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AIWF Founder & Chairman's Message

As we enter the last quarter of this unprecedented year, we are greatly encouraged by the ray of hope in the recent announcement of the long-awaited possibility of a COVID-19 vaccine, which has been developed by **Pfizer** and **BioNTech**. We all hope very much that this important development will help to restore some stability and to protect people all over the world, in developed and emerging economies and leaving nobody behind, as we are reminded of the vast inequalities that the pandemic has revealed in many regions and especially through the lens of gender and economic inclusion.

COVID-19 has presented the most serious global public health crisis of our time, the impact of which will be felt for many years to come, not only in the field of health but also in the economy, in job creation, and in the everyday lives of workers around the world. Women have been at the frontline of conflicts and crises many times throughout history, and they have been at the heart of humanising the response to this pandemic from the beginning.

Globally, women account for 70% of the health and social care workforce and deliver care to around 5 billion people, yet there is a gender gap in compensation for the global workforce of 28%. Women are at the heart of food security, a vital need for the world's population, and yet they have become most vulnerable to poverty and joblessness. In every economy, women are disproportionately bearing the brunt of unemployment and mass redundancies, with millions of women employed in the sectors most affected by quarantines and lockdown restrictions, including travel, tourism, restaurants, food production, and retail. Women also make up the majority of workers in the informal economy and in agriculture around the world, many of them lacking any form of economic security or social protections. Further, women are absorbing most of the unpaid care responsibilities through this pandemic, with women performing 76% of the total hours of unpaid care work globally.

In the MENA Region, COVID-19 has greatly exacerbated pre-existing social and economic inequalities, with women three times more likely to lose their jobs than their male counterparts, and nearly



Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, Founder & Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum

20% of formal and informal roles now under threat. Overall, severe lockdown restrictions have greatly disrupted economic activity in the MENA, with an estimated 19.5% of working hours lost in the first quarter of 2020 across Arab states – the equivalent of 23 million full time jobs. Women-led entrepreneurship and women's employment and progression in the private sector have been deeply impacted, and the ability of young people to access technology for education in some states risks a reversal in the tremendous gains that the region has made in education over the last two decades.

Losses like these threaten to regress the many positive gains achieved by women not just in the Arab region but globally. Women have long been at the heart of civil society and yet have been excluded from the decision-making roles steering governmental pandemic response policies. Even before the pandemic, women were still such a long way from achieving gender parity in governments, parliaments, cabinets or in the private sector. Today, although many in the international development community are raising much-needed awareness of the gender dimension of the COVID-19 crisis, UN Women finds that "gender concerns are not yet shaping the decisions that mainly male leaders are making."

From Day One AIWF has always believed that empowering women to gain decision-making authority and control over their lives is of crucial importance to building equitable and sustainable societies, in the MENA Region. Now, ensuring woman's equal representation in decision-making positions in managing the COVID-19 pandemic is critical to the long-term economic and social stability of the region and indeed all regions; quite simply, without women at the top table, hard-won gains and progress in the region will rapidly reverse, and it will take decades to restore momentum to where it was just a year ago. The key to empowering, engaging and including women in the MENA region, at both local and national levels, is strengthening women's voices and leadership, and accelerating women's equality in law and in practice to accelerate their leadership in communities, their participation in the economy, their engagement in the civic space, and their contributions at the highest levels of the political process.

The pandemic has forced a need for all states to 'build back better' which could, if leveraged correctly, drive gender equality in the region and unleash women's potential to contribute to economic prosperity. In our families, our communities, our workplaces, our corporations, and in our organisations, we all need to keep this conversation going, and keep coming together to initiate vital dialogue and facilitate meaningful connections that will power new projects, new strategies, initiatives and ideas to navigate the challenges of the region. We need to fully empower women's engagement, inclusion and successful leadership and full participation in the economy, because our future prosperity and stability as a region depend on it.

To address these critical challenges for development and inclusion in the region and beyond, AIWF has been deeply focused this year on working with our global advocacy partners, from our governmental, corporate and institutional networks, to reach across sectors, spheres and regions to build a strong programme of virtual events that we successfully held this year and which will be continued into 2021.

I am very proud to have chaired the series which we launched in July 2020 with our first programme in collaboration with our longstanding partners at The World Bank, titled *The Role of the World Bank in Coordinating Responses to Economic Challenges Aggravated by COVID-19 in the Mashreq Region*, for which we welcomed **Saroj Kumar Jha**, Regional Director Middle East, **The World Bank Group**, who shared the World Bank's mission to lift both formal and informal constraints to women's economic participation in the region and Mashreq responses to the pandemic to mitigate adverse impact of unprecedented economic and social disruption in the medium and longer terms.

Following on from what was a highly successful AIWF collaboration with the World Bank, we were delighted to host our second session in partnership with AIWF Global Partner **Pfizer**, *Women on the Frontline in the Fight Against COVID-19 and Beyond*, which examined the many roles of women at the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the work of Pfizer in developing a vaccine. The session was expertly led by AIWF Board Member **Dr Oualae Al Alami**, Vice President Cluster Lead at **Pfizer Biopharmaceutical Group** and chair of the Regional Diversity & Inclusion Council for Pfizer Africa, and we remain deeply proud of our partnership with Pfizer.

We continued our programme with the international institutions with AIWF's third session, *Building Resilience to Counter Unexpected Shocks: The OECD Response to the Gender Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis in the MENA* welcomed **Carlos Conde**, Head of MENA Division for the **OECD**, to share how, through the key contribution of women, the Arab region can build resilience, wealth and prosperity, also sharing key insights on some of the recent work of the OECD on women's empowerment in the MENA region.

With employment and job creation at the heart of the excellent session with Mr Conde, AIWF partnered with PwC Middle East on *Recovering from the Dual Shock of COVID-19 and the Oil Price Drop & Workforce of the Future: The Competing Forces Shaping 2030*, led by **Hani Ashkar**, Senior Territory Partner, **PwC Middle East**, which examined the dual impacts of COVID-19 and the oil price drop on the GCC from the economic, industry and government response standpoints; and examined how businesses can shape viable, practical, diverse and inclusive solutions to future of work challenges in the MENA Region. AIWF is exceptionally proud to have PwC as a Global Partner and acknowledges all esteemed colleagues at PwC on the valuable work being done to promote diversity and inclusion within the future workforce, in the region and beyond.

The themes of this discussion continued into a subsequent webinar event, *The Future of Work in the MENA Region: What will the future Arab workforce look like for women and young people?*, for which we welcomed **Frank Hagemann**, Deputy Regional Director at the **ILO**, and **HE Dr Mary Kawar**, Former Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan. I was especially proud to chair this session not only as AIWF Founder & Chairman but also as the only Arab Commissioner to have served on the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work (2017-2019), and in my introduction I stressed the need for macro and micro interventions to empower youth-led innovation, women's economic participation, and mitigate 'brain drain' of talented Arab youth.

We ensured to focus within our series on the broader Euro-Mediterranean region in another key session, *25 Years after the Barcelona Process: The UfM on Women & Inclusive, Sustainable Development in the MENA Region*, for which it was an honour and a pleasure to welcome **HE Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)**, to share key initiatives and outreach in the UfM countries 25 years on from the Barcelona Process, with special focus on women, economic empowerment, and climate action.

Within the framework of addressing the most salient issues impacting humanity in the region and globally AIWF was most proud to include a very special session within the series on *Humanising Energy*, which was held in early November welcoming **Dr Angela Wilkinson**, Secretary General & CEO of the **World Energy Council**; **Fatema Al Nuaimi**, CEO of **ADNOC LNG**; and **Ali Al Janabi**, Chairman of the Shell Group of Companies (Iraq/UAE) for a deeply engaging discussion on the human dimension of the energy sector and the need to ensure access to sustainable energy for women across the world who disproportionately are impacted by energy poverty.

With each event welcoming over 200 registered participants from an average of 30 countries, we are proud to have inspired engagement at such a high level across all sessions, which resonated deeply with AIWF's global constituency of men and women leaders, drawn from the Arab world and internationally. We have launched a YouTube channel to archive and make accessible the recordings of the webinar series and we are proud that these discussions have been so well received by our partners in the international development, business and research communities in the Arab region and worldwide. We look forward to sharing details of upcoming webinars and indeed to sharing the milestone AIWF 20th Anniversary Programme coming up in 2021, as we continue our close collaboration with our Benefactor Partner **PepsiCo** and all our Global Partners as well as our Institutional and international development partners, to spotlight issues of shared concern as we all shape and navigate the uncertain 'post-COVID' years ahead.

During this year, I was honoured to have the opportunity to address key regional and global virtual conferences, starting with an invitation from the **QS MAPLE** (Middle East and Africa Professional Leaders in Education) Conference 2020 held in September, which promoted the development of higher education in the Middle East and Africa within a global context with the goal of stimulating international partnerships and best practice exchange. I was delighted to deliver the Closing Keynote Address for this distinguished conference, and also to participate on a high-level

panel session titled *Preparing the region to become an economic power over the coming decade*.

The QS MAPLE Conference inspired such insightful, future-focused, intercultural dialogue between Arab and international leaders in education, and I was proud to contribute my insights on the growing role of women as engines of economic growth in the MENA Region, which has been the longstanding call of AIWF throughout the twenty years since its inception in 2001, and to share my thoughts on how governments, the private sector, civil society, media and women and young people themselves can come together to mainstream gender diversity and enhance inclusion in the MENA through education.

I was also proud to participate in early November on the high-level panel of the Think 20 (T20) Saudi Arabia Summit, held on the sidelines of the Presidency of the G20 this year, where I shared my reflections on empowering, engaging and including women in the MENA region and on strategies to mainstream women's equality to accelerate economic growth. To tackle gender equality, we need bold action and clear commitment from all parties, working together cohesively to put into practice the ambitious but certainly achievable 'Visions' that call for narrowing the gender gap in the region by 2030. I am proud to have contributed to this important initiative of the T20 and I congratulate the organising committee on an exceptionally well-organised, informative, and engaging Summit. AIWF looks forward to supporting the T20 outcomes actioning the many valuable recommendations that emerged from our discussions.

AIWF is always proud to collaborate with organisations and international institutions that share our commitment to empowering and supporting the next generation of women and young leaders in the region and beyond, and I had the pleasure on 17 November to participate at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Women's Conference on *Accelerating gender equality in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*. For this virtual event, I outlined strategies for encouraging women's voices and their participation in the decision-making process at the local level for more inclusive and equitable management of the pandemic. I deeply appreciated the kind invitation of **HE Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the UfM to participate in this special conference this year which coincides with the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action.

I was also pleased to deliver the inaugural and introductory Keynote at the **University Leadership Council's** Thought Leadership Series held virtually on 05 November, during which I shared AIWF's initiatives and global outreach to ensure a more sustainable

future for the youth of our region through viable employment, education and civic engagement. In my Keynote for this session, titled *Up-skilling and Re-Skilling: Ensuring a Sustainable Future for our Youth*, I shared learnings from my own leadership journey and the year I spent at Harvard in 2017 as a proud Fellow of the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative, as well as my contributions to the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work and its landmark report, *Work for a Brighter Future*.

These were both transformational experiences which have instilled in me a resolute commitment to the importance of lifelong learning and the need for the private sector to create decent jobs that will keep talented Arab youth in the region and contributing to its economic prosperity now and in the future. For this to be achieved in the MENA Region, we need to 'future-ready' the Arab workforce and we can only do this by equipping our youth to compete and succeed in a fast-changing world, aligning education with the needs of the labour market and ramping up investment in skills and infrastructure as well as promoting a mindset shift on gender equality and inclusion, to ensure that no Arab citizen, young or older, is left behind in the future world of work.

During the year we were proud to have the opportunity to collaborate with the AMAR Foundation and **Baroness Nicholson**, Chair of **AMAR** and President of the **Iraq-British Business Council**, on a webinar titled *Unlocking the MENA's full economic potential: Gender equality at home and at work*, which welcomed AIWF invitees **HE Hala Bsaisu Lattouf**, Former Minister of Social Development, Jordan, and **Caroline Fattal**, Board Member, **Fattal Group**, Lebanon, to discuss the pivotal role of women in the MENA workforce, the additional burdens that the pandemic had placed on women as primary caregivers in the family and in communities which are impacting women's economic engagement, as well as the need for legislative reform to bring gender parity to the forefront of the Arab sustainable economic agenda, supported by private sector workplace policy reform and cultural mindset shifts.

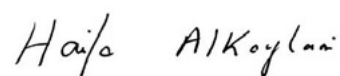
We were also pleased to support an organisation we greatly admire for its excellent work in the region, **Education for Employment (EFE)**, and I was delighted to accept the invitation of **Ron Bruder**, Founder & Chairman of the Global Board of EFE by contributing a video message in honour of EFE's #Work4Women campaign, a nine-week virtual exploration of the current job crisis the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to working women across the Middle East and North Africa. We are pleased to feature an excellent article within this newsletter on the mission of EFE to create economic opportunities for unemployed youth in the MENA so that they can create a brighter future for

themselves, their families, and their communities, and we look forward to working closely with EFE into the future on our many shared priority areas for action.

In reviewing the second half of the year, we have to pause and recollect the world shock and sadness at the horrific Beirut port explosion. On behalf of the Arab International Women's Forum, we expressed at the time our deep sadness and support for our members, partners and the civil society community in Lebanon at what was already a very challenging time, economically and socially, for the Lebanese people. We were all greatly saddened over the loss of life and the devastating scale of damage and destruction suffered by the Lebanese people, who are known for their strength and resilience in overcoming difficult times. There is no doubt that the Lebanese spirit and unity has greatly helped the nation in its path to recovery in the months since this disaster.

We are always proud in our newsletter to highlight success stories in the region and to celebrate the milestone achievements of women leaders in both the MENA and globally. In this edition, we are delighted to congratulate two outstanding women leaders from Lebanon who are dear friends of AIWF: **Hana Alamuddin**, whose architectural practice specialising in environmental responsibility and sustainable development has won the International Properties Award for Best Public Building in Lebanon 2020; and to shine a light on the younger generation by congratulating **Tamara Bou Chahine**, who recently graduated from the American University of Beirut and has started an internship with the regional UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On behalf of the Board and Partners of the Arab International Women's Forum I look forward to welcoming you all to the AIWF 20th Anniversary Programme in 2021. As we build hope for a better future, and look towards 'building back better' for women and young people in the MENA and globally, with everybody working hand in hand as part of a strengthened global community, AIWF stands ready to play its part by continuing to focus on realising the vision we all share, for inclusive, sustainable, equitable empowerment for women and young people, and a peaceful, prosperous future for all citizens in the region and globally.



Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani
Founder & Chairman
Arab International Women's Forum

AIWF's 2020 Virtual Programme features high-impact live sessions addressing key development challenges for women and youth in the MENA

In 2020, AIWF pivoted its Annual Programme to deliver a high-level series of webinar sessions and virtual events addressing some of the most salient issues of global and regional concern that deeply impact women's lives, their livelihoods, their security and prosperity.

The pandemic is a watershed moment for equality and empowerment, and a reminder of the need for stakeholders to take bold, cohesive action to safeguard gains on the SDG 2030 Agenda, to scale up investment in people's skills and capacity, to bridge the digital divide and the gender gap, to create opportunities for decent work, to invest in sustainability innovation, and to build a peaceful and prosperous future for women and youth because they are key to unlocking economic potential in both the MENA region and globally.

With in-person events and conferences around the world either postponed or moved online after global lockdowns limited travel and large event attendance, the AIWF Webinar Series 2020 was designed by AIWF to ensure that momentum for women and young people is not lost in these extraordinary and challenging times, and to bring visionary thought leaders and experts together, representing governments, international development organisations, the private sector, and civil society, to share vital recommendations and inclusive strategies for 'building back better' in the Arab world and internationally with a global audience.

With each event welcoming between 200-250 registered participants from an average of 30 countries, AIWF has inspired engagement at a high level in all of our sessions, which have resonated deeply with AIWF's global constituency of men and women leaders, from the Arab world and internationally.

We have launched the [AIWF YouTube](#) channel to archive the recordings of the series and we are proud that these discussions have been so well received by our partners in the international development, business and research communities in the Arab region and worldwide.

The Role of the World Bank in Coordinating Responses to Economic Challenges Aggravated by COVID-19 in the Mashreq Region



Saroj Kumar Jha, Regional Director Middle East Department, The World Bank, delivers a Keynote Address at the inaugural AIWF webinar in July 2020

The AIWF Webinar Series 2020 launched in July with an inaugural webinar, *The Role of the World Bank in Coordinating Responses to Economic Challenges Aggravated by COVID-19 in the Mashreq Region*, featuring **Saroj Kumar Jha**, Regional Director, Middle East Department (Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, and Syria), **The World Bank**, who shared the World Bank's mission to lift both formal and informal constraints to women's economic participation in the region and also covered Mashreq responses to the pandemic to mitigate adverse impact of unprecedented economic and social disruption in the medium and longer terms.

AIWF Founder & Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** acknowledged the many years of partnership between the World Bank and the Arab International Women's Forum, which goes back to 2008 when AIWF held its Annual Conference at the World Bank in Washington DC and has continued throughout the years with major collaborations on conference initiatives, most recently in Amman for a high-level conference on the intersection between women, water and youth as key development issues in the MENA.

During her opening remarks, Mrs Al Kaylani said: "The Mashreq region, like many other regions in the world faced significant economic and social concerns even prior to COVID-19 – from the refugee crisis which has impacted Jordan and Lebanon more than any other refugee-receiving country, to climate change, to stagnant private sector growth, widespread youth unemployment and persistent gender-based inequality. We need to look at the macro picture for the MENA more broadly, in order to understand where the region stands now and what we can do to help the region move past the current crisis, looking beyond COVID-19 and into a secure and prosperous future. The support provided to date has been to create relief, but if there is not a transition to productivity and

growth, there will be even more serious problems in the future.”

Mr Jha’s Keynote focused on specific development challenges in the MENA Region which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, with women and young people disproportionately impacted by instability, food poverty, and fiscal constraints compounding the long-term challenges of job creation and mass unemployment in the region. Mr Jha said: “The impact of COVID-19 on Mashreq countries has been significant, slowing progress made to date in human capital, job creation, and compounding existing gender disparities in the region. Less than a third of jobs in the Mashreq can be done from home, and women are carrying the heaviest burden of the pandemic.”

Mr Jha discussed the additional barriers faced by women to economic participation, including restrictive social norms, legal constraints, childcare and transportation, as outlined in the *State of Mashreq Women Report*, launched by the World Bank in June 2020 as a “lifecycle approach to analysing each constraint as it occurs in a particular point in a woman’s life, acknowledging that women’s experiences will be different depending on their different socioeconomic backgrounds.” The report promotes the digital economy as an opportunity for women to work flexible hours and from home, which eliminates at least a few of these barriers to economic participation.

The World Bank, Mr Jha said, recognises that gender equality is not just good for women but good for whole economies, as well as being key to inclusive growth and the development of a vibrant middle class. Challenges women face in the Mashreq can be addressed within the following four pillars of engagement: 1) Enabling a non-discriminatory legal framework; 2) Accessible and affordable childcare; 3) Safe transportation; and 4) Empowering women in the digital economy.

Further, Mr Jha shared, “we need to promote a more egalitarian society overall, to develop women’s capacity in political leadership, and the importance of protecting women affected by gender-based violence we need to women’s voice and agency in all decision-making spaces such as political leadership, the importance of supporting and protecting GBV cannot be stressed enough especially in this region where the number of refugees and displaced persons is very high.”

Initially, Mr Jha shared, the World Bank offered broad support to strengthen health systems for preparedness; in the second phase of its response, he said, the World Bank’s Strategic Preparedness and Response Programme was applying \$160

billion in financial support over the next 15 months to countries facing financial crisis in the pandemic. This would be applied to supporting businesses and bolstering economic recovery building among the most vulnerable segments of society and economy - as one example, mobilising more support for farmers and agricultural organisations to offset the key challenge of food poverty.

The Board of AIWF reiterates its deepest thanks and appreciation to Mr Saroj Kumar Jha for his valued participation in this inaugural session, and especially looks forward to continuing its close association with the World Bank in the years ahead.

Women on the Frontline in the Fight Against COVID-19 and Beyond



AIWF Board Member **Dr Oualae Al Alami**, Vice President Cluster Lead for Pfizer, expertly moderated the AIWF Webinar on ‘Women on the Frontline in the Fight Against COVID-19’ in July 2020

In partnership with Global Partner Pfizer, AIWF was proud to follow up the substantive World Bank session with a key discussion titled Women on the Frontline in the Fight Against COVID-19 and Beyond, expertly moderated by AIWF Board Member **Dr Oualae Al Alami**, Vice President Cluster Lead for **Pfizer**, and welcoming special Keynote Guest Speakers Dr Maryam Matar, Founder & Chairperson of the **UAE Genetic Diseases Association**, UAE; **Dr Fadi El Jardali**, Professor of Health Policy and Systems at the American University of Beirut; and **Dr Graciela Morales**, Vice President Vaccine Lead Emerging Markets for **Pfizer**, who joined the session from Costa Rica. The webinar was attended by over 250 participants from 31 different countries, including the Arab States, the US, Canada, the UK, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, Ghana, Kenya and Pakistan, among many other countries.

This session focused on the roles of the private sector, governments and academia in COVID response and future preparedness, calling for greater cohesion between the three and a bridging of the gap between academia, clinical practice and industry in order to advance innovation around COVID and future public

health challenges. In her introduction, AIWF Founder & Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** paid tribute to “the women at the frontline of the coronavirus crisis - women in science, research, policy development, healthcare, the media, and women who are caregivers, mothers and community leaders. At this time of crisis,” she said, “women’s roles are more important than ever. We express our sincere gratitude and admiration to our healthcare professionals, teachers, parliamentarians and all those keeping our essential services running all over the world.”

Dr Al Alami highlighted that women account for 70% of health services personnel globally, are on the frontline, sometimes sacrificing their lives for patients and their families during the crisis, and yet there is a pay gap in the sector, with women earning 80% of the wages of their male counterparts. Dr Matar acknowledged the importance of having an extended familial support network who could provide women with vital psychological support through extremely challenging times. It is necessary, Dr Matar said, that women have a safety net when it comes to emotional and psychological support. She also paid tribute to the preparedness of the UAE, and noted that it had taken decades of work to build those capabilities, investment in education, and the facilitation of important public-private partnerships.

Dr Morales updated on the global efforts that were underway at the time to develop a vaccine, and shared that there had been unprecedented levels of cooperation from stakeholders worldwide. The pharma industry, she said, had been working together through collaborative networks and platforms as they were “in a race against the virus”, and “this was an opportunity to recognise the collective advantage of all sectors working together and sharing knowledge.” Dr El Jardali elaborated on the need for governments to support more public-private partnerships in the pandemic response and the development of vaccines, as in times of crisis, the PPP model was at risk of breaking down. He called for the revision of PPP structural frameworks and for better regulation, especially in middle-income countries.

Additionally, with women at the forefront of the pandemic, all speakers were agreed that women need to be in the middle of emergency response and future preparedness planning. Recovery plans must include the gender lens and the world health system as a whole must rethink its approach to setting down region-wide strategies in parts of the world such as the MENA where there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution that works for the whole region given the vast social and economic differences between each of the MENA States. Significantly, the recommendation that academia and the private sector need to be more closely interlinked to produce the best research,

the best policy outcomes, and the most inclusive opportunities for women and young leaders, has recurred in several AIWF conferences on women in STEM leadership in recent years and it was a recurring point of discussion during the webinar. AIWF remains deeply grateful to Dr Oualae Al Alami and all her valued colleagues at Pfizer for their continued endorsement and support of the AIWF mission on this initiative and in all our initiatives and international outreach.

Building Resilience to Counter Unexpected Shocks: The OECD Response to the Gender Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis in the MENA



Carlos Conde, Head of MENA Division, OECD, shared key OECD strategies for building resilience in the MENA on pandemic preparedness and integrating the gender lens into response and recovery efforts

The Arab International Women’s Forum continued its well-attended programme of virtual events into September with another key session, *Building Resilience to Counter Unexpected Shocks: The OECD Response to the Gender Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis in the MENA*, for which we welcomed **Carlos Conde**, Head of MENA Division for the OECD. AIWF and the **OECD** have been co-operating for close to 15 years on women’s entrepreneurship in the MENA Region, and Mr Conde was invited to share how, through the key contribution of women, the Arab region can build resilience, wealth and prosperity in the region.

In her introduction, AIWF Founder & Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** said: “As our societies experience increased levels of uncertainty and unpredictability, resilience is impossible to build without focusing on women’s role who are intrinsic building blocks of our society. As we experience the pandemic shock of COVID 19, we see that women are at the forefront of the fight against the virus and the economic crisis is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. This situation sheds the light on the urgency of fast-tracking the efforts to empower, support and work towards a greater role for women in the MENA economy and in society at large. It also stresses the fact that to face this crisis and build

stronger resilience for our societies, leveraging the full potential of women in the economy will be key for unlocking and sustaining much-needed growth in the post-crisis period. There is thus an urgency to act and to make sure deliberative and systematic gendered-based perspectives are adopted in all fields of system."

In his Keynote, Mr Conde elaborated on how, through the key contribution of women, the Arab region can build resilience, wealth and prosperity, and shared some of the recent work of the OECD on women's empowerment in the MENA region. He said, "Women's economic empowerment is at the core of the overall competitiveness reform agenda of the region, and the COVID crises – despite its dramatic impact – is giving us a real opportunity for action." The evolution of the pandemic, he said, was an important variable, but reform in the region would depend greatly on countries' willingness and ability to pursue the right policies. Fundamentally, he said, "the transition out of the crisis provides a new opportunity to further the agenda for resilient, inclusive and sustainable economies."

Mr Conde shared some of the recent work of the OECD on women's empowerment in the MENA region, specifically the findings of the OECD policy brief, 'COVID-19 impact on gender equality and policy responses', which was launched in June 2020 to provide analysis of the intersection between the pandemic and the existing gender gap in MENA in several areas including education, employment, social protection, care work and gender-based violence, as well as an overview of the measures that MENA governments have been taking to respond to the crisis.

Mr Conde also acknowledged the key role of AIWF when he said: "It is important to acknowledge the key role that the Arab International Women's Forum has been playing for almost twenty years in the MENA region, in favour of women's empowerment and youth inclusion. The OECD values very much the longstanding co-operation established with the Arab International Women's Forum. Our partnership with AIWF is witness to the OECD's commitment to advance equal societies and competitive economies in the MENA region. I am sure we all agree that, in time of crisis, multilateral and multi-stakeholder co-operation is more important than ever, and I welcome and express my gratitude to the AIWF and its Chair Haifa Al Kaylani for this tireless engagement."

AIWF extends its warmest thanks to Carlos Conde and his distinguished team of colleagues at the OECD for the excellent participation and partnership for this key session which was exceptionally well-received by all who attended from the MENA region and around the world.

Recovering from the Dual Shock of COVID-19 and the Oil Price Drop & Workforce of the Future: The Competing Forces Shaping 2030



Hani Ashkar, AIWF Board Member & Senior Partner, PwC Middle East, led a key AIWF session that examined the impact of the oil price drop and COVID on MENA markets as well as future of work scenarios

With resilience of the economy and the challenges of the future labour market in mind, AIWF proudly collaborated with our Global Partner PwC Middle East on the fourth event of the series, *Recovering from the Dual Shock of COVID-19 and the Oil Price Drop & Workforce of the Future: The Competing Forces Shaping 2030*. The webinar was chaired by **Haifa Al Kaylani**, Founder & Chairman of **AIWF**; moderated by **Hani Ashkar**, Senior Partner, **PwC Middle East**; and addressed by **Dr Yahya Anouti**, Partner with **Strategy&**, who in the first part, shared leading perspectives on the dual impacts of COVID-19 and the oil price drop on the GCC from the economic, industry and Government response standpoints; and **Carol Stubbings**, Global Tax and Legal Services Leader, **PwC Middle East**, who elaborated on the 'Workforce of the Future' and on how businesses can shape viable, practical, diverse and inclusive solutions to future of work challenges in the MENA Region.

In her introduction, Mrs Al Kaylani acknowledged the many years of partnership between PwC and AIWF and conveyed the full appreciation of the AIWF Board to Hani Ashkar for his leadership on the joint session and as a longstanding and greatly valued member of the AIWF Board. She commended the PwC Middle East leadership team for its dedication to empowering women executives, supporting diversity, and driving inclusion in the workplace in the region. Hani Ashkar, in his opening remarks, said: "Our partnership with AIWF comes from our genuine belief in its mission, as we work towards a more diverse and inclusive future for our region."

Dr Yahya Anouti then framed his segment of the session around the clear 'wake-up call' from the dual impacts of COVID-19 and the oil price drop on the GCC from the economic, industry and Government response standpoints. The pandemic, he said, had



Carol Stubbings, Global Tax and Legal Services Leader, PwC, who led the 'Workforce of the Future' segment of the AIWF webinar in co-operation with Global Partner PwC Middle East

brought down oil prices which constituted a large proportion of GDP exports and government revenues, which had had a staggering effect on the economy. Dr Yahya said: "Around the world the pandemic has been a wakeup call to the imminent hazards and vulnerabilities that nations are exposed to, with the potential for double digit recession. Global trade and FDI are on an extreme accelerated decline and around 200 million jobs are vulnerable to loss globally. In addition to economic impact we see social impact related to food security, loss of income pushing people into poverty, and lack of access to essential health services. Covid-19 is not the first nor the last natural hazard we will be exposed to and in our history we have had climate change related hazards but we are now becoming more exposed to man-made hazards, terrorism and cyber-attacks – overall, it is a call to rethink vulnerability and resilience economic model in the region."

"When I talk about the competitive advantage, many oil rich countries in the region have built their competitive strength and they need to extend these strengths into the future. Fundamentally", said Dr Yahya, "people want a place to learn, innovate, to start up and retire; companies want access to talent and advanced technologies; we need an abundance of renewable low carbon resources and access to green tech; and importantly we need to develop circular and digitally enabled infrastructure. Talent needs to be developed from within the region, government policies and regulations need to be refreshed, we need to focus on innovation and R&D infrastructure, and rethink how we can operate an agile government model with all stakeholders aligned on one clear goal."

Dr Yahya concluded: "The pandemic was a wakeup call and a unique opportunity to disrupt and innovative, to shift our paradigm in economic development towards inclusive growth, and towards empowering women's contributions to the development agenda as well as enabling the contributions and inclusion of the most vulnerable populations in our region."

Joining the webinar from the UK for 'Workforce of the Future: Competing Forces Shaping 2030' was **Carol Stubbings**, Global Tax and Legal Services Leader, **PwC**, who had led PwC's thinking around the 'Workforce of the Future' study, which looked at four possible Worlds of Work for 2030. Carol said: "It is no exaggeration to say that Covid-19 has upended our entire world, altered the course of economies and societies around the globe in ways that we don't fully understand just yet," she said. "In everything from how to work, where work happens, how we use technology, work is being rebalanced. This is having massive societal implications around the world. Even before Covid-19 we were seeing widening skills gaps and mismatches between skills and the needs of the private sector", key among these, she explained was the digital divide, which had the potential to leave those without digital skills excluded from employment."

"We don't want to leave whole swathes of people behind," she said, "especially not in the MENA States where the female labour force participation rate of 24.6% is the lowest in the world, and half the global average." Carol continued: "High inequalities persist in the region, in legal protection and financial inclusion especially, although levels of literacy and education is on par with men. Girls are outperforming boys at school, and in many Arab nations, change is happening. We can make work more inclusive, but an enormous collective effort is required." During the pandemic, Carol shared, whole industries had been massively impacted and still were being negatively impacted, especially airlines, hospitality and other service industries. However, online retail and delivery services had experienced an unprecedented boon. "What we are seeing now is a competitive race to automation, digitisation, and real accelerated business transformation, reconfiguring for the future and building in organisational resilience for future crises; "moving", she said, "from just in case, to just in time."

There was a need, Carol said, for tech skills to increase by 50%, and social and emotional skills up by 25%. PwC research shows that CEOs rank transferrable skills, problem solving, creativity, innovation, leadership, and adaptability as most critical, in-demand skills, alongside digital and technical skills – but those are the most difficult skills to hire for." Carol concluded with a key insight on digitisation and women's entrepreneurship and how, with the increase of digitisation, more digital roles would be opening up, leaving women at high risk of displacement if they had no digital skills. Through women's entrepreneurship, she said, we can "unlock female business creation and drive up female labour force participation, because women-owned businesses hire more women." In addition, she called for greater emphasis on STEM

education in the region - "if we know that there will be more of a requirement for STEM skills in the workforce than we need more young people in STEM education now."

The AIWF Board extends its thanks and appreciation to Hani Ashkar, Dr Yahya Anouti, Carol Stubbings and the valued team at PwC Middle East for PwC's partnership on this important joint initiative which truly demonstrated PwC's thought leadership in critical areas of economic concern for the region.

25 Years after the Barcelona Process: The UfM on Women & Inclusive, Sustainable Development in the MENA Region



HE Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, shared the mission of the UfM in the region for the empowerment of women and young people through job creation

In recognition of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, AIWF focused in early October on the situation and opportunities for countries in the Euro-Mediterranean with a session titled *25 Years after the Barcelona Process: The UfM on Women & Inclusive, Sustainable Development in the MENA Region*. For this session, AIWF was proud to build on our history with the Barcelona Process and our long collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the inter-governmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation which brings together all countries of the European Union and 15 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

It was an honour to welcome **HE Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the **UfM**, to share the UfM's key mission and collaborative, partnership-driven approach to nurturing and empowering women in the social and economic spheres; generating much-needed job creation, career progression and economic inclusion opportunities for women and young people in the UfM countries; and sustainable development and climate action in the UfM countries in the context of food/water/energy security challenges.

In her introduction, AIWF Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** highlighted that the COVID-19 crisis was an

opportunity to rethink women's role in the economy and that it was "also compelling all stakeholders, governments, institutions and civil society to come together and prioritise creative policymaking through unprecedented cross-border collaboration, data-driven decision making, data sharing, and bold economic measures." She reiterated how proud AIWF is of the close links and co-operation with the UfM for over a decade, on women's entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, and sustainable development in the region, and of all valued engagement with the UfM Secretariat.

In his Keynote Address, the UfM Secretary General Nasser Kamel underlined that the UfM has always put gender equality, women's empowerment and the challenge of ending Violence Against Women and Girls at the centre of its agenda. Amidst a global pandemic and a strong economic crisis, a gender-aware response is particularly vital. Women and girls have been mainly affected by the COVID-19 social and economic fallout.

According to UN Women and UNDP, by 2021 around 435 million women and girls will be living on less than \$1.90 a day — including 47 million pushed into poverty as a result of COVID-19. Moreover, the UN estimates that women in the Arab world will lose more than 700,000 jobs. This is explained by the fact that some of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, characterized by low pay and poor working conditions, are women dominated sectors. In this context, women's leadership and voices are paramount and will help to ensure a more equitable and better recovery.

A gender-awareness response to COVID-19 should rely also on reliable gender data collection and on the research on the gendered impacts of COVID-19. As a valuable contribution to achieve this objective, the UfM Member States endorsed a unique intergovernmental set of twenty indicators as part of the UfM Ministerial follow-up mechanism that will allow to aggregate relevant data, monitor progress, evaluate the gender gap and provide recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders. All these challenges, he shared, would be addressed and discussed in the framework of Women High Level Conference, *Accelerating Gender Equality in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic*.

The Secretary General said: "The Beijing Platform for Action and the targets of the SDGs continue to be relevant road maps for action, and it is more crucial than ever to achieve them. Without coordinated action to mitigate the gendered impacts of COVID-19, there is a risk that the fragile gender equality gains achieved over the past 25 years will be lost".

Moreover, His Excellency underlined the relevance of Social Economy, which alone constitutes more than

3.2 million enterprises and 15 million jobs across the Euro-Mediterranean region. Beyond delivering social and economic value, Social Economy is a smart way to recover from this pandemic by unlocking resources, creating sustainable employment and generating regional economic growth.

Climate change was also addressed as one the major threats to the planet. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed key environmental challenges out of the agenda, while temperatures and sea levels continue rising. In this context, His Excellency urged us all to address the effects of global warming before it takes an irreversible toll on the Mediterranean Basin and its population.

Ambassador Kamel's speech ended on a very reflective and bold note, stating that settling for the status quo was no longer an option and highlighting that, if we wanted to tackle gender equality, economic empowerment and climate change, resilience and regional cooperation needed to be at the heart of the pandemic recovery.

As for digitisation and youth tech enterprises, the Secretary General stated that he was a strong believer in creative industries and digital economy as a crucial way to advance youth employment and economic growth, and that the UfM wishes to channel the potential of digitalization by bringing best practices to the region and by enhancing not only north-south cooperation but also south-south cooperation.

The Secretary General underlined that, while furthering regional digitalization remains a priority, we must make sure that nobody is left behind. With reference to the role of the civil society, he asserted that the contribution of civil society has been pivotal in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership since the inception of the Barcelona Process. The DNA of UfM is oriented towards empowering civil society as a whole because they are the drivers of any social, economic and political evolution.

This year marks 25 years since the Barcelona Process was launched in 1995 with the aim to strengthen relations between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean countries, within the framework of an enhanced Euro-Mediterranean association contributing to peace and security in the region and creating the UfM in July 2008. AIWF is proud to have been a part of the celebrations for the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process, and to have the UfM as a key partner in our international advocacy network, with which we share the core mission of ensuring sustainable, equitable progress for women and young people in the region and beyond.

The Future of Work in the MENA Region: What will the future Arab workforce look like for women and young people?



HE Dr Mary Kawar, Frank Hagemann and Haifa Al Kaylani discussed strategies for mitigating future of work challenges in the MENA Region

Pivotal themes of job creation, women's economic and entrepreneurial engagement, and youth empowerment were greatly aligned with a key webinar event held in October, *The Future of Work in the MENA Region: What will the future Arab workforce look like for women and young people?*, for which AIWF welcomed **Frank Hagemann**, Deputy Regional Director of the **ILO**, and **HE Dr Mary Kawar**, Former Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan. The session was chaired by **Haifa Al Kaylani** as AIWF Founder & Chairman and also as the only Arab Commissioner to have served on the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work (2017-2019) and to have contributed to the ILO Global Commission's landmark 2019 report, *Work for a brighter future*.

In her introduction, Mrs Al Kaylani shared that youth unemployment rates in MENA have been the highest in the world for more than 25 years, reaching 26.7% in 2020 and largely expected to rise by 2021 because of the pandemic; and this was linked with the high number of unemployed women in the region, which still has the lowest rate of female labour force participation in the world at just 24.6%. "For women and youth to be empowered to participate in today's difficult labour market as well as the fast-evolving workforce of the future", she said, "the region will need to engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue and commit to macro and micro interventions to directly address the underlying challenges that have held women and young people back in the region".

Many of these interventions were outlined in the ILO Report on the Future of Work published in January 2019 which delivers an excellent framework for an inclusive and equitable solutions to future of work challenges. The ILO report calls for a human-centered agenda and a rights-based approach

with key recommendations focused around three pillars of action: investing in people's capabilities, investing in the institutions of work; and investing in decent and sustainable work for all. For the MENA, this means investing in the care economy, green jobs, and infrastructure, and putting into practice a transformative and measurable agenda for gender equality at home and at work.

Mrs Al Kaylani said: "it is vital that we address the ongoing challenge of youth employment and implement innovative solutions that mitigate 'brain drain' migration of young people to other countries. It should serve as a call to action for to all of us in the international and regional community that the Arab Youth Survey 2020 reported that nearly half of young Arabs may leave their home country because of lack of job opportunities, poor leadership and widespread economic failure."

Frank Hagemann, Deputy Regional Director ILO, said: "This is the worst global crisis since World War II and requires unprecedented efforts to support recovery and build back smarter towards a better future of work for all, including for women and youth. Employment in the Arab region continues to pose a crucial challenge for policymakers, with the region registering high rates of unemployment, even prior to the COVID-19 crisis. These high rates are greatly driven by the region's inability to generate productive employment opportunities, particularly in the private sector. At the same time", he said, "entrepreneurship and self-employment remain limited in the region. This is partly the result of the weak business environment that often discourages youth and women from creating their own businesses. Entrepreneurial education remains also limited in a region where education systems have little improved over the years to better respond to the changing labour market needs."

Mr Hagemann continued: "Women and youth, who were already facing significant labour market challenges before the pandemic, have been particularly affected. An estimated 5 million Arab women, representing 21 per cent of total female employment, are employed in the hard-hit sectors and are thus at high risk of unemployment, reduction in wages and/or hours of work."

In addition, he noted, "informality is high in the Arab region. An estimated 64% of total employment in the region is informal and lacks support and social protection. Large numbers of youth are employed informally, which render them vulnerable to income and job losses. According to ILO estimates, 82 per cent of all informal economy workers in the Arab region are significantly impacted by lockdown measures."

What was needed, he shared, were "timely, large-scale and coordinated policies" to "protect employment

and support businesses and incomes. These policies along with a set of targeted measures should pay particular attention to the needs of women and young people in order first to prevent the youth of today from becoming a "lockdown generation" and second to allow women to realize their full potential in a more inclusive and equitable future of work."

Further, "the region must focus on structural transformation in order to unleash the potential of the private sector and support the creation of jobs in high-value added/ high-productivity sectors, that are more attractive to the increasingly educated young Arab women and men. This would also require increased investments in skills development programmes to support upskilling and reskilling of workers to be able to effectively assume their roles and responsibilities."

Mr Hagemann also called for reforms to education system to ensure provision of skills needed in current and future labour markets, with emphasis on soft skills and STEM education. "Close linkages between the business sector and education are key," he said, "to addressing the skills mismatch problem and create skills needed for the jobs of the future".

HE Dr Mary Kavar, Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan, reiterated the findings of the Arab Youth Survey which, she said, "reflects feelings engendered by widespread economic and social crises even before and after the Coronavirus pandemic". When young Arabs emigrate abroad, she said, "they do well and are productive even in more sophisticated and much more demanding technologically advanced economies. In the domestic economy, youth are disillusioned and considered to be unemployable, with high unemployment rates said to derive from lack of motivation, a skills mismatch or low-quality education - all of which somehow disappear once they cross the border."

Before the pandemic, she shared, "Jordan was experiencing challenges in terms of modest growth, and even this modest growth has to be compared to population growth because when population growth is higher than GDP growth then per capita incomes decrease as is the case in Jordan. This is in addition to high deficits, increasing debts, and no final space for social protection and social assistance public investment. All of this of course is translating into slow job creation." Across the region, Dr Kavar said, we are "dealing with an economy that does not produce jobs and when we come to the labour market we are then dealing with a segmented labour market (between men and women, nationals and migrants, public and private sectors and formal and informal sectors)."

In addition, she said: "The pandemic is causing major disruptions to education, training and work-based learning, and it has shown us that there are winners and losers in this transformation. The winners are

those who can take advantage of these opportunities, the more educated and skilled. The losers are the less educated and the less skilled and those who would lose their jobs in this transition and may have skills but for another era. Overall, the consequences of the pandemic are likely to be deep and long-lasting. They will most likely impact different groups of workers in different ways, such as older workers who are retrenched and will struggle to get back into the labour market; and young job seekers whose delayed entry into the employment puts their future on hold and might be the first to lose their jobs."

"The increase in long-term unemployment and exclusion of young people from the labour market is the greatest danger in the current situation. Past recessions demonstrate that youth unemployment not only increases swiftly and significantly at the beginning of economic downturns but also that it remains above pre-crisis levels long after the recovery has begun". Dr Kavar concluded: "While we address the immediate impact of the pandemic, it is also important to address the medium and long term as well, as unless the pre-existing structural issues with the economy change, we will continue to face these labour market issues."

AIWF greatly appreciated Mr Hagemann's and Dr Kavar's recommendations for action in the region on mitigating 'brain' drain migration of young people; revitalising the private sector to enjoy dynamic and sustainable growth; creating the necessary conditions for inclusive job creation; and expanding social protection mechanisms which we agree will be vital for economic recovery efforts post-pandemic and in the uncertain years ahead.

Humanising Energy

A key session in AIWF's virtual programme, *Humanising Energy*, was held in early November, welcoming **Dr Angela Wilkinson**, Secretary General & CEO of the World Energy Council; **Fatema Al Nuaimi**, CEO of ADNOC LNG; and **Ali Al Janabi**, Chairman of the **Shell Group of Companies (Iraq/UAE)** for a deeply engaging discussion on the human dimension of the energy sector and the need to ensure access to sustainable energy for women across the world who are disproportionately impacted by energy poverty. The session was introduced by **Haifa Al Kaylani**, AIWF Founder & Chairman and moderated by **Eithne Treanor**, Managing Director of **ETreanor Media**.

Even before COVID-19, the energy sector was undergoing immense transformation in the face of climate change and the transition to renewable and clean energy solutions. In 2020, across all regions, the dual impact of climate change and COVID-19 has accelerated major change in the oil and gas sector



Dr Angela Wilkinson, Secretary General & CEO, World Energy Council, addressed the AIWF Webinar 'Humanising Energy' in early November 2020

and in renewable energy, presenting opportunities to digitise, innovate and engage humanity and the MENA's valuable human capital and technology resources in driving the future of energy in the region and beyond.

In her opening remarks, AIWF Founder & Chairman Haifa Al Kaylani shared that since 2010, more than a billion people have gained access to electricity, with 90% of the planet's population connected by 2018, yet 789 million people still live without electricity today and hundreds of millions live with unreliable electricity. 2.8 billion people are still without access to clean cooking solutions, relying on wood, coal, charcoal or animal waste for cooking and heating, with exposure to air pollution increasing lung-related diseases among women (more so than men). 2.2 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion people do not have access to clean sanitation, recognising that "sustainable energy has a crucial role in achieving universal access to clean water and sanitation especially for vulnerable communities and during crisis times such as the COVID-19 pandemic".

In her Keynote Address, Dr Angela Wilkinson, Secretary General & CEO of the World Energy Council, acknowledged that AIWF and the WEC have much in common: "We both want to shape the future – in the Arab world where energy forms a part of economies and day to day life – and globally, to bring diverse and refreshing voices into the energy debate. We often forget," she said, "that energy is essentially a story about humanity. It is more than a sector – energy is the ultimate connector of hopes and fears, of people and geography." Dr Wilkinson continued: "The crisis reminds us all of the importance of energy in our lives. It has shown that individual actions have global impacts. The crisis is a brutal shock on society and impacts an already stressed and rapidly changing world energy system. Resilience has been tested. Recovery will not be easy." However, she said: "No crisis happens in a vacuum."

"The future of humanity depends on a new pattern of collaborative innovation which is not all or only about new energy technologies. We are promoting

a new approach to collaborative innovation to help connected energy societies to move faster and further together and from very different starting points. Energy systems are evolving, and the energy future will be more decentralized and diverse. We need diversity in thinking, skills and talents to build better energy systems for better lives and a healthy planet. Only by working together on the 'how to' humanise energy can we keep the future of connected energy societies open to better solutions and inspire new possibilities for human achievement."



Fatema Al Nuaimi, CEO of ADNOC LNG

Fatema Al Nuaimi, CEO of ADNOC LNG, commended AIWF for choosing such a timely and critical topic for the session. "There are close to a billion human beings on this earth deprived from the very basics, in terms of access to energy. What I find inhumane is to have children deprived of their right to education just because they do not have access to energy or to have the potential of women and girls lost because they have to walk for miles to get access to water and the basics of life." The issue had two distinct elements, she said, and this was something that energy companies needed to focus on: "to continue our contribution to provide affordable energy, and to make sure that this energy is not only accessible and affordable, but also environmentally clean and friendly".

"We have a responsibility to make sure that we reduce our carbon footprint, and as national oil companies, to work towards our sustainability targets – ADNOC has a target to reduce emissions by 25% by 2030. As we speak today, we are actively identifying all the projects and kinds of investment we need to have in place to achieve this target". National oil companies have another human factor to them, Mrs Al Nuaimi shared, which is their contribution to the communities in which they operate. There were two factors here: "firstly," she said, "is our commitment to our employees. ADNOC has 50,000 employees in a country with a population of 10 million, so we are a big employer and taking care of our employees automatically contributes to the development of the country."

Secondly, she said: "We have always been a direct contributor to the economy but also now we are committed to economic diversification: one of the



Ali Al Janabi, Chairman of the Shell Group of Companies (UAE/Iraq)

biggest projects we are working on currently is in integrated gas development, 54% of that project is through local suppliers and contributing to the economy." The SDGs clearly identify how access to energy is key to sustainable development, she said, and there are many ripple effects that depend on access to energy including access to water and food. "It would be naive of us," she said, "to think that we can solve such a big challenge alone, we need communities, companies and governments to work together to achieve an optimum energy mix that gives us sustainable development and sustainable energy."

Ali Al Janabi, Chairman of Shell Group of Companies (Iraq/UAE), who joined the webinar from Iraq, said: "When we talk about energy, we hear about corporations and contracts and concessions, it is all about the barrels, but the reality is a different story. The story of energy is one where energy powers people's lives, creating job opportunities, and contributing to development and prosperity for countries. We all have a responsibility as corporations, governments, development agencies to those who don't have the luxury of electricity."

Mr Al Janabi continued: "Shell's ambition is to provide access to energy to 100 million people by 2030 who don't have it today, mainly in Africa and Asia. It's not just about philanthropy, it needs to be sustainable business, because one-off charity doesn't kickstart the economy or provide sustainability now or in the future. It's about how do we power progress together to provide a cleaner more affordable energy? To do this, we have to come back to our commitments, to move with industry and to lead industry to decarbonise. We need to work hand in hand with customers, governments and others to look at how we can reduce emissions and ultimately strive towards reaching that sustainable future."

AIWF is proud to have the participation of Shell, a valued and longstanding Global Partner of the Arab International Women's Forum since 2002, and to have welcomed Dr Wilkinson and Mrs Al Nuaimi to the session for what was an engaging and deeply inspiring discussion. AIWF is also deeply appreciative to Eithne Treanor for her excellent moderation of the session.

AIWF Benefactor Partner PepsiCo and Saudi Sports for All Federation join forces to get the Kingdom actively moving towards Vision 2030

AIWF congratulates Global Benefactor Partner **PepsiCo** on the announcement of its partnership with the Saudi Sports for All Federation (SFA) that aims to make sports more accessible, facilitating a better quality and balanced lifestyle for people of all ages and abilities in the Kingdom. The two-year collaboration will see both partners work towards achieving the nation's goal of increasing participation in weekly sports by 40% by 2030.

Four key pillars – Endorse, Promote, Enable, and Activate – are at the core of the partnership, in which PepsiCo endorses the SFA's program of sports activities through an integrated, impactful marketing and communications campaign. This endorsement is centered on "Harek", a new movement revealed today, which is being spearheaded by PepsiCo in collaboration with the SFA to encourage a more active lifestyle and participation in SFA events. "Harek", which means "move", has been designed with its own identity and characterizes key principles of inclusivity, longevity, inspiring action, and is rooted in local culture.

Both partners will unite to *promote* key events including Family Activity Days, Neighborhood League Football, and virtual fitness activity as more people are now exercising from home. The partnership has enlisted PepsiCo's support as the Beverage & Nutrition Partner at SFA selected events, anchored around brands such as Aquafina and Quaker Oats. Through its Gatorade brand, PepsiCo will *enable* grassroots players and coaches to build their sports skills, thereby supporting the development of future athletes and trainers. The activate pillar will see PepsiCo leverage its scale and channels to raise awareness and drive thought leadership around topics of wellbeing, fitness, and the sports economy.

The partnership was marked with a signing event attended by SFA President **HRH Prince Khaled bin Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud** and officiated by SFA Managing Director **Shaima Saleh Al-Husseini** alongside **Tamer Mosalam**, Gulf & Levant Foods Vice President and Business Unit General Manager at **PepsiCo**. "By working hand in hand with the SFA, PepsiCo looks forward to get Saudi citizens and residents engaged in a wide variety of sport and leisure pursuits, and help the Kingdom pursue its ambition of being among the leaders in selected sports regionally



The SFA / PepsiCo partnership was marked with a signing event attended by SFA President **HRH Prince Khaled bin Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud** and officiated by SFA Managing Director **Shaima Saleh Al-Husseini** alongside **Tamer Mosalam**, Gulf & Levant Foods Vice President and Business Unit General Manager at PepsiCo

and globally," said Tamer Mosalam. "Through 'Harek' we hope to reach a diverse cross-section of citizens and residents and support the Government to achieve the Vision 2030 ambition to increase participation in sports activities and deliver long-term benefits for future Saudi generations as well."

PepsiCo has been committed to the prosperity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for over 60 years, making it well-positioned as the perfect partner for this initiative. It continues to support the Saudi government's goal to improve public health through increasing participation in informal and organized sports. The company's track record in driving social impact in the Kingdom also extends to other causes such as women empowerment, youth development and sustainable farming, among others.

Through its 'Winning with Purpose' mission, PepsiCo continues to support healthier and more balanced lifestyles in conjunction with efforts to reduce sugar, saturated fat and salt across its product portfolio. In addition to increasing sports participation, Saudi Arabia's bold Vision 2030 aims for sports to contribute 0.8 per cent to the economy and help to create an environment that allows for 50 Olympic athletes by 2030. Earlier in the year, PepsiCo further solidified its commitment to the Kingdom by pledging a projected SAR 1.6billion investment over the next five years.



The two-year partnership supports Saudi Vision 2030's ambitions of championing a more active lifestyle in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

AIWF ACKNOWLEDGES WITH APPRECIATION THE VALUED SUPPORT OF ALL AIWF GLOBAL & INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

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AIWF Institutional Partners



AIWF Global Communications Partner



AIWF Chairman participates at the Union for the Mediterranean Women4Mediterranean Conference 2020 on gender equality and the COVID-19 pandemic



AIWF Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** participated at the Union for the Mediterranean Conference on 'Accelerating Gender Equality in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic'

Haifa Al Kaylani, Founder & Chairman of the Arab International Women's Forum, was a key participant, at the kind invitation of **HE Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), for the 5th UfM Women4Mediterranean Conference 2020. The Conference was titled **Accelerating Gender Equality in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic** and took place virtually between 16-20 November 2020.

The Conference was held in the framework of the 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process and was inaugurated by the UfM Secretary General, Nasser Kamel and the Mayor of Barcelona, **Ada Colau**. Ministers from Jordan, Malta, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Sweden, Portugal, Norway, Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco, as well as the EU Commissioner for Equality, **Helena Dalli**, addressed the 700 experts, policymakers and representatives from the private sector, the civil society and international organizations who had gathered virtually to discuss the state of gender equality in the Mediterranean region in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UfM, in partnership with UN WOMEN, WHO, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, CIHEAM, CEED, and Smart City, held sessions and side events showcasing regional projects, a forum of women entrepreneurs, and discussion panels on how to prevent violence against women in the context of a crisis, the role of youth in combatting gender stereotypes, and mainstreaming gender equality in recovery responses of the agri-food sectors and in rural areas.

The panel session on which Mrs Al Kaylani participated, titled 'Women on the frontline of COVID-19', was moderated by **Paz Arancibia** from the UfM and also welcomed **Fatma Şahin**, Mayor of Gaziantep and former Minister of Family and Social Policies in Turkey. The session examined how women's leadership as well as their equal representation in decision-making positions, at local and national levels, can support efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In her remarks, Mrs Al Kaylani shared that women make up 70% of the global health workforce, but they hold only 25% of leadership positions in the health sector. In the MENA Region, women are at the heart of agriculture and food security and at the heart of the region's vibrant civil society, yet they also absorb most of the unpaid care responsibilities at home for their families and within their communities. The pandemic, she noted, had been especially hard for working women, for women who are the sole breadwinners in their families, and for people with disabilities.

"Gender imbalance in terms of decent work, remuneration and ability to progress pre-dates COVID – these challenges are exacerbated now but they have always been there," she said. "For women to be empowered after COVID-19 we need to address the existing gender inequalities at home and at work." There is also, she said, "an urgent need for gender-based data to fully understand how women are being impacted, not only in terms of infection rates but what impact the virus is having on their economic participation, their ability to work, and how they work. Policy measures at local and at national levels must be designed to consider the gender lens but also the wider diversity lens."

The UfM Conference launched the first-ever Intergovernmental Monitoring Mechanism on Gender Equality in a meeting of the UfM Member States, a new reporting exercise which will allow the UfM to measure and report the progress made on women's rights and provide policy recommendations to close the gender gap in the region.

AIWF congratulates all valued colleagues at the UfM Secretariat and the division for Social & Civil Affairs for an exceptionally well-organised virtual conference. The Board of AIWF looks forward to supporting the valuable initiatives of the UfM to address the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic and to help pave the way for a better, more inclusive Arab world in the future where women can fulfil their full potential as agents of change and be empowered to contribute meaningfully to the region's economic prosperity in the future.

AIWF Chairman Haifa Al Kaylani participates on a key panel of the T20 Summit on women's economic inclusion

AIWF Founder & Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** was invited to participate on a high-level panel discussion of the **T20 Summit, Women's Engagement, Empowerment, and Inclusion for Greater Economic Prosperity – What's Working, What's Not?** which took place as a virtual event on 31 October – 01 November 2020.

As an engagement group of the G20, and part of the inclusive and participatory G20 process, the Think20 (T20) is responsible for connecting and collaborating with regional and international think tanks as an engagement group that contributes to the G20 by serving as the 'ideas bank' of the G20; providing research-based policy recommendations to the G20; facilitating interactions between the G20 and the think-tank and research community; and communicating with the broader public about issues of global importance.

The T20 Summit 2020 gathers world-leading thinkers, civil society organizations and international institutions to virtually discuss the latest research-based policy recommendations and matters of global importance. It also serves as an interactive platform for peers to advance and share ideas on building a more prosperous, sustainable and inclusive world.

The panel, which took place on 01 November as part of the Women and Youth Policy Peers in Conversation series, was moderated by **Professor Zaid Eyadat**, Director, Center for Strategic Studies, Jordan, and together with Mrs Al Kaylani also welcomed **Dr Maha Al Sulaiman**, Deputy Minister, Education Programs, Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia; and **Dr Natasha Ridge**, Executive Director, **Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research**, UAE.

During the session, Mrs Al Kaylani shared her reflections on the engagement, inclusion and empowerment of women in the MENA Region, and her insights on future of work challenges, both as Chairman of AIWF and as the only Arab Commissioner to have served on the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work (2017-2019).

Mrs Al Kaylani said: "There is a new momentum, a new energy that we are seeing in the region towards empowering citizens in the world of work, rethinking traditional labour market models, and supporting entrepreneurship and gender-friendly flexible working



*At the T20 Summit AIWF Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** shared her reflections on the engagement, inclusion and empowerment of women as engines of economic growth in the MENA Region*

models as a direct response to the COVID crisis. In the light of the pandemic many MENA governments are ready to take action to level the playing field for women in the economy, specifically in the private sector and in entrepreneurship. We need to develop and implement policies and measures aimed at addressing the specific challenges that women face and allow them to create their own opportunities to contribute to – and benefit from – economic prosperity."

She continued: "Accelerating women's engagement and inclusion in the economy requires us to address the underlying social, economic and cultural challenges that are limiting women's participation and therefore contributions to economic prosperity". These include, she said, stagnant growth, low job creation, low productivity jobs, low rates of entrepreneurship; addressing the imbalance in the care economy which disproportionately burdens women; bridging the education/industry disconnect and fixing the poor school-to-work transition; reforming legislation to address gender and innovation gaps; eliminating the barrier of capital and finance which limits women's economic participation and engagement with entrepreneurship; and addressing the digital divide which threatens to constrain the economic potential of women in the MENA as well as widen inequalities in education and opportunities for lifelong learning.

The T20 produces a communique that incorporates the recommendations of the T20 task forces. The T20 Saudi Arabia communique will be shared with G20 leaders for their consideration in the G20 communique during the G20 Summit, which takes place in Riyadh in November 2020. Mrs Al Kaylani is proud to have contributed to this important initiative of the T20 and AIWF congratulates the organising committee on an exceptionally well-organised, informative, and engaging Summit.

AIWF looks forward to supporting the T20 in actioning the many valuable recommendations that emerged from the Summit discussions.

AIWF Chairman delivers Keynote Address at the ULC Thought Leadership Series Roundtable on 'Upskilling and Reskilling' to ensure a sustainable future for youth

AIWF Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** addressed the University Leadership Council's Thought Leadership Series held virtually on 05 November, during a key session titled *Up-skilling and Re-Skilling: Ensuring a Sustainable Future for our Youth*. Distinguished participants on the Roundtable panel alongside Mrs Al Kaylani included **Rola Abu Manneh**, Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered Bank; Professor **Ghaleb Alhadrami Albreiki**, Provost and Acting Vice Chancellor, United Arab Emirates University; **Leila Serhan**, Public Sector Director, Microsoft Gulf; **Thierry Dupont**, Managing Director, Dassault Systemes; and **Anass Derraz**, Director of Strategy and Development, Saur.

In her Keynote, Mrs Al Kaylani shared AIWF's initiatives and global outreach to ensure a more sustainable future for the youth of our region through viable employment, education and civic engagement. She said: "The UAE has truly led the way in the region and globally on mitigating future of work challenges through world-class investment in skills, education, entrepreneurship and sustainability innovation. Now is the time for much-needed skills investment to empower a future-ready workforce, across the whole MENA region. Improving the quality of education, addressing the school-to-work transition, and enhancing relevance of education by fostering closer links between academia and the private sector has been a longstanding call of AIWF and a recurring recommendation to emerge from many of our recent initiatives."

Mrs Al Kaylani continued: "The region must come together to strengthen policy, legal and institutional frameworks for women's economic participation and job creation specifically for young people – these could include implementing labour market policies that encourage and incentivise youth employment, drive youth entrepreneurship especially in the tech sectors and in social enterprise and cooperatives."

"In the future MENA labour market, workers will be expected to have the necessary skills to navigate this digitalised workplace as well to acquire the 'soft skills' that employers in the private sector increasingly require, including empathy, problem solving, and effective communication. This applies equally to older



Haifa Al Kaylani addressed the University Leadership Council's Thought Leadership Series on 05 November with the introductory Keynote and participation in the high-level panel discussion

workers as well as new graduates and new labour market entrants. As the Covid crisis is contained in the future and workers return to the labour market, we will see older workers potentially struggle to adapt if their old jobs no longer exist and new jobs require skills that they have not acquired in the pre-Covid era. Now is the optimum time to bridge the gap between universities and the private sector to ensure that graduates are well-equipped and fully-skilled to navigate new jobs in new sectors that may not even exist yet."

Mrs Al Kaylani also shared key learnings as a Board Member of the Harvard Women's Leadership Board, where she is very active in supporting the next generation of women leaders through Harvard's Women and Public Policy Program, a research center of Harvard Kennedy School that specialises in rigorous, high impact gender research. She also shared reflections on the transformational year she spent at Harvard in 2017 as a Fellow of the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative, as well as her role as a Commissioner of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work.

The Roundtable event was organised by the University Leadership Council in the UAE, led by **HE Nada Mourtada**, Secretary General of the ULC which under Dr Mourtada's inspirational leadership and under the Honorary Chairmanship of **His Highness Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan**, UAE Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development, brings together the leading institutions of higher learning in the UAE.

The Roundtable was supported and moderated by **Standard Chartered Bank**, which is doing excellent work in the Emirates to support the UAE's 2021 Vision to create a diversified knowledge-based economy to ensure long-term prosperity powered by skilled Emiratis and world-class talent. AIWF congratulates the ULC on an exceptional event and looks forward to working closely with all partners to action the strategies presented during the Roundtable.

AIWF Chairman delivers Closing Keynote on Women as Engines of Economic Growth at QS MAPLE 2020

In September 2020, AIWF Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** delivered the Closing Remarks for the **QS MAPLE Virtual Conference** and joined a key panel on *Preparing the region to become an economic power over the coming decade*. The QS MAPLE (Middle East and Africa Professional Leaders in Education) Conference was jointly organised by **Quacquarelli Symonds** and the **Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University**, under the theme *Innovative Middle East and Africa: Higher Education-led Economic Diversity and Globalization* from 16-17 September 2020.

With the MENA and Africa in transition, and with countries in both regions now exploring new opportunities for diversified and globalized economic models, disruption across industries is seeing resources exports, primarily oil, coming to the end of their life cycle, and many countries are looking to shift towards a knowledge-led economic future. The QS MAPLE Conferences are designed to explore how higher education providers can build both regions' knowledge economies, develop an entrepreneurial mindset and lead new and diversified economic models. The programme for QS MAPLE 2020 was very much focused on the decade ahead and how the region might equip and empower its people to contribute meaningfully to economic growth and to a prosperous, and peaceful future with the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In her Closing Keynote, titled *Women as Engines of Economic Growth*, Mrs Al Kaylani contributed her insights on the growing role of women as engines of economic growth in the MENA Region, which has been the call of AIWF in the twenty years since its inception in 2001, and shared her thoughts on how governments, the private sector, civil society, media and women and young people themselves can come together to mainstream gender diversity and enhance inclusion in the MENA through education, especially now in the light of the pandemic.

Mrs Al Kaylani said: "AIWF sees this as the optimum time for the MENA region to invest in an enabling environment for economic growth: an environment that engages women as partners in private sector growth, in their roles as business leaders, entrepreneurs, producers, innovators and investors; and an environment that ultimately empowers all citizens with the education, experience, ideas, ambition and aptitude to make a real difference to



AIWF Chairman **Haifa Al Kaylani** delivered the Closing Keynote at the QS MAPLE 2020 Conference in September

the economic future of the region. 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 and the rightful participation of women."

In addition, she said, "enabling women to contribute to the economy as employees and entrepreneurs represents a major opportunity to boost competitiveness, private sector growth and job creation which would power the MENA economy into a prosperous decade."

Earlier in the day Mrs Al Kaylani was also delighted to participate on a key panel session on 'Preparing the Middle East to become an economic power over the coming decade'. During the panel discussion Mrs Al Kaylani elaborated on the call of AIWF for the last twenty years for gender equality in the region and shared key strategies for mainstreaming gender diversity towards a decade of economic growth and a future of prosperity and opportunity for all Arab citizens.

Together with Mrs Al Kaylani, the panel discussion featured distinguished participants **Hugh Martin**, Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer, **The British University in Dubai**, and **Professor Francois Therin**, Senior Advisor to the Dean, **Africa Business School**, and was moderated by **Winnie Eley**, **QS MAPLE 2020** IAAC Committee Member. The panel discussion focused on how best to address the deficits that are holding the region back, and how to navigate the decade ahead by connecting and collaborating on education reform and linking education with industry to achieve a prosperous future for the MENA Region.

AIWF is proud to have contributed to this excellent international initiative dedicated which inspired such insightful dialogue between Arab and international leaders in education, and thanks the QS MAPLE team for their leadership on this valuable Forum which delivered many inspiring discussions and outcomes.

Gender equality at home and at work to unlock the MENA's full economic potential: AIWF partners with AMAR and IBBC on key webinar initiative

In September, at the kind invitation of **Baroness Nicholson**, Chair of the AMAR Foundation, President of the Iraq-British Business Council (IBBC), and the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Iraq, the Arab International Women's Forum was proud to partner with AMAR and the IBBC on a webinar titled *Unlocking the MENA's full economic potential: Gender equality at home and at work*.

The session was co-chaired by **Haifa Al Kaylani**, Founder & Chairman of AIWF, together with Baroness Nicholson, and welcomed distinguished Keynote Speakers **HE Hala Bsaisu Lattouf**, Former Minister of Social Development, Jordan, and **Caroline Fattal**, Board Member, **Fattal Group**, Lebanon to discuss the pivotal role of women in the MENA workforce, the additional burdens that the pandemic has placed on women as primary caregivers in the family and in communities which are impacting women's economic engagement, as well as the need for legislative reform to bring gender parity to the forefront of the Arab sustainable economic agenda, supported by private sector workplace policy reform.

In her opening remarks, Mrs Al Kaylani paid tribute to Baroness Nicholson for all valuable collaboration between AIWF, AMAR and IBBC on delivering the webinar session. She said: "**Baroness Nicholson** has been a much valued and longstanding friend and supporter to AIWF for nearly 20 years and we all deeply admire the tireless dedication of Baroness Nicholson to advocating for peace for the Iraqi people for almost 30 years, as well as her dedication to helping Iraq rebuild by setting up the AMAR Foundation as a leading health and education charity benefiting Iraqi women, children and young people for a better future."

Mrs Al Kaylani shared that globally, gender inequality has major economic implications for women, communities, societies and countries in a wide range of areas. Gender inequality is a persistent and universal challenge not limited to the MENA Region, which still has the lowest rate of female labour force participation in the world at just 24.6%. Even before the pandemic gender bias was still deeply rooted in many parts of the region and gender inequality existed at work because it existed in society and at home, and vice versa. Women do an average of 75% of the world's total unpaid-care work, including childcare, caring for the elderly, cooking, and cleaning. In some parts of the world,

including South Asia and the MENA Region, women's share of unpaid-care work is as high as 80 – 90%. The ILO calculates that on average women around the world perform 4 hours and 25 minutes of unpaid care work every day compared with 1 hour and 23 minutes for men.

In her address, Mrs Al Kaylani elaborated on the challenges women face in the pandemic, including the burden on women of the unpaid care economy and care responsibilities in the home; women being disproportionately represented in industries that had been hardest hit by COVID-19 including retail and service-based industries, with women more vulnerable overall to job losses and economic instability because of pre-existing gender inequalities; and the negative impact on female entrepreneurship, especially in micro enterprises which account for a high share of female labour-force participation in many MENA countries.

She said: "The gender dimension of the COVID-19 crisis highlights the uneven progress made toward gender equality in recent decades. It is important to recognise that the region has come a long way and has made considerable progress in areas such as maternal mortality, women in professional and technical jobs, and representation at political / parliamentary level. There is greater acceptance and greater visibility for women's leadership in every aspect of societal and economic development in the MENA countries. And there is clear and established support across MENA society for intervention from the highest levels on gender equality."

Mrs Al Kaylani continued: "The key to unlocking gender inequality in the MENA region and beyond is strengthening women's voices and leadership. To tackle gender equality, we need bold action and clear commitment from all parties – the private sector, governments, civil society, academia and the media all have vital roles to play in mainstreaming gender equality and ushering in normative acceptance of women's leadership at all levels, in all sectors, and in all spheres, as well as inspiring a paradigm shift in attitudes of both men and women towards the division of family, care and household responsibilities. Men have a key role to play in achieving this vision. Men are not the problem, they are part of the solution as our partners in bringing about lasting gender equality."

Baroness Nicholson thanked AIWF for co-operating with the AMAR Foundation on this important initiative. She acknowledged the role of AIWF over 20 years in empowering women and young people in the Arab world and shared the role of the AMAR Foundation in developing skills training for women in post-conflict areas and refugee situations. Baroness Nicholson called for more women to enter politics in order to mainstream gender inequality when she said: "We need good laws for women, and a justice system that

is fair to women. To get more women into politics, entering the professions is key. Empowering women to get into the professions impacts on all women in society and internationally as well – we need women to enter the legal profession, to get involved in local justice systems, and move from there into policies where you will be implementing and setting the policies that address inequality.”

HE Hala Bsaisu Lattouf, Former Minister of Social Development, Jordan, talked about how women’s employment is so essential to the overall welfare and wellbeing of a country, and how important it is to have women’s voices heard at every level and embedded into all programmes to advance society. “Looking at the MENA, we cannot discuss women’s rights without looking at human rights and social justice. The MENA is a very wide area and different countries have different levels of women’s empowerment. We’ve been working on women’s empowerment for so long and there is still so much injustice, and we haven’t reached the goal we wanted. Maybe it is time we did things differently when it comes to human development, and maybe COVID will give us that chance. It is time to unbundle the way we’ve been doing things, and stop looking at women’s issues as women’s issues alone. We need to look at the broader challenges as a whole. We cannot solve one issue without thinking about our system of values.”

Caroline Fattal, Board Member of the **Fattal Group** in Lebanon, shared her perspectives on women’s empowerment as a social justice issue as well as on the positive impact that women’s leadership at board level and upper management makes to a business’ bottom line. She talked about the rise of gender-based violence, and how the difficulty of accessing paid work together with the lockdown restrictions has made it very difficult for women to balance work and life. “Women in the world represent 39% of the employees but they are experiencing 54% of job losses. Losing jobs at higher rate than men is leading to a serious gender regression. We are seeing a very important regression in gender and human economic participation. When women are employed, a major part of the income is geared towards children’s education and towards community harmony. It is very important that there is no regression in Lebanon and the whole region.” In Lebanon, she shared, she has launched an SME Fund to support with immediate relief for women-owned businesses.

AIWF was proud to partner with the AMAR Foundation and the IBBC on what was a highly engaging and well attended virtual initiative, and extends its deepest appreciation to Baroness

Nicholson for her continued support of the AIWF mission.

AIWF Global Partner PwC shares strategy for D&I and employee wellbeing after COVID-19



Norma Taki, ME Diversity & Inclusion Leader and Transaction Services Partner, PwC Middle East

With thanks to Norma Taki, ME Diversity & Inclusion Leader and Transaction Services Partner, PwC Middle East, valued AIWF Global Partner

2020 has been a challenging year that has undoubtedly brought new lessons for us all.

We have embraced the opportunities Covid-19 has presented to the ways we work - the flexibility of where we work from, when we work and how we work is no longer scrutinized with the same lens as it was pre-lockdown. These are powerful practices that support working parents - mothers especially - and are becoming more broadly accepted and understood as the judgement culture of flex working has been diffused.

However, there are also challenges to the flex working environment. Working virtually can leave many feeling isolated and distanced from colleagues and teams. We are operating in a new era of working practices and whilst we strive for diversity, it is critical that we strengthen our culture of inclusion.

Accordingly, **PwC’s** D&I focus for this year is inclusion. After a turbulent year, we want to ensure all our people feel accepted, valued and a sense of belonging. We will focus on ensuring everyone is represented by a voice at the table via our eight people communities: women in business, women in tech, next generation, working parents, disability inclusion, multicultural network, HeForShe advocates and our new D&I Council.

We are developing and delivering training programs to break down biases and challenge stereotypes as well as to enhance EQ. Ensuring that people feel safe being their true selves in the workplace will help them work better, be more productive, creative and innovative.

We remain committed to supporting our female colleagues’ progress through their careers, from the

new graduate intake last month through to our senior grades and are developing interventions that will help enrich the female career path at PwC; mentorship, sponsorship, digital upskilling, more role modelling of female leaders, targeted training (e.g. personal branding and women in leadership) and looking for opportunities that provide career defining experiences for our top female talent.

Our diversity and inclusion ambitions will not achieve their full potential if we do not ensure accountability. Our data-driven accountability strategy is aimed at the top levels of our organisation, by setting targets for all our partners; how they hire and develop their female talent is crucial to us realising our goals of increasing female leaders across the firm.

In addition to these interventions, as a firm we are also prioritising the wellbeing of our people across the region with a specific focus on mental health. We are driving open conversations in hope of building psychological safety so that regardless of differences and diversities, our commonality is that we care and are in it together.

For World Mental Health Day, we are proud to have launched our new mobile Digital Wellbeing app that will provide on demand content to support people at any part of their wellbeing journey. Diverse content that speaks to everyone's needs and preferences, including podcasts from our leaders, articles, music and videos. We have also invested in training 40 of our middle management in an accredited Mental Health First Aider course.

More than ever we all have a responsibility to create safe environments of belonging, acceptance and care wherever we go; at work with our teams and in our communities. This is how we will build an inclusive culture that will celebrate the diversity of our people.

Norma Taki is the Diversity and Inclusion Leader at PwC Middle East. With over 20 years of experience, Norma is committed to driving transparency, reporting and investment in diversity and inclusion within the Middle East. She is an advocate who believes that rigid roles do not do us any favours and no longer serve us in the workplace, as she works towards building awareness through action. She is invested in making a difference, not just within PwC, but through the clients and networks the firm operates in. Norma is a Transaction Services Partner, leading PwC Middle East's Retail and Consumer industry, which involves her working with clients to analyse, structure and execute successful deals in the region.

AIWF congratulates Hana Alamuddin on her recent International Properties Award for Best Public Building in Lebanon 2020



*The public school in Abey, Mount Lebanon, for which **Hana Alamuddin** has won the International Properties Award for Best Building in Lebanon*

AIWF is pleased to congratulate one of our first and valued members in Lebanon, **Hana Alamuddin**, whose practice **Almimariya Architects and Designers for Sustainable Development** was recently honoured with the International Properties Award for Best Public Building in Lebanon 2020, for a school located in the town of Abey, Mount Lebanon a town known for its religious and cultural diversity evident through a rich built heritage dating back to the 9th century.

Ms Alamuddin said: "Almimariya Architects and Designers for Sustainable Development works on architecture that is environmentally responsible and contextual. By context we mean, not just the site and climate, but the users, their values and way of life to nurture a sense of belonging and identity which will lead to a strong sense of responsibility towards their environment. Therefore, the school was designed according to sustainable building practices starting with an ecological approach to the site such as the location of the basketball court on the roof that minimizes the footprint of the buildings and its impact on the natural environment."

Ms Alamuddin said: "With a limited budget, the school uses basic materials that are brightened by the use of color. Also inspired by the architectural tradition of the town, important spaces such as the library and art room recall the traditional kiosks giving the school a special character that reinforces the identity of the place. The school brings together children and families from different religious background and is a starting point to rebuild a cohesive community for the future."

AIWF is proud to have Hana Alamuddin as a longstanding member in Lebanon and we congratulate her on her richly deserved success and all her valuable initiatives to develop sustainable living and community solutions.

AIWF Chairman Haifa Al Kaylani contributes video message of support for EFE's #Work4Women campaign

[Watch the video](#)

Women play a vital role in the economies of MENA, yet they only make up one quarter of the workforce, the world's lowest female labor market participation rate. COVID-19 has illuminated these inequalities, with job losses disproportionately impacting women and youth in the MENA region.

The pandemic has severely hit retail, tourism and hospitality jobs traditionally held by women. COVID-19 also has severely impacted the informal sector (62% of workers are women in MENA), part-time positions (as much as 50% are women in Morocco and Palestine, for example), and school closures are forcing many women to give up their jobs – a global trend. The pandemic is expected to create 700,000 job losses for women in the Middle East in 2020, about 40% of the 1.7 million total expected job losses.

Women can drive economic prosperity if they are given the opportunity. In the midst of the pandemic's disruption, there is opportunity for women given surging growth in digital jobs, e-commerce and online customer support, health care, and the growing gig economy where women can work from home. But it is crucial to skill up first-time jobseekers and reskill women who lose their jobs. And we must go further than training – to connect women to concrete job opportunities opening now and in an extended COVID recovery period.

This is the mission of Education For Employment (EFE), to create economic opportunities for unemployed youth in MENA so that they can create a brighter future for themselves, their families and communities. EFE is the leading nonprofit that trains youth and links them to concrete job opportunities across MENA. This pivotal region is the hardest place on the planet for youth to get their first job, where youth unemployed has been close to 30% and is now soaring during the pandemic.

EFE focuses on the demand side, partnering with businesses that need qualified employees with young women and men seeking employment. Since 2006, locally-run EFE Affiliates in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, with support hubs in the USA, Europe, and the UAE, have connected more than 111,000 youth to the world of work while providing 3,000 businesses with the entry-level talent they need to grow. Over 57% of EFE's



EFE's innovative programmes aim to create economic opportunities for unemployed youth in the MENA region

graduates are young women, reflecting EFE's special focus on supporting women's entry into the workforce.

We are now focusing even more on quality jobs in growing sectors and skills that will make women competitive in local, regional and international markets. Technical and digital skills and English language capacity are in high demand. Human skills (such as leadership, teamwork, communication and critical thinking) are increasingly in demand precisely because so much is going digital. The demand for digital skills is a tremendous opportunity, as we can reskill someone relatively quickly. EFE's 100,000th graduate was a young woman in Morocco who joined EFE's coding program and then got her first job. Another young woman graduate from EFE's program in Jordan now has her own business repairing smartphones. She is in high demand in her conservative community in southern Jordan with women who do not want men seeing photos on their devices, and as devices are breaking down more often due to high usage with remote learning and work from home. In Palestine, a nursing graduate named Hazar was able to find a job after taking EFE's training that included human skills and connected her to a local hospital.

As opportunities to learn and work increasingly go online, it is even more urgent to ensure access for women. Internet access remains an issue, and few households have multiple laptops or desktop computers. Yet EFE is finding that pivoting to online training during COVID-19 has enabled us to reach rural women who normally could not have traveled for in-person training. There is so much we can do to support women as they seek to build their futures and support their families through skills and job opportunities. Please join our #Work4Women campaign and to learn more about EFE, you can visit www.efe.org.

With thanks to Jasmine Nahhas di Florio, Senior Vice President for Strategy, Partnerships & Communications, Education for Employment, for her kind contribution of this article elaborating on EFE's mission in the region which AIWF is proud to support

AIWF congratulates Tamara Bou Chahine on recent graduation and internship with UN OHCHR on refugees



With thanks to Tamara Bou Chahine for her kind contribution of this article

"You can't build a peaceful world on empty stomachs and human misery," wrote Dr Norman Borlaug, father of the green revolution. These powerful words resonated with me when I was an undergraduate student at the American University of Beirut and were crucial in shaping my interest in food production and food security. Moreover, my intrinsic drive to contribute to the advancement of human rights and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as well as the opportunities I had to work with civic society and with AIWF Founder & Chairman, **Haifa Al Kaylani**, inevitably put me on the path to pursue a career in the food production industry. That is why, after graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Biology in 2018, I started my Master's in Aquaculture as part of a European Erasmus Mundus program (IMBRSea).

How can we build a sustainable marine food production model that could benefit food and water insecure regions? That is the question I worked on finding solutions to as I embarked on my graduate journey. During my Masters, I met people from all around the world and travelled to several countries across Europe to learn, share, and understand the different challenges facing the food production industry as well as their various solutions. Most importantly, this experience made me more confident in that there are capable, passionate, and innovative young people who are determined to make the planet a better place. I am proud to say that despite the challenges brought forth this year, I successfully defended my thesis and graduated with great distinction at the end of August 2020.

I am currently participating in the Lebwox incubator for Lebanese women entrepreneurs where I am learning how to design a business startup that responds to the current needs of the MENA aquaculture industry. There is a huge untapped potential in aquaculture in the MENA region despite it being the fastest-growing

food production industry in the world that is set to contribute the most to close the gap between supply and demand.

I am also interning at the Regional Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the MENA region, which monitors, promotes, and protects all human rights including the mandate on the right to adequate food. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with the OHCHR-ROMENA in monitoring human rights advancement and violation in the region as I am learning and understanding the different climates and obstacles that countries are facing in the MENA Region.

Guaranteeing the right to adequate, available, accessible, and sustainable food is essential to move into a more evolved, peaceful, and fair world. Moreover, the right to food for everyone, which is rooted in the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, will not be accomplished until all human rights are protected and respected for everyone. There is a long way to go, but I am determined to promote the development and accomplishment of all human rights, and that of food in particular, throughout my professional career.



ARAB INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S FORUM
المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

The Arab International Women's Forum, established in 2001 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, uniquely links Arab women with their international counterparts, showcasing their development, ability and competence in business, professional and public life, and creating greater global awareness of women's success and prospects in the Arab world. To join AIWF as an individual, corporate or student / new graduate member, please visit www.aiwfonline.com.

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Date of next issue

The next edition of the AIWF Newsletter will be published in March 2021. AIWF Global Partners, members, friends and supporters are kindly requested to contact the Editor at info@aiwfonline.com on or before 15 February 2021 to contribute articles, photos and news.