

‘We Emerge Stronger and Better’: Special Message from the Arab International Women’s Forum on the valued occasion of Emirati Women’s Day 2026

28 August 2026 – On behalf of the Board, partners and members of the Arab International Women’s Forum (AIWF), we extend our high esteem and deep respect to **Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak**, the Mother of the Nation, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation.

As Founder of the Arab International Women’s Forum and on behalf of the AIWF Board, I take this opportunity to pay our deep respect and our tribute to **Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak**, the Mother of the Nation, whose lifelong advocacy for women’s education and leadership has shaped the architecture of opportunity for Emirati women, women across the Arab region, and globally.

We also share our congratulations with all Emirati women as we join the United Arab Emirates in celebrating their outstanding leadership and contribution to national life on Emirati Women’s Day 2026. This special occasion is an opportunity to honour Emirati women’s resilience and their remarkable achievements, and to recognise their role in advancing the UAE’s development which has inspired women across the Arab world and globally.

The 2026 celebration, which has been extended this year into a month-long celebration until the end of September, holds particular significance as the country builds on decades of progress in women’s empowerment and pursues its ambitions for innovation, sustainability and inclusive growth – with women and young people’s voices at the heart of this progress. Emirati Women’s Day honours and spotlights the outstanding women leaders who have preserved the nation’s cultural heritage, overcome professional barriers and encouraged younger generations to pursue new opportunities as role models in sectors and spheres that were previously dominated by men, especially in STEM, public office and on the international / diplomatic stage.

All of us at the Arab International Women’s Forum remember the founding belief of the late **His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan**, President of the United Arab Emirates since the formation of the Federation on 2 December 1971 and Ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, that no nation can rise without the empowerment and full inclusion of women. Throughout the UAE’s history, Emirati women have played a central role in the development of its society and economy and in advancing the country’s national progress. The 2026 theme, *We Emerge Stronger and Better*, celebrates the collective strength, resilience and ambition of Emirati women. The

UAE provides a distinct benchmark for the rest of the region, with women's empowerment through education and economic opportunity as part and parcel of the nation's founding values which place women at the heart of society, at the heart of the community and at the heart of the family.

The Arab International Women's Forum celebration of Emirati Women's Day carries particular resonance in 2026 as the Forum marks its 25th anniversary. Emirati women have been part of AIWF's story from its earliest days, through the representation on the Board of **HE Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi**, former UAE Minister of Economy, Minister of Foreign Trade; **HE Dr Raja Al Gurg**, Chairperson and Managing Director of the Al Gurg Group; **Dr Shaikha Al Maskari**, Chairperson of Tricon Group, and currently **Dr Lamya Fawwaz**, Executive Director, Brand & Strategic Initiatives at Masdar. Our esteemed AIWF Emirati Board Members have all played a key role since the inception of AIWF and throughout its 25 years, every step of the way. Our many Emirati members and friends, have contributed significantly to AIWF's development over the years as an influential platform for women's leadership and economic participation across the Arab world.

Over the years, AIWF has hosted numerous conferences and programmes in the UAE, including at the Dubai International Financial Centre, bringing together thousands of women leaders from across business, government, academia and civil society. AIWF is also proud to maintain three active Memoranda of Understanding with leading UAE institutional partners: Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy (WiSER) at Masdar; Al Ain University; and startAD, the Abu Dhabi-based accelerator powered by Tamkeen and anchored at NYU Abu Dhabi. These partnerships form part of AIWF's deep collaboration with Emirati women across sectors and professions throughout its 25-year history, a record of engagement of which AIWF is immensely proud.

As AIWF reflects on 25 years of partnership, advocacy and collaboration, its enduring relationship with Emirati women stands as a source of great pride and a foundation for its future work in the UAE. AIWF remains committed to supporting their ambitions, amplifying their leadership and working alongside its Emirati partners to advance opportunities for women in emerging fields. On behalf of the Board and the wider AIWF community, we once again extend our warmest congratulations to Emirati women on the occasion of Emirati Women's Day 2026 and we celebrate their remarkable achievements and invaluable contribution to the UAE and the wider Arab world.

Haifa Al Kaylani OBE

President & Founder

Arab International Women's Forum

HE Mona Al Moayyed

Chair of the Executive Committee

Arab International Women's Forum