was a Saudi Deputy Minister, women had been appointed to the Shura Council, and Saudi recently announced its first female Saudi Ambassador (to the United States). In addition, she said, the Chair of the Saudi Stock Exchange is a woman. "These might sound like small steps, but they are important signals and significant steps for the region, and I am optimistic that things are beginning to change for women in the GCC."

Elisabeth Guigou was invited to share her experiences of improving women's participation in public life as a former Minister in France and the current President of the Anna Lindh Foundation which covers 42 countries (all EU Member States and the 15 countries South of the Mediterranean). She began her remarks with an overview of the situation in France, which has a long history of gender inequality but now has a 40% parity government under Emmanuel Macron. Although excellent progress had been made, "I would say that the fight has not ended," said Ms Guigou. "In the Anna Lindh Foundation, we have complete parity in all our programmes and even sometimes we have more women than men. We work through dialogue and essentially with youth from 18-35 to promote mutual respect and understanding and fight stereotypes. Just last week we held a prominent gathering attended by HRH Princess Rym Ali of Jordan who chaired the 10th edition of the Mediterranean Journalist Awards which spotlighted the question of gender quality." Of the issues being discussed at the conference, Ms Guigou said: "These issues are global and change of mentality is a slow process. Women need a lot of resilience, and the issue of quotas is controversial, but we need to discuss them because people need the facts to form their own opinions."

Lilia Hachem Naas was asked about the constraints that women impose on themselves, and she replied: "The majority of board appointments are largely informal, based on the old boy

network, and this is nepotism which women generally do not have access to or benefit from, so if we take the two factors together (the leakage from the managerial pipeline and the fact that women don't get into senior management positions because of nepotism), this restricts women's ability to serve on boards and be involved in the decision-making process. Quotas are one way of doing it but there are more measures that can be taken, for example: good legislation, identifying what is inhibiting women from moving up the career ladder, what is preventing women from reaching higher levels? For example, one of the main barriers at board level is that women themselves choose to graduate in fields that are known to be women-friendly." In addressing this, she highlighted the importance of making use of and building on networks such as AIWF.

Jane Valls, on the controversial issue of quotas for women on boards, said: "We can look at the progress that women have made, and we should do that, but it is too slow, and we need to recognise that. The World Economic Forum says it will take 200 years to close the gender gap – we won't see it and our grandchildren won't see it. We can't wait and the world can't wait." The only countries, she shared, that have succeeded in getting 30% on boards are those that have introduced mandatory quotas – Norway in 2008 after the financial crisis, as one example, not just as a gender issue but an issue of equality rights, as they saw it as a way of boosting their economies. She said: "Many women don't like quotas as they feel we should be elected on meritocracy but it doesn't work like that, it is not a level playing field. In the Arab world we live in a rules-based society with many gender biases and cultural barriers, so we need to change the rules [with quotas] temporarily until it becomes the norm. It's not just about gender diversity, it's about diversity in all its forms, we need young people on boards for example who understand tech. There is a clear business case for it, it's not just about equal rights but a business case that shows that having one woman on the Board has an economic ROI. 30% can have a significant impact, that's what we have to fight for, and quotas are the only way."

Elisabeth Guigou, when asked how best to get more qualified women in public office, referred back "on Jane's point about quotas, women should not be content with just 30%, it is necessary to have prominent and active legislation that mandates women's participation." She explained: "France imposed by law a quota of 50% which is fair. We have to change laws, voluntary goals are not sufficient, so we need to follow legislation up with implementation and monitoring." Dr Ghada reinforced on this point the importance of legislation, especially on issues of violence against women because this factor skews the public perception of women (as weak or as victims) and undermines their leadership role in society as a whole.

Mona Almoayyed was asked for solutions to bring more women into family business to take on their rightful role and she pointed out that in the GCC countries 80% of the economy is family business, but only 10% of them survive after the third generation, so "you always have to face the possibility that the company won't carry on and therefore succession is important. When the founder of the business dies, second generation children manage to work together but when it comes to the third generation it is time to plan strategically as it is not always easy for siblings to agree. The main solution is to separate family from management, and to ensure that family members don't go straight into CEO roles."

In her company, Ms Almoayyed shared that they have formed a family council where all family members are in the council and meet twice a year with a strong Board of Directors, more women than men, together with Directors from outside the family as well as a lawyer and auditor to bring objectivity to the Board. Ms Almoayyed also shared that her company had formed several committees, with the executive committee being the most active in bringing the family business into line with international corporate governance standards. She is also trying to create a charter or constitution for the business, and the main factor in the constitution is succession planning and the declaring of conflicts of interest. All of

these, Dr Howaidy agreed, were strong corporate governance issues, and the approach of Ms Almoayyed was exceptionally progressive in this regard, with her solutions representing excellent practice that could be emulated for family businesses around the region.

Dr Howaidy said: "Women look at success in their lives in a holistic manner, with different ways of looking at success that is removed from the linear approach that men take." She then asked each panellist for a personal challenge that each had faced throughout their career, starting with Jane Valls, who shared that because of a gender equal upbringing she entered the workforce not knowing what gender inequality was until her first job interview when she was asked: "Why on earth do you want to work?" She said: "I am often the only woman in the room. In Mauritius it is a very patriarchal society, and when I joined the Chamber of Commerce it was all men in suits. You unfortunately get used to that. Three and a half years ago I came to the Gulf and again I feel sadly that I have stepped back and am often the only woman in the Boardroom. As a professional you just get on with it. I will say, however, that women in the Gulf are highly respected and treated very well with respect in this part of the world."

Elisabeth Guigou echoed the gender equal upbringing and shared that when she became the Minister of European Affairs under the leadership of President Mitterand her son was ten, and so her husband took charge of the home and family. "I have been very lucky with my personal life and my civil servant life, and I will say that solidarity between women is key to women's success and essential to changing the dynamic."

Mona Almoayyed shared that her first challenge was when she won the election at the Chamber of Commerce in Bahrain in 2001 as the first woman in the Chamber together with 20 other men. She seconded the statement of Jane Valls that women are highly respected and treated very well in the GCC countries: "We might not be equal yet, but we are respected. As women we have to work harder to gain the confidence of the people, but once you gain it, things become easier." This echoed a point, as Dr Howaidy said, that Dr Maya Morsy had made about women being judged more harshly than men for their professional performance and their ability to juggle work / family.

Lilia Hachem Naas stated that the support of family and husbands is pivotal to women's success, as she learned when she had the opportunity to go and finish her Masters in the US. Ms Hachem Naas recalls being in the male-dominant international trade meetings visiting Asian and African countries alone and often being the only woman in the room, with male delegates expecting you to be the assistant and not the head of the delegation. "In terms of career progression," she said, "I have seen peers and colleagues get promoted before me even though I knew I was performing better and investing more of my time. I had to really force my institution to move me from one department to another in order to be able to move up with my career."

During the Q&A session which immediately followed the session, Hanan Saab (AIWF Board Member) shared that one of the issues which caught her attention was the quota of 50% as "after the financial crisis of 2008 banks suffered less in the economy when they had more women on their Boards," she said. "Going forward we are aiming for 30% but don't you think at the end of the day it is about posting a quota at least as a starting point then working on this in development, education, as a starting point?" Mona Al Moayyed agreed that she was in favour of quota as "we can't compete quickly enough with men, whatever we do is balanced with family and household responsibilities, and I really believe in quota to ensure balance and fairness between gender representation on Boards."

Elisabeth Guigou reiterated that indeed, companies with more women on Boards had proven to be more resilient to the financial crisis, so quotas would be good in areas in which they were

needed, “and we will need them for some time in the future, but try to have a 50% quota and count the 30% to be considered as a minimum.”

Lilia Hachem Naas on this point added: “The new generation will break a lot of barriers being faced today – we have an important role to play in equipping the next generation and giving them the foundations to come up with a different way”. Jane Valls shared: “To recap, women do bring a different perspective and that’s what they bring to the boardroom which can benefit from gender diverse perspectives, and teams that produce better results and better decisions, which we as women can achieve by engaging with men. For every woman in the room, let’s also see a man who is supportive of gender roles. We need more men to engage as men are not the problem but part of the solution. We need to publish more data, and let’s not get carried away by success stories because we need data, hard facts.”

## Panel 2: Women in entrepreneurship and SME development, the rural / agricultural sectors and the informal economy

### Panel Chair

**Nada El Agizy**, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation Director, League of Arab States, Egypt

### Guest Speakers

**Fatma El Zahraa Aglan**, Agricultural Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, The World Bank, Egypt

**Dr Iman Bibars**, Vice President, Ashoka Global & Regional Director, Ashoka Arab World, Egypt

**Dr Salwa Bayomi El Magoli**, Professor, Department of Food Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Cairo University, Egypt

**For many women in the Arab world, entrepreneurship has been a lifeline to economic inclusion. Some parts of the region are witnessing the exciting growth of networking organisations, online web communities, publications, entrepreneurship training and mentorship initiatives, as well as funding competitions specifically targeted at women entrepreneurs with a special focus on those in tech innovation and social enterprise. In other parts of the region, women in the rural and agricultural sectors face significant gender disparity.**

**As the ILO finds: "Although gender inequality varies considerably across regions and sectors, there is evidence that, globally, women benefit less from rural employment, whether in self- or wage-employment, than men do", receiving 25% less pay than men and also shouldering much of the burden of unpaid work which is neither valued nor remunerated. Women working in the rural sector are also less able to anticipate or recover from disasters or civil unrest, more likely to suffer from food insecurity and poverty and more likely to be marginalized in development projects and economic growth initiatives.**

**Additionally, the informal sector, estimated at around 25% of regional GDP, plays an increasingly significant role in providing entry-level work to low-skilled women and young people, who typically encounter low wages, inadequate working conditions and job insecurity. This second session explores strategies for empowering women in entrepreneurship, specifically in the rural industries, and for 'formalising the informal' economy.**

Nada El Agizy, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation Director, League of Arab States, Egypt, chaired the second panel of the *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* conference. Ms El Agizy shared that she was a graduate of AUC and had an enduring emotional attachment to the university as one of her children graduated from the school and the other was still studying there. Her department, she shared, was related to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, and the session would be focused on women's inclusion and participation in MENA economy with emphasis on challenges of women's entrepreneurship in rural agri-sectors and also in the informal economy.

Panel speakers were invited to share their insights on session topics and themes. Fatma El Zahraa Aglan joined the World Bank Agriculture and Food Practice team in the MENA in 2018

having previously worked with the World Bank Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation team since 2013. Her focus is currently on value chain financing, digital agriculture and mainstreaming youth inclusion, across the World Bank Portfolio in Egypt.

Ms Aglan said: "Within the sectoral context, agriculture and agribusiness combined contribute to approximately 35% of GDP and provide jobs to approximately a quarter of the population". She highlighted the sectors' tremendous market opportunities, mentioning that the untapped export potential alone is estimated at US\$16 billion, which is three times the current export level. Ms Aglan also presented the key sectoral challenges, and particularly focused on: inefficiencies along key value chains particularly with regards to food loss and waste, poor skilling and access to technologies, lack of extension services, as well as prevalence of lower quality, low income and sometimes seasonal jobs.

On water scarcity, Ms Aglan said: "Agriculture uses approximately 86% of Egypt's share of water, and while Egypt has a track record of high water use efficiency, a lot still needs to be done to raise efficiency of irrigation and production in the agriculture, especially given the growing population pressures". To highlight the gender element in the agriculture sector, Ms Aglan used numbers provided by UN Women, stating that 58% of the Egyptian population live in the rural areas, and that poverty is very much connected to regional disparities, where upper Egypt has more rural poverty than lower Egypt. It was also identified that agriculture as a sector is one of the main sources of employment for women, and that while the informal rates of employment are particularly high in rural Egypt, the overwhelming majority (94%) of the 1.8 million women working in the informal sector, reside in rural areas. Additionally, it was highlighted that 82% of women business owners operate in rural areas (usually micro-entrepreneurs producing sustenance level income), and that the majority of them face challenges in starting their businesses due to lack of finance and limited land ownership. Moreover, challenges to sustain their businesses unfortunately persist due to low levels of literacy, limited access to business development services, and restricting cultural norms".

Ms Aglan continued: "Taking more of a macro look on Egypt's Vision 2030 it is evident that it is predominantly about doing more with less – it's about efficiency and productivity. We need to look at new productive models, to decrease food loss and waste, and move the dial and change the rhetoric to tackle negative perceptions of agriculture and working in the rural economies." On ICT in agriculture, Ms Aglan stressed the need for more open data for agricultural research and development and evidence-based policy support, and also shared that "Africa has done amazing work on digitalization of African agriculture, for example, by using ICT to reduce costs and counterfeits." She explained that even though people see that digital technologies may replace certain jobs they could also produce different and new jobs along the value chain. Ms Aglan also reiterated the need for infrastructure, climate change driven action, higher income jobs, youth employment and greater roles for women in the sector as the best way to raise inclusion and tackle gender bias through technologies.

Ms Aglan stated that one of the best ways to use technology in agriculture is to support the development of human capital through knowledge transfer and upskilling and nutrition sensitive and climate smart agriculture. Another avenue of support suggested was directed at entrepreneurship in pursuit of agricultural development, where sustainable business models and innovative solutions would be encouraged, rather than 'quick return' solutions that might not be sustainable two years down the line. This comment came in the context of her explanation of the DigitalAG4Egypt Challenge, a World Bank competition which was able to crowdsource over 100 innovative solutions aimed at raising agriculture efficiency in Egypt.

Dr Iman Bibars of Ashoka Arab World, which was founded in 2013 supporting more than 100 leading social entrepreneurs, is also co-founder and current chair of Egypt's very first microfinance organization, the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women, which provides credit and legal aid for women heads of households. She shared that women

and social entrepreneurship were “two of [her] favourite subjects”, and we all “want to prove that women can succeed.” She said: “I would like to start by sharing our definition of social entrepreneurship in Ashoka in over thirty years and seventeen years in the Arab world: entrepreneur is a French word which has nothing to do with money or business, it is really about the venture, about social impact, changing the market, changing the social systems that affect or cause or lead to any real discrimination against women or against vulnerable groups. This is what we mean by entrepreneurs, and women are extremely important for social entrepreneurship – the more we realise and work to empower more women to be part of the social entrepreneurship network the more we will have real structural solutions to social problems.”

Dr Bibars said: “Worldwide, 38% of social entrepreneurs are women, so we have a wealth of leading social entrepreneurs. In the Arab world we have 114 Fellows in 11 countries, 40% of whom are women. We have wonderful women in the Arab world, but we define success in the mainstream as ‘scaling up’. We did a survey among 1800 Fellows across the world, and identified three ways to define success from a woman’s perspective: 1) *scaling up* to change laws, norms, policies, that will then reduce discrimination against other women or anybody else; 2) *scaling out*, which refers to the number of people we reach (it is important to reach lots of people but do we really impact those people, change their behavior, make them become different people?); 3) this impact is what we would call *scaling deep*, changing behaviour in one village, two, three villages, then cities and so forth.”

“If you look at how women lead, we nurture, collaborate and work from within, and when we start to look at how women overcome challenges, every woman here has overcome challenges, so we should celebrate that we lead differently and this is how the world should be led, diversely. Social entrepreneurship is important because it is about social impact. The beauty of social entrepreneurship is that it is all about local solutions to local problems.” Dr Bibars reiterated Ms Aglan’s remarks about how deeply Egypt relies on agriculture with women in particular being the backbone of the sector.

Dr Salwa El Magoli, who has published 84 research papers in different fields of food science and technology and has worked at the World Bank and the European Union on higher education reform in Egypt and other Arab countries, was appointed by the President in the Senate from 2002-2011 where she worked on laws, policies and strategies that shaped the country in different areas but especially in agriculture and education. Dr Salwa framed her intervention by opening with a question: Can rural women be engines in economic development? “The answer,” she said, “is yes – why? In the MENA region 57% of the population lives in the rural area, and in Egypt 30% of labour are in agriculture. 45% of this 30% are women. Agriculture is a very specific sector – we have heard a lot about women and a lot about what Egypt has done for women, but we never hear about agriculture because it is never on the agenda. Women in rural areas don’t have the access they need to productive resources and services, and there is significant discrimination in the labour market between women and men.”

Dr El Magoli continued: “Are women working under more precarious conditions than men especially in the farms? Yes. Do they work more hours taking into consideration their household responsibility and childcare? Yes, because in some countries they can work more than 17 hours a day, working unpaid. We know that they don’t have access to land ownership and they have problems with physical resources, energy, transportation, human resources, education, training, and financial facilities, because empowerment is based on decision making and who decides on business strategy? Men. Women in rural areas hardly ever dominate the spending of financial resources. This is very important.”

Dr El Magoli shared key issues of women’s empowerment in the rural areas in the MENA region, among them, “cultural sensitivity about women, which is taking too long to change.

Women are being kept away from access to credit and financial services or resources, which means that men will continue to dominate in the financial aspects of business development.” Dr El Magoli suggested: “We have to increase women’s access to finance and non-financial services; most importantly, we need a functional definition of empowerment before a conversation around positive or negative changes in empowerment can happen. The problem is that empowerment is an abstract concept, and the translation of empowerment in different languages dilutes the meaning because the word means different things in different languages.”

Ms El Agizy asked Ms Aglan at this point what the World Bank is doing to promote the status of women in agriculture and the informal sector, and Ms Aglan referenced the World Bank Gender Strategy, gender tagging and targeting process in World Bank operations, explaining that at the World Bank there are more than 14 sectors with cross-cutting solutions, one of which is gender. It was said that “on the Egypt country level, we have several colleagues focusing on gender in the Human Development Vice Presidency Unit. Recently, we partnered with the UK and the National Council of Women and conducted a Women Economic Empowerment Study. Additionally, our colleagues at the Finance Competitiveness and Innovation team have launched a US\$200 million program to promote small businesses and spur job creation for women and youth. In the Agriculture and Food Global Practice in Egypt, we promote private sector led job creation, efficient resource management and productivity, and gender inclusion. Aware of the multiple initiatives that exist (such as those by the Central Bank and FAO), we also encourage multi-stakeholder approach, where different institutions, and various platforms can come together to construct an effective partnership.”

Dr Bibars shared her experiences of microfinancing and its effect on rural areas and especially on women, with regard to raising awareness and advocacy through Ashoka. She said: “We take a holistic approach to microfinance to really see what the woman needs, and we have trained other NGOs to do this as well. Microfinance is vital to giving women choices, as mothers, wives, as working women. There are 800 NGOs in Egypt working in microfinance, reaching more than 18 million, and 75% of them are low income women with 49% of them being rural women. Government needs to adjust their policies, as there are opportunities to reach women with microfinance but not enough awareness about it either among women or NGOs. We need more role models, and empowering women should be about empowering them within their context and giving them choices within that context.”

Dr Salwa was asked what she thinks are the strategies or policies that we need to promote the status of women in rural areas, and she offered a contrasting view: “Firstly, we need to develop a new gender sensitive strategies for managing the agriculture associations, which are the main players in rural areas. They are the missing link. Secondly, we need to increase investment in agriculture in general, and women-leading agribusiness in particular. 500 Egyptian pounds as a microloan is not empowerment – agribusiness is. We need to recognise that 45% of the labour force in agriculture is rural women so we need strategies to recognise the potential of women. How can they do what they need to do, and how can we build their capacity and existing talent? There is also technical agriculture education for men and women and we need to link that with agribusiness and industry especially the food industries.” Dr El Magoli urged the World Bank not only to lend or grow but to invest in added value (linking industry with education and technology) otherwise, she said, “resources would be wasted”.

Dr El Magoli continued: “Women in the rural areas are strong leaders in urban Egypt but we’re talking about women in the farms. What is their situation, what are they suffering from, what is their potential? Individual efforts won’t be as effective without networking or deep engagement between the World Bank or governments or other stakeholders with agribusiness associations.”

During the Q&A session AIWF Chairman Haifa Al Kaylani intervened to share her insights and experiences on this critical topic and to share that she spent, two years ago, a year at Harvard as a Fellow of the Advanced Leadership Initiative 2017, where she specialized in agriculture to address food and water challenges in the region. She said: "We are one of the most distressed regions in the world. Agriculture consumes water and we need agriculture to achieve food security, so how do we balance and set up sustainable agriculture in the region, creating jobs for women (and men), whilst also exciting the youth?" Following her year at Harvard, Mrs Al Kaylani created a model for small scale farming taking on a pilot farm of 10 hectares in Jordan costing around \$500,000 in order to create an "affordable, scalable, and doable" pilot project in Jordan, creating jobs for 15 rural women using technology (hydroponics). "The main aim is to reduce water consumption to save water and maintain production of food whilst creating jobs in the rural areas and creating above all social cohesion between people who live in the rural areas and urban areas," Mrs Al Kaylani said. "I am proud to share that the World Bank responded very enthusiastically to the project when I was at Harvard and they offered me a grant to launch the first project in Jordan as part of their drive to do more work in the region in the sector. My initial project is now being implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture in Jordan, with the government fully involved, and to have the support of the FAO. Fundamentally, we cannot do things alone, and working with others is key."

On the need for a social enterprise law in the region, Mrs Al Kaylani said: "I am committed to social enterprises, which I studied at Harvard and got to understand about social enterprise and impact investing, but when I came to set up my project in Jordan, I found that there is no law for social enterprise. I went to Beirut to do another project with AUB and found that there is no law for social enterprise there either – so we need laws that allow you to set up social enterprise with tax exemptions as they do in Europe and US as this way we can get impact investors to invest in the region and in agriculture. Addressing Dr Salwa's point on access to markets, every farmer I have met in the implementation of my project has pointed out that access to markets is difficult – you can produce but where do you sell your produce? You have to guarantee your produce has a market from day one and this is not always easy to do."

A representative from the Central Bank of Egypt pointed out that agriculture takes priority in terms of the Central Bank's current initiatives and works closely with the World Bank to gather government entities together to optimize and maximize. Impact investing is very important not just as a CSR activity but also in terms of value, but impact assessments must be done as the more you can show impact the more funds are attracted to the region. Another participant commented on rural women and their involvement in agriculture and SME support, with the missing component being financial education programmes – women in rural areas need to learn how to deal with banks, to understand what the bank is capable of giving them, how to open an account, make a transaction, and to understand what else is available other than a small loan. There are many other transactions in the financial sector and financial literacy is important to start a business or go into entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector.

A participant from CARE International also pointed out that women are at the front lines of climate change and the MENA region is not paying full attention to this issue even though it is affecting women and young people disproportionately and will especially do so in the future. Women in Egypt and across the region need to take ownership of climate change as a women's empowerment and human rights issue more fully. Inheritance law is heavily biased against women and prevents women from owning the land that they need for their agricultural business and their livelihoods. Another Participant, the Deputy Governor of Buheira Governate, shared the concern during the Q&A of urban crawl on agricultural land.

In closing, Ms Aglan highlighted the importance of private sector participation and the need to maximize finance for development, and shared the key findings from Egypt-Enabling Private

Investment and Commercial Finance in Infrastructure Report, which is a study that identified the bottlenecks that hinder private sector investment in agriculture, these were:

- 1) Predictability or lack thereof of government policies;
- 2) Fragmented value chains;
- 3) Issues with food safety and quality;
- 4) Access to finance;
- 5) Land titling and registration.

Ms Aglan said: "Unfortunately, there is limited coordination, fragmentation and duplication of mandates between different entities and government ministries. While efforts are currently being done to remedy this, like the newly established National Food Safety Authority, which brings together and unifies approximately 18 different agencies overseeing food safety regulation in Egypt; there is a plethora of work to be done. There are lots of information and resources available, but the most important thing is how to coordinate implementation and amalgamate the work, to get it to result in an effective concerted effort." Lastly, Dr El Magoli, in her closing remarks, called for more 'role model projects', stating: "Farmers are inspired by the successful strategies of others and one good project will inspire another."

## Panel 3: Women in public service and leadership: Towards gender parity in parliament and women's inclusion in policymaking

### Panel Chair

**HE Mervat Tallawy**, Former Director General, Arab Women Organisation & Former Ambassador to Japan and Austria, Egypt

### Guest of Honour Session Speaker

**HE Jan Thesleff**, Ambassador of Sweden to Egypt

### Guest Speakers

**Dr Heba Hagrass**, Member of Egyptian Parliament, Egypt

**Natasha Carmi**, Lead Water Specialist, Geneva Water Hub, University of Geneva, Switzerland

**Almas Jiwani**, President Emeritus UN Women Canada NC & CEO Almas Jiwani Foundation, Canada

**Frida Khan**, Senior Specialist, Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality International Labour Organization Regional Office for the Arab States, Lebanon

**Helen Walbey**, Head of Gender Inclusive Finance, AFI Malaysia

**In most Arab countries, women are successfully assuming positions of leadership in public service and international relations and are increasingly being elected and appointed to political, diplomatic and international development roles, giving women a greater voice in legislative reform throughout the region. Arab women are becoming more deeply engaged in the political structures and legislative processes of the region despite the universally low representation of women in the political sphere.**

**More Arab women in parliament will ultimately safeguard women's interests in policymaking and ensure that women can contribute their vital voices towards the elimination of gender imbalances in legislative and regulatory frameworks impacting economic and social progress in the region. The third conference session, chaired by Her Excellency Mervat Tallawy, former Egyptian Ambassador to Austria and Japan, welcomed HE Jan Thesleff, Swedish Ambassador to Egypt, for a Special Keynote Address and invited Arab and international leaders in public service, regulation and empowerment for women in the political sphere to examine strategies for supporting women's advancement in public life.**

In follow up to the morning's first panel on women on boards, and just before the commencement of the third panel immediately after a networking lunch, Dr Ghada Howaidy took the floor to announce that AUC had just received a press release that the Financial Regulatory Authority in Egypt board had just approved a decision to require representation of women on boards on companies listed on the Egyptian Stock Exchange and those engaged in non-banking financial activities. Dr Howaidy called the development "a real step forward" which, she was proud to share, the Women on Boards Observatory at AUC had had a hand in as they had provided the information to the Authority to support as it made its case to the Board. The announcement was widely applauded by all present.

The third panel was conducted under the leadership and with the moderation of HE Ambassador Mervat Tallawy, former Ambassador for Egypt to Austria and Japan and former Director General of the Arab Women Organization based in Cairo. Her Excellency said in her Panel Opening Keynote: "This is one of the most important panels that affect women, present and future. Women are wrongly portrayed in the media generally speaking as being interested primarily in fashion, food, clothes, and there is no spotlight on their vital contributions to family, economy, society. In Egypt, the role of women has been respected since 1919 but what recently made the mark in the minds of the international community is the role of women in the revolution of 25 January 2011 and how women's voices were more prominent than men in voting for the constitution and parliamentary elections. 54% of the votes for the constitution and the two elections were from women and 46% from men, which means that men sat at home or in cafes while women were voting. Unless women make their mark on the ongoing current situation of the country, nobody will pay attention to us. We need to teach our media to represent women accurately and fairly, without stereotype."

Giving the example of women in Eritrea, Her Excellency said: "Women fought in the war and now have 33% of women in parliament because they are fighters. The spirit of taking care of a country's main economic problem and bringing women's voices into the discussion to support this is what will sustain the position of women. We have had a lot of positive things happen in last six years, constitution, renewed legislation, criminalisation of violence against women, and it is important to build on all of these remarkable positives."

HE Ambassador Tallawy said: "Although we have good laws and regulation, we have had poor implementation and a lack of intention to interpret legislation fairly due to social or cultural constraints. Women in public service have also been disadvantaged by the lack of knowledge and data, the lack of confidence of women in themselves, the lack of gender friendly laws and regulations, and of course the heritage of cultural bias lingers."

The third session commenced with a Guest of Honour Keynote Address from HE Jan Thesleff, Ambassador of Sweden to Egypt, who is expertly knowledgeable about the Arab region having served as past Ambassador to many Arab countries. His Excellency Ambassador Thesleff started his Keynote with an analogy: "When you go to the Red Sea and you stand on the shore and you look out onto the water it is beautiful, but if you put your head under the water you see something even more beautiful. Why am I telling you this? Because what's under the surface is the most complicated, the most complex, but also possibly the most beautiful. We talk about change when we see it but the most difficult changes are those under the surface and those of the minds." HE pointed out: "Before going into what I have come to say, there are not enough men in this room – most of the women participants know and agree with what we are going to say but the men should also be here to listen to it."

Ambassador Thesleff continued: "This is a special year in which AUC celebrates its 100th anniversary. It is also the 100th anniversary of the ILO. To explain why I am here, my Prime Minister co-chaired with the President of South Africa the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, and Haifa Al Kaylani was one of the prominent members of that Commission, indeed the only Commissioner from the Arab world to contribute to the discussions of the ILO Commission which are very relevant to our discussions today."

"Women are underrepresented at all levels, as voters in many countries, as politicians, as judges, as leaders in organisations, in industry, in government and in private sector. In Sweden, we have come a long way, but we haven't gotten as far as we think. For example, we think we are very advanced in Sweden but we are yet to have a female Prime Minister in Sweden. In Egypt it is very encouraging that you have eight Cabinet ministers but let's not get involved only in mathematics, it's the political imprint and the model they set as women Cabinet ministers that is the real signal, not the number." His Excellency continued: "We need role

models but we don't need role models only at the highest level, we need them also at realistic, attainable, relatable levels. We are all so obsessed by perfection; we look at those who are fantastic but we should look for what is good. In my view, good is fantastic, a good teacher, a good police officer, that's fantastic, and they are the role models that will really encourage women to take that extra step."

His Excellency explained that he is proud to represent the first government to adopt and actively pursue a feminist foreign policy that aims in every policy decision to ensure that women's rights and participation remain central in the decision-making process. Ambassador Thesleff said: "We have proven that this works because other countries have followed our lead. How do we do it? There are four Rs that guide us: the first is rights, the second is representation, the third is resources, and the fourth is reality. How do rights, representation and resources work in reality ... whether in Sweden, Egypt or elsewhere? It is only 100 years since we introduced the universal vote in the sense that women were included. Today, we have 46% of parliamentarians and 50% of ministers are women in Sweden and any government that would have less than 50% would be a dead government in my country. We have 61% of women in government offices. But let's not be blinded by figures."

"When it comes to our feminist foreign policy, there are things that must be prohibited (gender-based discrimination, domestic violence and forced marriage are just a few examples of what should be prohibited). Then there are areas where we talk about progress not prohibition - for example, equal rights for inheritance, and equal access to education, employment and health. Sometimes we mix up the two - what should be prohibited and what progress we should aim for?"

His Excellency continued: "The second R was representation. Who conducts policy and decides on it? Who represents women in this regard? We need women not only in numbers but in the right places - to illustrate this point, in Sweden we have 61% of women in public / government service without them actually having an impact or affecting the policy agenda. The third was resources. You can be very good at representation and rights but if not equally good at distributing and allocating the resources to live up to those rights and that representation it is useless, so actually ministries of finance should be heavily involved in gender issues."

"It is needless to say that the voices of women should be heard, to be heard is not enough we should be listened to, but we forget the voices of men on these issues. Without having the voices of men on board, progress would be very slow - for this reason we have worked with the NCW and UN Women in creating implementing projects directed especially at boys and men. Gender quality is not a women's issues, it's a human issue and it's a human resources issue - if you don't use your full resources you will lose out in all respects. When I speak to Egyptian men I say, 'you can have 11 players on a football team but you choose only to use 5 of them - how do you play against another team and win if you don't bring the other six on board?' It makes economic sense, it's smart economies to work for gender equality."

His Excellency concluded his Keynote with: "A 2015 UN study shows that if we had an equal labour market, the global economy would grow by 28 trillion US dollars by 2025 and the gross world product would rise by 26%. We don't count all the unpaid work that goes into the economy that nobody pays for and nobody even counts. Women are underrepresented in the political and public space but they are also underrepresented in private sector and private enterprise, innovation, entrepreneurship, STEM and engineering."

Almas Jiwani followed on from His Excellency's address: "Do we really want to achieve *statistical* gender equality in parliament and corporate policy? Why aim for gender parity if a majority were needed to achieve our real goals? Should we not refocus our objectives

based on what we want to specifically achieve, and opt for quality not quantity of women representatives? As of December 2018, the global participation rate of women in national parliaments was about 24.1%. Canada has gender parity and Rwanda has the most women in parliament in the world. Who can argue that either of these countries have achieved better, more efficient, more democratic, more equitable, more successful government?"

Ms Jiwani continued: "Globally, only a little more than 20% of the government ministers are women and five of the most commonly held portfolios of women ministers are: social affairs, family / children and the disabled, environment and natural resources, employment, labour and vocational training, and trade and industry. In the corporate world they are making rapid strides in the right direction, and the share of women in senior roles globally is increasing incrementally. In 2019, 29% of senior management roles are held by women, which is the highest number ever on record. 87% of global businesses have at least one woman in senior management, however almost half of them are human resources directors."

"Entrepreneurs are strongly influenced by role models in social conditions. Women entrepreneurs must be promoted as role models, the education system must promote gender neutrality and women should not be discouraged from pursuing a career in the field of STEM or other traditionally male-dominated disciplines." Ms Jiwani went on to say: "More targeted action can also be taken to ensure that the family, social and fiscal policies do not discriminate against female entrepreneurship. How can we measure entrepreneurial activities of women?" As Ms Jiwani shared, 75% of the world's total unpaid care is undertaken by women including the vital task of keeping households functioning, childcare, cooking, and cleaning. Unpaid work amounts to as much as \$10 trillion of output per year, roughly equal to 13% of global GDP. "That is the crux of the matter," Ms Jiwani said, "that women take on the brunt of these activities and advocating for gender parity is not enough. Through an overhaul in policy need to liberate the power of women and empower them to get more involved in business and the state. Strong women will no doubt succeed in this, but the majority of women will need assistance and guidance."

Dr Heba Hagrass referred back to the creation of the Egyptian constitution which stated that there should be 'suitable' representation for women in the parliament, meaning that the drafters could avoid mandating a specific number. After the historic Egyptian elections, around 90 women parliamentarians entered into office and were well received and well treated in the Parliament. "It was very encouraging when we were moving around in the parliament that we felt the hospitality of our colleagues around and in all the rooms and all the committees - our first fight came when we started asking to head these committees. This was the real struggle and here started the lobbying over not allowing women real representation to participate on these vital committees because of the inter-lobbying between men."

Dr Hagrass recalled: "We were able to lobby with our male colleagues for any draft law that we wanted to push forward and just while sitting with them at the halls we talked about our laws and our suggestions and we got mostly their support in pushing certain laws that we believe are important to us as women, not for issues of women but for us as women in our fields of work. We come from a variety of disciplines and I specifically was pushing a number of laws for persons with disabilities because they have been marginalised for too long in Egypt. The first three years in parliament we created a friendly environment, a cooperative spirit between men and women. The real friction for Egyptian women parliamentarians came when there was a draft for the amendments for the constitution. When men saw that one of the amendments of the constitution was to mandate 25% seats for women in the parliament, some were outraged."

"So I, as Heba and the only member in Parliament who is a representative for NCW, started to rally and try to sit with our male colleagues to see why were so adamantly opposed to the

amendment. They were really opposed to the quota of 25% and when I started talking about the matter with them and telling them why don't you support us for the 25% as more women in parliament would give extra perspective for the family, for women and the underprivileged? Essentially, male parliamentarians were all worried that the seat that would be given up to the quota would be his. Bias prevails - they all believe that women should be at home taking care of our children while we are here taking care of the country." HE Mervat Tallawy intervened to lend her support in that "to implement rights of women we have to stress changes in social culture and mindsets of men, at home, in school, in the media, in films, otherwise the laws will remain a piece of paper."

Helen Walbey of Alliance for Financial Inclusion in Malaysia, on her first ever visit to Cairo, began her intervention with a story, because "stories matter, when we're talking about the 980 million women in the world who have no access to any form of banking, it's their stories that matter." The Alliance for Financial Inclusion has members in 89 countries and they are Central Banks and national regulatory bodies in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Yemen and Tunisia. AFI strives to ensure that the world's unbanked have access to banking. "Last week," Ms Walbey shared, "we had our global policy forum in Rwanda which recognised the 25 years since the genocide. Rwanda has been rebuilt primarily by women, with the highest current representation of women in parliament. So it was in Rwanda that 800 of the world's financial regulators gathered for the AFI Policy Forum."

"One of the regulators was saying about the importance of changing regulation - asking the governor to change things, to include those who are poor, not just worry about mainstream monetary policy. The Governor would say that economic policy was more important, although she was a very senior woman he simply wouldn't listen. In the meantime, a new regulation that came out of legislation enacted meant that to be able to open a bank account you had to provide a large amount of info to prove who you were to demonstrate that you weren't laundering money or financing terrorism. As a woman living in a village, she had land but because of legislation in the country she couldn't own that land but she farms on that land. She goes to the bank to open an account but because she doesn't have the right ID and she didn't have that ID provided when she was born, or her husband has her ID, she cannot open a bank account so she has to turn to the informal sector where it costs a lot more to borrow money and she doesn't have the security and protection that she would have had with a formal financial situation. She has no access to a mobile phone because the country hasn't invested in the infrastructure, there is no broadband or mobile coverage, and she cannot access mobile money or a mobile bank account. There's an NGO in the area coming into the community and teaching women about financial literacy. So she goes on a course and learns how to manage money."

"The Government then decides to invest in an infrastructure programme and she's able to access mobile phone signal. With her financial literacy training she can access her mobile phone and set up a mobile money account she can then start to trade, she can't go to a physical bank and she doesn't have ID so can't get a loan, but she can build up a trading history and demonstrate better repayment rates than men. Through that she can access capital and expand her business. She employs other women in the village, who become more independent and are able to pay their school fees, invest it back into their communities. The woman in the Central Bank is still telling the governor that financial inclusion matters, advocating for a department to be set up in the Central Bank to do this and ensure that nobody is left behind."

"Women respond enthusiastically, and the Central Bank realises they need to engage and tap into the AFI network. They discover that one of the most progressive Central Banks around supporting women, the Central Bank of Egypt (Chair of AFI Board and Deputy Governor Lobna Helal is Vice Chair for Committee) is doing great work, driving dynamic change for women in financial inclusion." Mervat Tallawy highlighted Helen Walbey's story as an excellent example of how women can change what is perceived to be a rigid structure and the power of one

woman to change policy and infrastructure of an institution – it all depends on how the case is presented and the persistence of the advocate.

Upon her introduction, Natasha Carmi representing the Geneva Water Hub of the University of Geneva shared two key points: “I am interested in the empowerment of women through a very specific lens and that is the lens of water diplomacy. I’m a hydrologist working in the water field for the last 20 years and like many others I have also experienced the universal challenges that we have all experienced as females working in the engineering field. In 2019, we are still at 34% for the enrollment of women in engineering. The second key point is that the water peace nexus is now more widely recognised, and I would like to highlight the role for women in this nexus. At the highest level at the UN Security Council and in the United Nations over the past decade there has been more recognition of the value of preventive diplomacy, and more recently diplomacy through different areas of specialisation including water and climate diplomacy. Today, there is an increasing recognition of the ‘water/peace nexus’, or the use of water as a vehicle of peace. When we look at the women and peace nexus, many of you are familiar with the UN Resolution 1325 that was the first framework that actually gendered the nature of war and peace. Although there have been several Resolutions following 1325, as mentioned earlier, the progress has been very slow.”

Ms Carmi asked: “Why should women be involved in water diplomacy? We make up 50% of the world’s population. We are the users and ones impacted most by water scarcity, climate change or water in armed conflict. Most refugees are women and youth, so yes, we should have a more active role. Within that framework we have conducted a very basic mapping of the status of women as it relates to holding more senior decision-making positions whether in water negotiation or as ministers of water or in other water-related sectors. The mapping was done using a very basic questionnaire covering three target countries, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon, to try to identify what the internal self-imposed bottlenecks are that prevent us women from attaining these positions.”

Ms Carmi echoed Jane Valls’ statement that the majority of bottlenecks were cultural or self-imposed, as with this basic mapping she and her fellow panellists had come to the same conclusion, that the main limiting factors for the advancement of women to attaining key water decision-making positions were because of the negative perceptions of female leaders in patriarchal societies. “Based on this basic mapping we have been able to come up with recommendations and possible solutions – one of them mentioned by the panellists was education, which clearly needs more focus and attention given by universities and schools and trying to eliminate this misconception that there are specific fields which are male dominant, one of them being water, the other being diplomacy. Another barrier was related to perceived lack of skills among women needed to be a water diplomat – mainly, legal, international relations or diplomacy skills. In the three target countries we had a high percentage of technically qualified women yet when we held interviews, they were all reluctant to apply for higher positions because they were lacking one of these three skills. There is opportunity and room to build capacity in these particular three areas.” There is a need to build upon this basic mapping, and to develop it on a larger scale, and Ms Carmi welcomed any interest in collaboration in the development of this work.

Where could we actually empower women today in what we are doing? “My work with the University of Geneva is with the Center of Excellence specialising in hydropolitics. The Geneva Water Hub was the Secretariat for the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace initiated by 15 co-convening with a mandate of two years and the objective was to produce recommendations to globally and effectively operationalise the use of water as a vehicle of peace, and to advance a global architecture of hydrodiplomacy. The Panel convened and held stakeholder consultations and produced the report, *A Matter of Survival* in 2017 with several recommendations, one of which was to call on the General Assembly to convene a global

conference that speaks to the issue of water as a vehicle of peace. There is clearly a very active role for parliamentarians, diplomats, women working in various UN agencies, to be able to advocate towards achieving such a conference."

Ms Carmi concluded: "Another potential role where women could be extremely effective is the promotion of the legal principles that would protect all water related infrastructure in armed conflict, particularly in our region which unfortunately is the field for most modern conflict – in most conflict there is targeting of water infrastructure and an impact of that on citizen livelihood." Ms Carmi further added that at the Geneva Water Hub, there will be a detailed elaboration for the role of women in the implementation of the recommendations of the Panel, and that this would be shared with AIWF to be disseminated among its members for further interest and collaboration.

Frida Khan from the ILO Regional Office in Beirut further stated that "the ILO is the custodian of the 5.2 SDG Indicator which looks at women in managerial positions, which means we are responsible for collecting data, analysing and raising awareness about it. This indicator very interesting as it covers legislative, executive and judiciary branches of government as well as public and private sector enterprises, and it measures the share of women in managerial positions, firstly all women in all managerial positions then all women in middle and high management positions, excluding junior management positions, in order to be able to analyse whether there is a glass ceiling within management itself, getting to a certain level but not able to progress to higher levels. In the Arab region, not enough countries are collecting this data, certain countries are asking the questions about women in management positions but not going into these three categories, then there are other countries collecting data but not asking question, then other countries that are simply not collecting labour force data. The ILO prioritises this in their work with member states in the region."

Ms Khan continued: "Even with imperfect data we get interesting insights – for women in parliament and governments, there are encouraging trends. In the MENA overall representation of women in national parliaments reached 18%, a significant improvement from 4% in two decades and in some cases quite a dramatic jump – Jordan and Tunisia have had impressive gains in women in municipal governments, in the Lebanese Parliament there are four ministers including the Interior Minister, in the UAE the women's representation in their Federal Council has increased and there has been a decision to implement a 50% quota in their next elections."

"Also," she said, "if you look at Bahrain's foreign diplomatic corps one third are women. However, for women in leadership and management in general, the figures are not so good. Globally 27% of leaders and managers are women but in the Arab states this comes down to 11% which has increased only slightly in the last decade or so. The ILO looked further at this data to see that of these 11% how many had children and how did they impact career trajectory? Women with children were less likely to be a manager or leader and only 18% of female managers and leaders have children."

Ms Khan clarified: "This doesn't mean that motherhood somehow impairs women's ability to take on leadership roles, it simply points to the fact that women carry disproportionate responsibilities on unpaid care work, they drop out of the labour market or take on easier jobs that don't have the same career growth prospects. Other indicators in correlation, according to recent research by the World Bank, women are less likely to have leadership positions in economies where property rights are constrained." In addition, in countries where there is a higher proportion of women who own firms, they are more likely to employ more women in their firms so there is multiplier effect in terms of general female labour force participation. 70% of the economy examined in the MENA do not have specific legislation in the world of work.

Ms Khan ended her intervention by sharing four main recommendations that policymakers and parliamentarians could consider:

- 1) Highlighting the value and importance of statistics, data collection, analysis to look at the bigger picture before forming policy and taking institutional or organisational steps to correct it;
- 2) For parliamentarians, looking at investing in the care economy is important because of its enabling effect (it enables women to redistribute their care responsibilities and enter the labour market) and because the care economy itself also generates jobs and GDP. Scratching under the surface, changing our own perceptions around care work and recognising it as a shared responsibility between women and men and also the state, not just the priority of mothers.
- 3) For parliamentarians, reforming legislation and taking action to protect women's property rights, reform inheritance laws including laws on joint titling, and introduce fiscal incentives on titles awarded to women. Ms Khan said: "We need to take Tunisia's example by looking at Islamic inheritance laws and going back into the progressive spirit in which they were formed to reinstate equal inheritance rights for women and men under Islamic finance law."
- 4) Protecting women from violence and harassment in the world of work; there is evidence that the majority of victims of harassment in the workplace are women, so we need laws in place to prevent and address harassment and violence. There is a new ILO Convention that has been endorsed by a large majority of member states so a good place to start is for countries to ratify it.

In the Q&A session, a participant pointed out that the mindsets of women themselves also need to be changed in some cases as women need the confidence to believe that they can contribute to development, and that they too can compete in an increasingly competitive global market. On Frida Khan's point about the care economy, the participant raised the point that the region should move away from 'maternal' leave and towards 'parental' leave which would help change workplace culture and would help incentivise shared responsibility of childcare for both genders when they become parents.

Another participant made the point that awareness and knowledge hinges on responsible reporting by the media, as the media is a very important tool that is underutilised, saying: "We cannot just use old tools to talk about future challenges or to implement regulations or change that we are asking for – we need to use the media to convey human stories. We even need to modify the ways in which we are communicating with the media and use more innovative methods to inspire the fair and accurate representation of women in the media that we are all seeking for women in the region." Haifa Al Kaylani, Founder & Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum, interjected to share her agreement with this important point and to share that AIWF works very closely with the media because "we want the stories to come out of this room to the wider community", agreeing also that we need "novel ways of engaging with the media" and that AIWF collaborates for this reason with global media such as the FT on special reports highlighting the successes of women in the Arab world, to reliable and responsible media.

Also during the Q&A, a participant highlighted the need to change cultural output in the region to stop showing and normalising violence against women, in films, television series, or other popular culture and entertainment platforms, and to engage with stakeholders in the arts, the film industry, and the entertainment industry as a whole to take violence against women off our screens and therefore change the narrative. Egypt is a significant and influential player in the Arab entertainment industry especially in Arab television and cinema, and therefore can have a tremendous impact in shifting the narrative and normalising strong, empowered, working, entrepreneurial, leading female characters in entertainment output.

## Panel 4: Reflections on the future of work for women and young people in the MENA Region

### Panel Chair

**Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani**, Founder & Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum, United Kingdom & Commissioner of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work

### Guest Speakers

**Deborah Greenfield**, Deputy Director General for Policy, International Labour Organization (ILO), Switzerland

**Dr Afef Haddad**, Deputy to the Country Director, Country Program Coordinator Maghreb and Malta, The World Bank, USA

**David Suarez**, People and Organisation Middle East Leader, PwC Middle East, UAE

**Dr Haleama Al Sabbah**, Associate Professor & Chair of the College of Natural and Health Sciences, Zayed University, UAE

**Dr Nagla Rizk, Professor**, Department of Economics & Founding Director, Access to Knowledge for Development Center, American University in Cairo, Egypt

**Despite tremendous achievements in all sectors by Arab women, the Arab world's investment in education over the last two decades is not translating into greater inclusion in the world of work due to a complex combination of universal factors related to the 'future of work'. Which development challenges do the Arab private and public sectors urgently need to address in order to adequately prepare the Arab workforce for a 'future of work' that will be irrevocably changed by technology, automation and AI?**

**This question inspired the concluding panel of the conference programme, *Reflections on the future of work for women and young people in the MENA Region*, which was chaired by AIWF Founder & Chairman Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, who in August 2017 was appointed to serve as a Commissioner to the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work. The Commission was established by the ILO to undertake an in-depth examination of the future of work, provide the analytical basis for the delivery of social justice in the 21st century, identify key challenges facing the world of work and deliver practical recommendations about how these may be addressed in the future. These recommendations were published in a landmark report in January 2019 titled *Work for a Brighter Future*, which formed the basis for the panel's deliberations.**

Chairing the final panel of the day, Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, Founder & Chairman, Arab International Women's Forum, United Kingdom & Commissioner of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, opened with keynote remarks thanking everyone for a most enriching day discussing the economic, social and political importance of engaging women as drivers of economic change and growth in the Arab region. She said: "It has been a privilege to listen and to learn."

The final panel of the day, she said, would present us with a unique opportunity to consider future of work challenges and human-centered solutions for the MENA region, from the evolving workplace and the changing face of the Arab workforce to the impact of technology

and automation on traditional vocations and sectors, such as agriculture and other rural industries. The panel would be central to the overall programme because it would tie together all of the key themes, challenges and opportunities examined in rich depth over the course of the day's discussions. Among them: women's low rates of participation in the MENA economy and in public office; the ongoing challenge of youth unemployment in the Arab region; and the situation for women and young people in rural sectors and the informal economy.

Haifa Al Kaylani said: "We see the future of work as one of the most pressing sustainability and development challenges of our time for all regions, yet there are distinct demographic and economic challenges at play within the Arab region which further complicate the dynamics of the future working world in the MENA and African economies. There are, of course, broad differences between each of the MENA States and further differences yet between the Arab countries and emerging African economies. Yet the core challenges – fast-rising populations and the urgent need to provide decent work opportunities for new labour market entrants – are acutely shared by both regions."

Mrs Al Kaylani shared that it had been a great privilege to be appointed to serve in August 2017 on the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work under the leadership of Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden, and Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, together with the 27 other distinguished Commission members representing diverse disciplines and sectors of society and the economy. She said: "Our deliberations as Commissioners took as a starting point the unprecedented scale and speed of transformative change in the world of work and ultimately delivered a human-centered agenda and a rights-based framework for addressing future of work challenges. These challenges are mainly driven by new technologies, climate change and demographic shifts, and they are generating great uncertainty as well as income disparity and social inequality. By 2050, the working age populations will decline in almost every region except Africa (with an estimated 12% increase). Young people especially will need help "navigating the increasingly difficult school-to-work transition", already a well-documented economic empowerment challenge in the Arab and African regions."

Mrs Al Kaylani continued: "In order to allay these disruptions, we need to understand and anticipate the drivers of change and implement key strategies from now to mitigate any adverse impact from technology and automation. Skills building, reskilling and upskilling, as well as a commitment from governments across the region to invest in lifelong education, is key to addressing these challenges for the MENA and African economies". A universal entitlement to lifelong learning "enables people to acquire skills and to reskill and upskill" and is a cornerstone recommendation of the ILO Commission on the Future of Work which would be explored further in the afternoon's panel discussion.

Fundamentally, Mrs Al Kaylani said, "we can minimise future disruption and inequality by supporting women in entrepreneurship and in all sectors, especially the critical STEM sectors where so many of the jobs of the future will be created, to reach their full potential. By integrating skills building with SME development and matching training opportunities to the needs of the labour market, we can further help women protect themselves against disruption to traditional industries and vocations by promoting opportunities to innovate, leveraging those same technologies and processes of automation to reach new markets and grow their businesses."

Deborah Greenfield, Deputy Director General for Policy, International Labour Organization (ILO), Switzerland, which celebrates its Centenary Year this year, began her intervention by thanking AIWF for the invitation to join a panel of experts. She briefed the audience with an overview of the ILO, which was "born out of the ashes of WWI, when the world was in

tremendous turmoil and there were huge movements of people looking for work. Those who attended the Paris peace conference created the ILO with the foundational principle that lasting peace cannot be achieved without social justice. 100 years later," Ms Greenfield said, "that is as true today as it was in 1919, although the world looks very different now, and the ILO has grown from 41 members to 1919 to 187 member states today. In our quest for social justice ILO strives to raise working conditions around the world among member states. The challenges that we face in the future of work are really layered on top of persistent challenges of inequality, poverty, gender inequality, and of regional differences, so we have layered on top of a century of challenges the new trends that we see in the world of work."

Ms Greenfield continued: "Several years ago as we approached the Centenary we knew that we wanted to look forward and build on what ILO has accomplished in the past to address the challenges facing the future of work. As part of that initiative, the ILO Director General Guy Ryder put together an independent Global Commission on the Future of Work and we were so fortunate to have Haifa as such an active member of the Commission and then working so hard to amplify the message of the Commission after the report came out. *Work for a brighter future* was published in January 2019 and many of the recommendations of the report were duly adopted at the ILO Centenary Conference this year in June through the Centenary Declaration. What the Centenary Declaration does, based in part on the Future of Work report, is to chart the ILO's course for social justice as we move forward through the next century."<sup>1</sup>

"The main themes of the report and some of the recommendations tie directly into what we have been talking about today. At the heart of the report is a call for a human-centered agenda that puts people and the work they do at the center of economic and social policy as well as at the center of business practice. The Commissioners saw the human-centered agenda in three separate pillars: we need to make greater investments in people's capabilities – this is a broader concept than human capital because it looks at people in an integral way throughout their life cycle, including their transitions into work, through work and into a period where they won't be working. Those investments include investments in lifelong learning, because we know that the transitions that will be caused and are already being caused but technological changes and the speed of digitalisation and technology will require most of it to have more than one job, and the training that we get will not be sufficient although we know that the most basic training we can have is the ability to learn *how to learn*. That pillar also includes a transformative agenda for gender equality."

On the second pillar, Ms Greenfield said that this involved "making greater investments in the institutions of work, with those institutions including regulatory frameworks, labour administration and labour inspectorates. Institutions will have to adapt to changing circumstances, changing conditions in the world of work and the nature of the employment relationship which is changing dramatically. We are also going to need to make greater investments in what we call social dialogue as a public good, the ability of workers, governments and employers to come together to solve problems."

The third pillar is on investing in decent and sustainable work. Ms Greenfield said: "Decent work is the ILO's shorthand for what it takes for a worker to be able to fulfil themselves on the job, come home safely, have an adequate income, enjoy adequate social protection and have a voice at work. There are many aspects of the economy that can be invested in as we move into the future of work but the Commission highlighted several that are relevant to the conference today: one of these is the care economy, as Frida Khan from the ILO Beirut office said today, the care economy liberates women to join the labour market but if we take the high road to the labour economy we will create over 50 million jobs globally that are characterised by decent work." In addition, Ms Greenfield said, "we need to invest more in the rural economy which

<sup>1</sup> ILO, *Work for a brighter future* (2019)

has been neglected for so long, because women truly are the engines of the rural economy particularly in agriculture. We need to invest in green jobs, jobs that will help us transition to a carbon neutral economy, and we have set of recommendations that address this directly as what we call the 'just transition'."

An important point for the region, Ms Greenfield stated, was that the Commission has singled out investment in infrastructure as key to the future of work. "If we don't invest in infrastructure," she said, "the digital divide between advanced economies, developing and emerging economies will continue to grow and we won't be able to equip workers in countries that are lacking in infrastructure with the skills they need, whether they are basic skills or more advanced skills. One more important message from the Future of Work report that I want to emphasise – in the debate about whether technology will destroy jobs, the ILO do not think that jobs will become obsolete. Work will change dramatically, and the employment relationship is already experiencing tremendous tension, but we don't believe that jobs will be replaced by robots. Rather, parts of jobs will change, mature, and evolve – that will mean that many people will be liberated from certain kinds of drudgery, the repetitive tasks that can be performed as if not more effectively by robots, and they will have to learn how to work alongside robots in a 'co-bot' situation."

"Demographic shifts are also affecting the world of work as is of course climate change. But we are not hostage to these trends. What are the policies that we can put in place to harness these trends so we can continue on a path of developing sustainable economies with sustainable social development? We need to address unpaid work – as we said today women have always made a critical contribution to the economy, but much of it has been unpaid and unmeasured. Less than half of the female population in the world is in the labour market today and in the MENA region there is a much wider gap – only a quarter of women participate in the labour market and the number drops to 16 percent aged 15 to 24. Here I want to stress that we need to tie the challenges facing youth to the challenges facing women. One of the most important moments in a working life is the transition from school to work and we have heard today that this is particularly difficult for women in this region. When women / workers don't transition well and cannot find work as they leave school, no matter what level of school, this has lasting scarring effects on women workers."

Ms Greenfield said: "This is a region that has been characterised by a high degree of conflict and a certain amount of fragility. Women often become the economic backbone of their families in this situation and so the jobs programmes and policies that we implement need to take full account of what it is to be living in a conflict situation. We know from a survey that the ILO commissioned from the Gallup organisation in 2017 that most women around the world want to work, and it is also the case in this region that most young and highly educated women especially want to be in the labour market. But in this region, men's views don't always align with women's views."<sup>2</sup>

Ms Greenfield conceded that it was "a sensitive issue" but that she would pursue it with a bit of data given the value and instructiveness. "This is a huge issue around the world but in the context of today I am going to focus on this region. Most highly educated men are likely to say that women should work at paid jobs. But 51% of men in Northern Africa and 45% in the Arab states would prefer women to stay at home to look after the family and do the housework. This is true for men, younger than the age of 45, particularly in Egypt, Morocco and Libya who are more likely than older men to say that they would prefer women to stay at home and look after the family and housework."

"So how does this translate into the obstacles that women are identifying for their participation in the labour market? First, they identify the balance between work and family as one of their

<sup>2</sup> Gallup and ILO, Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and women (2017)

top challenges. It is important to note that this is a region with the highest share of unpaid care work among all regions and all income groups. Arab women perform 86% of the total amount of unpaid care work. They spend about five times more a day than men. Women are time poor. They simply do not have the time resources to take care of their unpaid work and to move into the paid labour market.”<sup>3</sup>

“The second issue that women in this region identify as a barrier to participation in the labour market,” Ms Greenfield said, “is unfair treatment in the workplace, which includes abuse, violence, harassment and discrimination. Frida Khan (ILO) talked about the groundbreaking convention that came out of the June labour convention about ending violence and harassment in the world of work which we urge all member states to implement because of the roadmap it provides for governments, employers and workers to deal with what is one of the largest barriers to women’s participation in the labour market.”

In her closing remarks, Ms Greenfield said: “We need a transformative agenda for gender equality as the statistics show, we need care policies that allow women to transition into the labour market, and these policies need to differ from region to region, country to country, depending on what we find in each region or country and what the country’s own goals are. We can create a care economy that is a win-win for everyone by turning care into paid, decent work. In addition, we need to deal with violence, harassment and discrimination and give workers the opportunity to enjoy more time sovereignty.”

Haifa Al Kaylani then invited David Suarez, People and Organisation Middle East Leader, PwC Middle East, UAE, to deliver the corporate multinational perspective based on the outstanding work that PwC has done on the future of work and the changing workforce over the last four years making PwC well ahead of the curve on this critical topic. Mr Suarez followed up on Ms Greenfield’s remarks about the human-centered agenda to elaborate and discuss the future of work, employment, the evolving workforce and what that means for women and young people.

Mr Suarez said: “There’s no question that out of all the many interrelated mega trends in the world today, demographics or climate change, the biggest by far in terms of influence is technology. Technology has been substituting jobs for the better part of the last 500 years, since the 1450s when the printing press was invented and all of a sudden copyists were out of a job, and when the steam engine and railroads came along, there were people who used to operate horse drawn carriages suddenly out of a job, then when automobiles came along they created and destroyed jobs simultaneously. If this has been happening for hundreds of years is now any different?”

Mr Suarez continued: “Yes, for three important reasons: the first reason is that machines are getting a lot better at doing complex and non-repetitive tasks, and this is coming from a space engineer and computer scientist by education, having studied AI at Brown University later studying machine learning on my own through a free online course run by Google. I am dumbfounded by what machines are able to achieve. The processing speed we have today is unprecedented in the history of humankind. Computers now can write symphonies, the Wall Street Journal uses a robot reporter that ‘wrote’ 800 articles last year, Sotheby’s sold a painting for \$500,000 that had been created by a robot.”

“The second factor,” Mr Suarez continued, “is that the pace of technology adoption is faster than ever before. It took 200 years for the printing press to be adopted and 150 years for the steam engine to take root, but it has taken less than 3 months for the newest smartphone to take over the marketplace. The pace of technology adoption is incredibly fast.”

<sup>3</sup> ILO, Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work (2018)

"The last element," he said, "is that for the first time in history, every incremental improvement in technology-led productivity is not actually being followed up by an increment in employment. A study by two economists at MIT shows that for every new significant invention there has been an equal (in relative terms) increase in employment<sup>4</sup>. From the year 2000 these two curves have diverged, with a slump in employment and wages due to machines now being able to do things much better than before. We are simply unable to keep up with how technology is progressing, because the pace of development is simply unprecedented. It is," he said, "a very different future out there."

When it comes to the future, David asked, are we going to be substituted by machines? "I don't think so," he answered. "The future I see is of an 'augmented humanity'. Martin Rees, Britain's Astronomer Royal and former president of the Royal Society, has elaborated on the concept of 'meta-humans', where we are becoming extensions of ourselves. The future is going to be an augmented future. Elon Musk has talked about "neural link", connecting computers to our brains because the brain is the limiting factor in humans and the moment we can do that (which Musk has already tested on rats), all of us have a whole new and unprecedentedly wider set of possibilities. So the future is about augmented humanity, and that is why when it comes to the workforce PwC produced a report on the Workforce of the Future (hard copies of which were made available to conference participants) envisioning what this 'augmented humanity' might look like for the future workforce."<sup>5</sup>

Mr Suarez continued: "For the workforce what you see is that the set of skills required for the future is quite different from what we have today. In the survey PwC looked at a couple of things – we asked people, what are the things that matter when it comes to the future of work? Do you think we are ready in the MENA? Global trends in the MENA mirror the same issues trending globally, but what we are lagging behind with in the MENA is on the readiness factor. In 65% of the categories we are lagging way behind, with four particular categories of concern being human to machine collaboration, advanced data analytics, 21st century skills, and the value of wellbeing, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In regards to 21st century skills, Mr Suarez recalled the 'four Rs' outlined by HE Jan Thesleff earlier in the day and shared that a key concept PwC is starting to use is that of 'renaissance talent', which refers to no longer being able to afford to teach people the way we used to. "University programmes have become hyper-specialised, and we cannot continue educating vertically when we need to be educating horizontally. This means not differentiating between science or art, recognising that workers need to be skilled in both and need to be able to engage both left and right sides of the brain, to be able to work both independently and collaboratively, with creativity, data literacy and IT savvy all equally important skillsets to drawn upon. All of a sudden, you have a workforce of Leonardo da Vincis, which is why we call it renaissance talent."

Mr Suarez pointed out that women's economic engagement and youth unemployment is a significant issue in the MENA as well as many other countries, yet: "Youth come equipped in digitally native format, and much more conducive to learning digital things quickly, which is especially true here in the MENA. Including women in the workplace is not something we need to do only because it is right or a moral imperative, the main reason in my mind is because it is completely economically senseless not to do so. We have heard many statistics and studies – one from the OECD demonstrates that if we are able to remove social and legal barriers in the MENA, we could add around \$575 billion to the MENA economy. That's 16% of GDP. The numbers are absolutely phenomenal – for example, we do a yearly study of around 2000 CEOs around the world, and ask them: are you getting a rich return on your investment in diversity and inclusion initiatives? 85% of them say yes. I think that diversity is mainstreaming across the world and it is advancing in the MENA – at a slower pace perhaps, but it is still advancing."

<sup>4</sup> Amy Bernstein and Anand Raman, The Great Decoupling: An Interview with Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, Harvard Business Review (June 2015), Accessed at: <https://hbr.org/2015/06/the-great-decoupling>

<sup>5</sup> PwC, Workforce of the Future (Middle East Edition), March 2019, Accessed at: <https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/publications/documents/workforce-of-the-future-middle-east.pdf>

Haifa Al Kaylani then invited Dr Afef Haddad, Deputy to the Country Director, Country Program Coordinator Maghreb and Malta, The World Bank, USA, which has also conducted advanced studies on the future of work. Dr Haddad began her intervention by saying: "It's a great pleasure to be here supporting the mission of the World Bank group to eliminate poverty in the world and empower disadvantaged people to leverage a limitless potential for advancement." Her presentation would focus on one of the leading projects in the World Bank, which has seen some of the brightest young people from the poorest regions of Tunisia team up with Tunisian women living in poverty to help reduce the economic exclusion of both. This is the World Bank's EmpowerHer project that Dr Haddad first launched at the Young Arab Women Leaders: Women-Led Innovation in STEM conference held in London at the Royal Academy of Engineering in December 2017.

Dr Haddad said: "When countries value girls and women as much as boys and men, when they invest in their health, their education and their skills training, when they are given greater opportunities to participate in the economy, manage incomes, and own and run businesses, the benefits extend far beyond individual girls and women – they extend to their children, their families and their communities, economies and societies at large. This is what EmpowerHer is about, using technology to build bridges between youth as agents of change and women as agents of societal transformation.

EmpowerHer is an innovative World Bank project that leverages the unbounded enthusiasm of youth and their tech skills to overcome the challenges to women's economic empowerment. The initiative develops helpful technological solutions irrespective of the woman's literacy level and has brought together private entities, government entities, associations for women, partner agencies and potential female beneficiaries from across Tunisia in an unprecedented setting, to identify development challenges that young tech developers can work with women to address.

The project has encompassed a series of hackathons across the country and especially in the three poorest regions of Tunisia. In this programme the rural women artisans teamed up with young unemployed tech graduates in Tunisia to design apps to help them sell their traditional handmade crafts to the world and to have access to social benefits and healthcare. Women, especially in the rural areas, and unemployed graduate youth have an understandable sense of exclusion especially in the remote regions of Tunisia. They have high potential but lack job opportunities for youth while the women artisans lack access to markets, finance, social services and information. Supporting the needs of these two very different groups is at the heart of the World Bank's strategy for the MENA directly addressing social cohesion and inclusion, but also creating opportunities that leverage the skills and potential of both groups.

Dr Haddad said: "In Tunisia youth are among the largest users of social media in the region and growing number of university students were studying Information Technology (IT) so I wondered if advanced IT tools could be the bridge to solving constraints for rural women that they have faced for generations. Could IT be the platform to bring tech savvy unemployed youth together with artisan women to find the most innovative solutions to solve both of their problems? This was the start of the EmpowerHer project."

"After a series of hackathons, five winning apps were selected and in the past two years the World Bank Group has accompanied them to build their entrepreneurial skills, to train them and strengthen their capabilities. I am happy to announce that they are now entrepreneurs. They have moved in less than two years from unemployed graduates to 'startupper'. This is development by the youth for the youth and for the women by the women."

Haifa Al Kaylani interjected to commend the EmpowerHer project and how deeply it engages with and supports youth in the unemployment issue and meets women's entrepreneurial needs. She queried whether the project was only live in Tunisia at the moment and Dr Afef

confirmed that whilst hackathons had been held only in Tunisia and Morocco to date, there had been interest from several different countries in the MENA Region and across the world to replicate the same model, so this would hopefully happen in the future.

Dr Haleama Al Sabbah, Associate Professor & Chair of the College of Natural and Health Sciences, Zayed University, UAE, was then invited to share her viewpoint from the UAE and from her vantage point at Zayed University which is very much ahead of the curve in terms of AI and adopting technology and producing tech savvy, skilled graduates ready to compete in the global workforce and in the competitive global markets. Dr Haleama Al Sabbah began her intervention by restating the important words of the AUC President that morning about helping people to learn how to learn, recalling the popular Arabic saying “don’t feed me the fish but train me how to fish”, as this echoed the ethos of Zayed University. She said: “Women are half of society so any country that values development should not leave her in poverty or illiteracy. Measurement of an economy is judged by the development of women. Women are an essential part of society who contribute to the transformation of society.”

Dr Al Sabbah was asked how the UAE is empowering women and she explained: “The UAE has made significant progress in its mission to empower women in the workforce across various sectors and Emirati women have full support from the government in their wish to work and lead in various domains of the economy. This is why the UAE is the leading country in gender equality in the region according to the World Economic Forum in 2018. Women also have equal rights to economic resources, they have access to ownership, they have access to resources, to finance, to inheritance, to run businesses – in fact, they are equal partners in society with men.”

She continued: “Women in the UAE participate actively in the public and private sectors and society gives them the power to do that. About 70% of university students are girls, women make up 66% of all government employees, and 30% of managerial positions across various industries are held by women. Zayed University has a 90% female student body and is also the center for future of work-focused education in healthcare, science, economics, media, business and arts, aiming to equip students to compete in a global environment and prepare for leadership in business, economy and family life.”

Testament to this, she explained, is how many Zayed graduates become leaders in their fields – for example, at Ministry of Health, they asked the university to nominate students to become young leaders there, as did the Family Supreme Council in Sharjah and the Ministry of Education. Qudwa means role model in Arabic and it is an empowerment initiative at Zayed University designed to encourage students and empower them in how to conduct effective academic and qualitative research. She said: “Zayed University is committed to cultivating critical thinkers who are technologically literate in order to empower them for the future and full technology that will be pivotal to the future of work.”

Dr Nagla Rizk, Professor, Department of Economics & Founding Director, Access to Knowledge for Development Center, American University in Cairo, Egypt, was then invited to deliver the final remarks of the future of work session and framed her intervention in the area of technology and inclusion within the concept of AI, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, inclusion and inequality in the Arab world.

Picking up from Mr Suarez’s presentation on PwC’s work in this area, Dr Rizk reiterated that technology can create wide gaps between income groups not only within a country but globally: “On country level it can create global leaders and others that fall behind within an economy at the same time. The beauty of the digital revolution and more so the Fourth Industrial Revolution is that the technology can be flipped around and used to empower people for inclusion. So you have both centrifugal forces moving away from the center and centripetal forces bringing all forces to the center and bringing everyone together.”

"Technological development," she said, "is on steroids in the time of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, hence we have a great opportunity to make use of this technology to improve people's lives in the wider sense of development. The Arab world is a diverse region of countries at very different levels of development, as well as natural and capital resources, but there are many commonalities, not least of which is that it is a youthful region. More than two thirds of the region's population is under the age of 25. Youth are the future of work, but they are also the future of everything."

Dr Rizk continued: "The MENA is a region where we have high unemployment rates overall but sadly especially high unemployment of the youth, of women, and of the educated. It is a red flag when we have people with university degrees who cannot find work. We have 34% youth unemployment in the region, whereas the global percentage is 13. Figures for Egypt and Tunisia are 34.3% and 36.3%, which are today higher than what they were before the Arab Spring. That is why we have informal work, for better or worse, it is a reality that exists, and as with all inequalities and poverty levels, it is women who bear the brunt. We know that trickle-down economics has not worked so we need to think of creative and innovative ways of using the power of technology to include, incorporate and empower the less privileged or less powerful, in that sense. These are all indications that raise alarms and require our urgent attention and action to deal with what is happening around us."

It is important to note, as Dr Rizk reiterated, that the digital divide is not only about inequality in access or technology, but in the use and ability to contribute to content in technology because of gender, age, geography, income, within countries and across the globe. There is much that can be done to leverage big technology and AI for development, and to achieve the SDGs in this process. Dr Rizk made a significant point that has been echoed in all sessions of Women as Engines of Economic Growth as well as in several past AIWF conferences: "An important elephant in the room is data and research and utilisation of it to make informed policy decisions. Data within itself has inequalities and biases embedded within it, both in the data itself and the algorithm, and the input and the processing of this technology can amplify inequalities yet again – and again, who bears the brunt? Women, the less privileged, youth, and the marginalised in general. We need to start the process with proper data, that is aggregated properly and collected using various methodologies, data using ground-up technologies, in order to prevent further marginalisation of the already marginalised."

"In addition," Dr Rizk continued, "it is very important to have an enabling environment and to revive the role of government as facilitator or enabler not as a player. In the region we have a wealth of human capital that has yet to be utilised, and this is the beauty of the potential of technology which can change all that if utilised correctly. People talk about the "thinning middle" in terms of skills, in that tech is always in the hands of the highly skilled because the skill level in the middle is that which can be replaced through automation – and anything that can be automated will be automated."

Crucially, Dr Rizk stated, "context matters. We have to think about what technology means and could mean for this part of the world. We cannot take what is happening in the developed world and decide that the approach of other regions will work just as suitably. For example, we did a study on the situation of Uber drivers in Egypt, on female drivers working for the ride-sharing platform. In Egypt, Uber has changed drivers' lives, whereas in North American and Western Europe, ride-sharing services are the exploitative "bad guy" of the gig economy. So in all matters we need to look at the context and see how best regulation can be enforced in a region-specific context."

Dr Rizk continued: "One problem related to human skills is retention. We have a thin layer of high skilled workers that we have in this part of the world which get snapped up by the Global North, or by multinationals in home countries or indeed by other more developed countries such as the UAE and others. It is an open question: how to capitalise on this wealth and not see

them as a loss to the region? When you talk about the future of work for both men and women, what will happen to the families as part of the role of the government is to secure the livelihood of the people.”

Haifa Al Kaylani thanked Dr Rizk for her valuable contribution and agreed that the right data is critical and what Dr Rizk had said for Egypt could very well resonate in other Arab countries. At this point, taking forward Dr Rizk’s closing statement about the responsibility of governments to secure livelihoods for their people, David Suarez (PwC) posed a question for the panel: “What is the role of government in the future of work and to what degree should governments mandate quotas or targets?” Mr Suarez referred to a recent study which said that 68% of women and 66% of men agreed that the government had to intervene in the private sector. He said: “I am against quotas by principle as it’s a disservice to women to create forced opportunities, almost demeaning in fact, but the fact is we need to create opportunities where there aren’t any.”

Deborah Greenfield said: “We have spent a lot of time on quotas today, as they are a useful tool – there’s no question about it. What quotas do is to force those in a position to hire and to look hard and really examine why they are not hiring enough women and to take the measures that will allow more women to apply successfully. If enough women apply, then enough qualified women will apply so possibly corporations need to revisit how their job descriptions are worded. What are the corporate policies you have in place that will allow women to balance their responsibilities as well as men? What is the promotional trajectory and where are the role’s flexibilities? If hiring women is simply voluntary, we will continue to proceed at a snail’s pace, which is not good enough, so quotas are essentially a big push in my view for women to be hired.”

In closing, Haifa Al Kaylani said: “The issues being discussed today are at the heart of the human-centered agenda that the ILO Report on the Future of Work calls for. Egypt is on the right track towards meeting its commitments to the SDGs, with its strong government, its investment in human capital and education, and its commitment to youth empowerment and women’s entrepreneurship, financial inclusion and economic participation. We have the opportunity now to pause and reflect on the multi-faceted changes that are around the corner and to develop a vision for the future working world in Egypt and the MENA and African economies.”

“The challenges for the MENA Region presented by future of work transitions, although complex, are certainly not insurmountable if stakeholders come together as we are today to initiate vital dialogue and facilitate meaningful connections that will power up new projects, new strategies, initiatives and ideas to navigate the challenges of the working world of the future. Lastly,” Mrs Al Kaylani said, “we all have a role to play in limiting the impact of future of work transitions and turning challenges into innovative solutions. In my view, global security and regional stability depends on it.”

## 6. Recommendations emerging from the Arab International Women's Forum and The American University in Cairo Joint Conference on Women as Engines of Economic Growth: Empowering women innovators, entrepreneurs, executives and educators towards fulfilment of the SDGs in the MENA Region

*Recognising* that sustainable and inclusive economic growth is a clear priority for the MENA States but will only be achieved with the full engagement of young people, with the rightful economic, political and social participation and the valuable contributions of women who make up one half of the Arab population;

*Recognising* that gender equality and the empowerment of women lie at the heart of the SDGs as a core issue under SDG 5 (Gender Equality), the achievement of which would have a “multiplier effect” across many other SDGs including ensuring equal access to decent work, full and productive employment, tackling poverty, improving education, bettering health outcomes, promoting innovation, and crucially, driving economic growth;

*Recognising* that there are broad differences between each of the MENA States yet the core challenges – fast-rising populations and the urgent need to provide decent work opportunities for new labour market entrants with equal participation for women and opportunities for the youth majority – are acutely shared by all countries in the region;

In consultation with valued speakers, partners and all stakeholders in the *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* initiative, these are the recommendations to emerge from the valued contributions of all distinguished subject matter experts who participated at the *Women as Engines of Economic Growth* conference in Egypt in September 2019, led by the Arab International Women's Forum and the American University in Cairo with the proud partnership of PepsiCo as Lead Conference Partner and PwC Middle East as Conference Supporting Partner.

### General Recommendations

**Recommendation 01 | Education reform** Universities should focus on producing tech savvy, world ready graduates, and on graduating men who understand what gender equality means, not as a political nicety but a requirement of the success of society. Universities need to better prepare students for an unpredictable future of work and to take ownership in the social development process. Universities need to encourage a culture of critical thinking and innovative learning to help people “learn how to learn”. Education policymakers should recognise that access to education alone is not enough – there is an urgent need in the MENA Region to improve education quality overall especially in STEM subjects. Encouraging more women to study information and communication technology subjects in particular is key to improving women's engagement in tech careers given technology's role as an empowering agent in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Secondary schools feeding into universities should encourage more young women to pursue STEM and other challenging non-STEM subjects as in many parts of the region there is a lack of such skills among women for careers in international public service, in diplomacy or in policy development – mainly, law, politics, and international relations. Education in the MENA needs to evolve from the highly specialised,

narrowly focused 'vertical education' and to be replaced by 'horizontal education' across the disciplines to engage both left and right sides of the brain – science and creativity combined – to produce a future-ready labour market and leaders who will revolutionise the Future of Work.

**Recommendation 02 | Collective action** We need collective action for and by women. Mobilizing around common and shared concerns is key. Supporting women's organisational capacity and women's access to paid work transforms the economic pathway, empowers collective empowerment and active citizenship, and can help to transform entrepreneurship policy and access to financial and non-financial services as they apply to women.

**Recommendation 03 | Legislative reform** should be prioritised to ensure gender-neutral legislation and implementation on the ground. Laws around new investment must mention equal opportunity and women's financial inclusion. This applies equally to laws around bankruptcy, inheritance, and property. Legislative reform should particularly address violence against women with laws in place to prevent and address harassment and violence in the world of work. Arab women have identified unfair treatment in the workplace as a barrier to economic participation, which includes abuse, violence, harassment and discrimination. Arab governments must take stock of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment 2019 (No 190) and Recommendation (No 206). For the first time violence and harassment in the world of work are covered in new international labour standards, adopted at the Centenary International Labour Conference in June 2019 and currently open for ratification by ILO Member States. The Convention urges all Member States to implement as it provides a roadmap for governments, employers and workers to address one of the largest barriers to women's participation in the labour market. A large majority of Member States have endorsed the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment, and its ratification and further implementation in national legislative agendas should follow.

**Recommendation 04 | Workplace policy change** should be at the forefront of legislative reform, with regard to updating labour codes around workplace regulations, maternity and parental leave, childcare and elderly care policies. Recruiters should be prohibited in law from asking women if they are engaged or married, or the ages of their children. The region must move away from 'maternity' leave and towards a progressive model for 'parental' leave which would help change workplace culture and incentivise shared responsibility of childcare.

**Recommendation 05 | Leveraging the power of social media** Social media is a powerhouse in the region for both business growth, entrepreneurial success and engagement of advocates for social progress with key constituents and other supporters. Social media should be leveraged to allow change agents to directly reach hundreds of millions of users in the Arab world to change norms and correct stereotypes and behaviours that negatively impact the ability of women to play an active role in society.

**Recommendation 06 | Research and data** There is an urgent need to publish more data in the region so that policy formation, economic reform and social development is tied in with hard facts and objective, ethically produced data. Data should be made available on an open basis to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and innovation in the region. Data should be made available in the Arabic language. In the Arab region, not enough countries are collecting viable, ethical data, aggregated properly or collected using various methodologies or updated technologies. Statistics, data collection and analysis are vital to strategic policy design and critical to making institutional and organizational changes in the region that will promote gender balance and address legislative gaps or advocacy priorities.

**Recommendation 07 | Re-educating the media** We must re-educate the Arab and global media to represent women accurately and fairly, without stereotype, to emphasise and 'normalise' women's leadership and success stories across a broad spectrum of sectors and in all spaces – not just top ministerial appointments but including human stories on the impact made by small-scale social entrepreneurs, teachers, mothers, and community leaders. Awareness and knowledge of gender issues and the negative impact of gender inequality in the Arab world hinges on responsible, objective reporting, and regional media training programmes should be engaged with directly in order to highlight the importance of gender balanced reporting. Advocates for women in the region must be prepared to modify the ways in which they are communicating with the media, utilising new tools and platforms to circumvent biased media if necessary.

**Recommendation 08 | Transforming influential popular culture to champion gender balance**

The role of popular culture and the production thereof in the region, which has vibrant Arabic language entertainment and creative industries, cannot be underestimated in terms of championing progress in social and institutional culture and promoting a shift in the mindsets of men and children – at home, in school, in the media, and in films. Without this mindset shift, endorsed in the region's entertainment, news consumption and digital media output, most legislation and policy reform will remain ineffectual. Artists, musicians, filmmakers, producers, writers and other creatives in the region's entertainment value chain must shift cultural output in the region away from depicting and therefore 'normalising' violence against women, in films, television series, or other popular culture and entertainment platforms, and towards engaging with other stakeholders in the arts, the film industry, and the entertainment industry as a whole to take violence against women off our screens and thereby change dominant narratives. Egypt is a significant and influential player in the Arab entertainment industry especially in Arab television and cinema, and therefore can have a tremendous impact in leading narrative change and promoting strong, empowered, working, entrepreneurial, leading female characters in entertainment output.

## Advancing women's leadership and gender diversity on corporate boards and in family business

**Recommendation 09 | Examine the feasibility of expanding the Women on Boards**

**Observatory regionally** The Women on Boards Observatory, established in 2017 at the AUC School of Business, issues an annual monitoring report on the representation of women as Members of Boards of Directors in Egypt and maintains a database of qualified women who can serve on Boards. This initiative should be examined in consultation with AUC and a consortium of MENA and international universities to determine feasibility of rolling out the initiative to Business Schools around the region feeding data into a main centralized regional observatory body at AUC.

**Recommendation 10 | Champion quotas to increase female representation on corporate boards as a temporary measure until there is gender balance on boards** We need to change the rules in the Arab region with quotas until gender balance on boards becomes the norm. Quotas are not only required to ensure gender diversity but diversity in all its forms (for example, we need young people on boards who understand tech and can update corporate approach to technology thereby enhancing competitiveness). Gender quotas should not be limited to just 30%, but to 50% if the benchmark set by France is to be followed, and it is necessary to have prominent and active legislation that mandates women's participation as well as implementation and monitoring mechanisms to guarantee legislative effect.

### **Recommendation 11 | Beyond quotas, shun nepotism in recruitment to plug the leaking pipeline of female talent in executive leadership**

The majority of Board appointments are largely informal, based on the 'old boy network', and this nepotism generally limits women's access to Board appointments and leadership opportunities. If the most influential corporations in the region (largely multinationals and family-owned conglomerates) promote their female Board Member appointees extensively through the global media and all corporate communications channels, put them forward for visible Board roles and committees, and champion their endorsement from the Chairman down of how a gender balanced board is crucial to their competitive advantage, then other corporations will follow suit.

### **Recommendation 12 | Create a benchmark for Family Councils in Family Businesses**

Following the standard set by the AlMoayyed Group in Bahrain and others, a benchmark and toolkit should be created to encourage the formation of Family Councils within family-owned conglomerates in the region where all family members are represented in the council and meet twice a year with the company's Board of Directors, as well as a lawyer and independent auditor bringing objectivity to the Board. Family businesses in the region should also create a charter or constitution for the business, with the main factors in the constitution being succession planning and the declaring of conflicts of interest. These solutions represent excellent practice that should be considered further for emulation by family businesses around the region.

### **Recommendation 13 | Examine the feasibility of a regional roll out of Gender Balance Councils**

Established in 2015, the UAE Gender Balance Council is a federal entity responsible for developing and implementing the gender balance agenda in the United Arab Emirates. This initiative should be examined independently and in consultation with the UAE Gender Balance Council to determine feasibility of rolling out similar Councils around the region.

## **Women in entrepreneurship and SME development, the rural / agricultural sectors and the informal economy**

**Recommendation 14 | Crowdsourcing tech solutions to agricultural issues** Technology is an enabler, some of its best uses allow for raised efficiency and productivity and increased inclusion. Another key benefit of technology in agriculture is the development of human capital through knowledge transfer, upskilling and nutrition sensitive and climate smart agriculture. Key measures to develop a pipeline of sustainable solutions are to promote entrepreneurship, support sustainable business models, and avoid 'quick return solutions' that might not be sustainable in the future. This recommendation calls for enhanced investment in initiatives to encourage people into agriculture by crowdsourcing innovative IT solutions to raise agricultural efficiency in the MENA region, following the benchmark set by the World Bank in DigitalAG4Egypt, in the forthcoming DigitalAG4MENA platform, and in the EmpowerHer Initiative (see Recommendation 37).

**Recommendation 15 | Reframing entrepreneurship** The more we work to empower women to be part of the social entrepreneurship network the more they will deliver real structural solutions to social problems. In its strategy and policy development, in both the public and private sectors, the region needs to move beyond using the term 'entrepreneurship' in the strictly profit-making sense and reframe regional awareness of how entrepreneurship, and more specifically social entrepreneurship, can inspire local solutions to local problems.

**Recommendation 16 | Redefine success in terms of 'scaling deep'** There are three ways of defining success in social entrepreneurship (Ashoka): 1) scaling up to change laws, norms, and policies that will then reduce discrimination against other women or anybody else; 2) scaling out, which refers to measuring engagement with the numbers of people reached; 3) understanding how we can impact those people, change their behavior, and inspire them to

act – this impact is scaling deep, and refers to changing behaviour one woman, one man, one village, one company, one city, one country, one region at a time.

**Recommendation 17 | Reforming inheritance law and property rights to empower women's entrepreneurship in agriculture** Inheritance law in the region is heavily biased against women and prevents women from owning the land that they need for their agricultural business and their livelihoods. Although we have good laws and regulation, we have had poor implementation and a lack of intention to interpret legislation fairly due to social or cultural constraints. Noting the specific benefits to women in the agricultural business sectors, parliaments must prioritise legislation and action to protect women's property rights, reform inheritance laws and laws on joint titling, and introduce fiscal incentives on titles awarded to women.

**Recommendation 18 | Develop new gender sensitive strategies for managing the agriculture associations, which are the main players in rural areas.** 45% of the labour force in agriculture is rural women so we need strategies to recognise the potential of women. These associations are the missing link between women's empowerment and the agricultural sectors / food industries and can offer women entrepreneurs vital lifelines of support in terms of access to markets.

**Recommendation 19 | Improve access to financial literacy training** The missing link between rural women and their involvement in agriculture and SME development is financial literacy. Banks have an opportunity to educate and support women in rural with engaging with banks, understanding the range of suitable products and services available to her, how to open an account, make a transaction, to bank online, and to understand what other support might be available beyond small loans. Financial literacy is important to successful entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector and so this recommendation calls for increased investment and focus on financial education programmes for women entrepreneurs specifically in the agricultural sector and rural industries. It also calls on financial institutions to develop suitable products specifically aimed at the needs of this sector.

**Recommendation 20 | Technical agriculture education must align with agribusiness and industry especially the food industries** Academia and universities must encompass capacity building as the cornerstone of degree programmes in food sustainability, agriculture and food sciences. More attention needs to be paid by universities with regard to how to link theoretical agriculture education in the classroom with technical experience and learning in the field, as well as to link graduates in the agriculture, food sciences and sustainability disciplines with the food industries to ensure that the best and brightest talent have a stepping stone into the industry and into the relevant public sector departments where their education and skills can contribute to future solutions. Similarly, universities must do more to encourage and support student-led entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector and rural industries, linking academia with industry and SME development to ensure a vibrant and thriving sector for the region. Similarly, government policies and departments must plug into this network of academia, industry and people in order to unify the work of various agencies and ministries so there is no duplication of efforts when it comes to food security.

**Recommendation 21 | Introduce social enterprise laws across the region** In Jordan, Lebanon and many other parts of the region that rely heavily upon the agricultural and rural sectors, there is no law for social enterprise (defined by Harvard Business School as "any organization that has as one of its key objectives to address a social issue, whether it is nonprofit, for profit, or public sector"). The region needs laws that allow innovators to set up social enterprises with tax exemptions as they do in Europe and the United States, as this way the region can attract impact investors to invest in the region and in agriculture. Impact investing is very important not just as a CSR activity but also in terms of value. Impact assessments are crucial as the more impact that can be shown, the more funds are attracted to the region for this vital sector.

## Women in public service and leadership: Towards gender parity in parliament and women's inclusion in policymaking

**Recommendation 22 | Governments must prioritise gender sensitive foreign and domestic policies** that aim to ensure that women's rights and participation remain central in every policy decision, emulating the 'Four Rs' that guide Sweden's 'feminist foreign policy' which could be successfully benchmarked in the region and globally: these are Rights, Representation, Resources, and Reality.

**Recommendation 23 | Adding a fifth R – Role Models** The region needs role models but not only those at the highest level, they are also needed at realistic, attainable, relatable levels – teachers, police officers, community leaders, entrepreneurs, are all female role models who can encourage women to take that extra step.

**Recommendation 24 | Create a regional strategy to address unpaid work and the care economy** More targeted action is required to ensure that the family and social and fiscal policies do not discriminate against women. Parliamentarians must prioritise national investment into the care economy because of its enabling effect (it enables women to redistribute their care responsibilities and enter the labour market, for example) and because the care economy itself also generates jobs and contributes to GDP. The region's parliamentarians must work to change perceptions of men as well as women, institutions and society, around care work and formally recognising it in the formation of policy as a shared responsibility between women, men and the state, not just the priority of mothers.

**Recommendation 25 | Government leaders in the region must ensure diversity in government portfolios led by women** Appointing women ministers to lead diverse portfolios, especially those traditionally entrusted to male ministers, will inspire diversity in senior leadership across the board. Diversity in government portfolios led by women will trickle down to diversity in the leadership opportunities that come up for women.

**Recommendation 26 | Women in public service must take ownership of the current approach to quotas in public office and parliaments and strategise as necessary** As with quotas for women on corporate boards, the issue of quotas for women parliamentarians also remains contentious, yet it is necessary for parliamentarians to understand the causes of opposition, identify their own biases and strategise to counter opposition from male parliamentarians who worry that the seats lost to a quota system might be theirs. This is a matter of re-educating parliamentarians through dedicated programmes to promote the contributions of women in parliament and public service and to highlight the vastly positive impact that women's leadership in parliament and public office can bring to matters around the family, the economy and social cohesion as a whole.

## Reflections on the future of work for women and young people in the MENA Region

**Recommendation 27 | Addressing the school to work transition is pivotal to meeting Future of Work challenges** Helping young people and women in "navigating the increasingly difficult school-to-work transition" must be a key priority for policymakers in economic development and labour policy formation. One of the most important moments in a working life is the transition from school to work and this is particularly difficult for women in this region. When women / workers don't transition well and cannot find work as they leave school, no matter what level of school, this has lasting scarring effects on women workers.

**Recommendation 28 | Aggregate research, reports, studies and perspectives on Future of Work challenges and solutions** so that policy makers and researchers alike can understand and anticipate the drivers of change and implement key strategies from now to mitigate any adverse impact in the future from technology and automation. This Recommendation is linked with Recommendation 06 on strengthening research culture, ethical research methodology and open access for research in the region.

**Recommendation 29 | Prioritise skills building, reskilling and upskilling**, as well as multi-stakeholder investment in lifelong education, as key to addressing Future of Work challenges for the MENA economies. A universal entitlement to lifelong learning “enables people to acquire skills and to reskill and upskill” and is a cornerstone recommendation of the ILO Commission on the Future of Work.

**Recommendation 30 | Minimise future disruption and gender inequality by supporting women in entrepreneurship and in all sectors**, especially the critical STEM sectors where so many of the jobs of the future will be created, to reach their full potential. By integrating skills building with SME development and matching training opportunities to the needs of the labour market, we can further help women protect themselves against disruption to traditional industries and vocations by promoting opportunities to innovate, leveraging those same technologies and processes of automation to reach new markets and grow their businesses. Access to relevant entrepreneurial support is needed, which includes establishing and strengthening links within the entrepreneurial community, and provides access to finding sources that are non-discriminatory towards women entrepreneurs.

**Recommendation 31 | Calling for the region to adopt the ILO's human-centered agenda and rights-based approach** that puts people and the work they do at the center of economic and social policy as well as at the center of business practice, by: a) Making greater investments in people's capabilities including lifelong learning; b) Making greater investments in the institutions of work, with those institutions including regulatory frameworks, labour administration and labour inspectorates (institutions should adapt to changing circumstances, changing conditions in the world of work and the nature of the employment relationship which is changing dramatically); and c) Supporting social dialogue as a public good and fundamental to empowering workers, governments and employers to come together to solve problems.

**Recommendation 32 | Investing in the care economy** would liberate women to join the labour market and potentially create over 50 million 'decent jobs' globally. Addressing the impact of unpaid care work on women and recognizing the imbalance in demands between work and family is key to resolving women's most persistent challenge to economic participation. It is important to note that this is a region with the highest share of unpaid care work among all regions and all income groups. Arab women perform 86% of the total amount of unpaid care work. This Recommendation is linked with Recommendation 24 which calls for women parliamentarians given their unique position to influence policy formation on workplace policy and legislation around unpaid work and the care economy recognizing that care of children and society's elderly is the responsibility of men, women and the state, not women alone.

**Recommendation 33 | Investing in the rural economy** which has been neglected for too long, and recognising that women truly are the engines of the rural economy particularly in agriculture. This Recommendation calls for enhanced investment in green jobs and jobs that will help the region transition to a carbon neutral economy in a way that sustains both workers and enterprises (noting that the ILO has a set of recommendations that address this directly, termed the 'just transition').

**Recommendation 34 | Investing in digital infrastructure** is key to addressing Future of Work challenges to ensure that the digital divide between advanced economies, developing and emerging economies does not continue to widen, as workers are already lacking the infrastructure and skills needed to compete in a digital-first working landscape of the present as well as the future.

**Recommendation 35 | Prepare workforces from school age to participate in 'co-bot' working situations** Work will change dramatically, and the employment relationship is already experiencing tremendous tension, but jobs will not be replaced by robots. Rather, it must be recognized that parts of jobs will change, mature, and evolve, meaning that many people will be from certain kinds of drudgery, the repetitive tasks that can be performed just as if not more effectively by robots, and they will have to learn how to work alongside robots in a 'co-bot' situation. If a task can be automated, it will.

**Recommendation 36 | Addressing the high degree of conflict and resulting economic and political fragility in the region** Women often become the economic backbone of their families in conflict situations and so jobs programmes and Future of Work policies that we implement should take full account of what it is to be living in a conflict situation and to be working in a reconstruction economy. In addition, women and young people in the region need to take full ownership of climate change as a women's empowerment and human rights issue.

**Recommendation 37 | Explore the feasibility of rolling out the EmpowerHer initiative across the region** as this project uses technology to build bridges between youth as agents of change and women as agents of societal transformation. Also explore whether the project could be broadened to sectors outside of agriculture or the rural industries, bringing young unemployed tech specialists together with entrepreneurs from a broad range of sectors with more hackathons and by allocating more funding.

**Recommendation 38 | Examine the feasibility of rolling out the Zayed University Qudwa ('Teaching for Global Excellence') Initiative regionally** Qudwa is a forum for teachers, by teachers that aims to elevate the teaching profession in the UAE and improve the future of education.



## ARAB INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM

المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

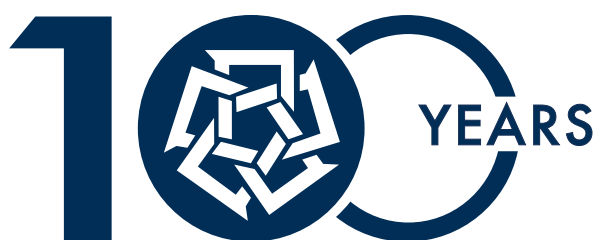
The Arab International Women's Forum (AIWF) is a non-profit development organisation focused on women's development and youth empowerment headquartered in London and founded in 2001 by Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani.

AIWF's Annual Programmes have featured over 40 high-level international conferences since inception in 2001, in London, Berlin, Paris, Dubai, Doha, Damascus, Washington DC, Madrid, Brussels, Sharjah, Cairo, Amman, Beirut, Palestine, Kuwait and Morocco. Conferences and international initiatives have covered a broad range of women's and youth issues and examining strategies for job creation, inclusive sustainable development, the role of *women as engines of economic growth*, economic competitiveness, early stage entrepreneurship in the MENA region, women-led innovation in STEM, and important challenges related to women's peace and security and the impact of water scarcity and food insecurity on women and refugees in the MENA region as well as refugee maternal health.

AIWF works closely with a global network of corporate and institutional partners to promote and prioritise the engagement of women and youth towards finding innovative and actionable solutions to the multi-faceted and complex environmental, economic security, gender and developmental challenges the MENA region faces. AIWF and all AIWF Global Partners are committed to giving women across all sectors and spheres a powerful platform to voice and examine critical issues of global and regional concern that deeply impact women's lives, their livelihoods and their security, wellbeing and prosperity.

*Women as Engines of Economic Growth* builds on the AIWF high-level agenda for action over the last eighteen years under the guiding principle of *Building Bridges, Building Business*, and takes forward AIWF's successful advocacy on women in business, as engines of economic growth and drivers of sustainable change.

For further information on AIWF's Annual Programmes, publications, activities and membership, please visit [www.aiwfonline.com](http://www.aiwfonline.com)



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The University offers 36 undergraduate, 44 master's and two PhD programs rooted in a liberal arts education that encourages students to think critically and find creative solutions to conflicts and challenges facing both the region and the world. It also offers a globally recognized professional community-based education in English to meet the needs of the dynamic Egyptian and broader regional economies. The University's educational assets include the largest English-language academic library collection in Egypt, three modern theaters and 15 cross-disciplinary research centers. The University's modern, 260-acre New Cairo campus constitutes a visionary investment in the future of Cairo, Egypt and the region — a state-of-the-art facility for advanced research, innovative teaching, lifelong learning and civic engagement. Chartered and accredited in the United States and Egypt, The American University in Cairo is an independent, not-for-profit, equal-opportunity institution.



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**FASTER,  
STRONGER,  
AND BETTER.**

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**200,000**  
Students



**50 %**  
Are Females



Over The Past  
**11 YEARS**



**RISE UP  
SUMMIT  
PARTNER**

During the last summit 2018 two gaps were identified as top priority for focus and intervention; women and education in coordination with the ministry of social solidarity and the UN announcing "Egypt Hackathon 2030", where the winning team who came up with a social platform that aims to connect, mentor, and empower women in the sports sector in Egypt through an application name هُنَّ.



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