

Forum Agenda*

Day One: 15 October 2009:

Women and Leadership

08:00-09:15	Registration
09:30-10:45	Opening Ceremony
10:45-11:00	Networking Coffee Break

11:00-13:30 Panel I: Politics and Media

11:00- 12:15 Part 1: Women and Politics

The changing international environment brings to the fore the host of political challenges and related economic and social issues that face the Arab world. NAWF 2009 resumes a vital discussion that started with the first forum in 2007 on the potential role that Arab women can and should play in dealing with these challenges and issues, and the obstacles that continue to limit their political leadership qualities and abilities.

This session will discuss the following issues:

- Is a quota system the best option to ensure a significant share for women in elected assemblies and ministerial posts, and is the Arab world ready for the application of this system on a wide scale?
- Advances made in the political participation of women in the Arab world.
- Social, economic and legal vehicles for promoting the political role of women and an ideal profile for a successful Arab woman politician.
- A psychoanalytical analysis of the relation of women to, and their identification with power, particularly political power and influence.

12:15- 13:30 Part 2: Women and Media

The media has become an increasingly important factor in shaping and swaying Arab public opinion over the last decade or so. The question is how can Arab women take advantage of this powerful tool to further their aims, especially in terms of expanding and strengthening their political image and role.

This session will discuss the following issues:

- What role is required of the media in building up a political image for Arab women?
- Is this image a function of how it is perceived by men, or by women themselves, and to what extent can Arab women build up their own proper political image?
- Strategies employed by women in other countries in their electoral campaigns: Do they differ from those used by men candidates and can they be applied in the Arab world?
- Is the adoption of the male campaign model the way to success?
- What prevents women leaders and politicians in the Arab world from integrating women's problems and rights in their media activities and programs?

13:30-15:00 Lunch

15:00-18:00 **Women, Entrepreneurship and Psychometrics Measures**

15:00-16:15 **Plenary Session: Women in Business**

The role of Arab women in business has grown rapidly in recent years propelled by unprecedented economic growth and a climate of reform and liberalization. But as the international economic crisis takes its toll on the region in terms of shrinking business and growth prospects, has its impact been felt in terms of reduced career opportunities for women.

This session will discuss the following issues:

- Has the economic slowdown increased competition in the job market to the detriment of opportunities for women?
- Was the performance of Arab business women in the crisis on par with that of their male peers, and did women show that they have better business sense?
- The effect of the current economic crisis on the position of women in organizations globally and what lessons should be learnt from this by women building their careers in an increasingly globalized business environment.
- How have women in Arab family enterprises weathered the storm, and are they breaking the glass ceiling and creating new opportunities for other women?
- What are prospects for women as business leaders in the region?

16:15-16:45 **Networking Coffee Break**

16:45-18:15 **Workshop 1:** Entrepreneurship and psychometric measures

Workshop 2: Social entrepreneurship

Day Two: 16 October 2009

Media, Sexuality, Education and Creativity

9:00-10:15 **Panel III: Sexuality and the Media**

The media can be a double-edged sword, delivering useful entertainment, but also increasingly frequent and explicit sexual content. Accordingly, it may help break down the cultural taboos associated with sensitive sexual topics and bridge gaps in our sexual knowledge, but can also promote socially unacceptable and unsafe sexual ideas and behavior.

This panel will discuss the following issues:

- Why has sexual content risen dramatically in the media and can this trend be countered or controlled?
- Does the discussion of issues and problems of human sexual expression, including rape, incest, abortion, and sexually transmitted diseases on TV talk shows serve a useful purpose or is it simply sensationalist?
- Does the open discussion of such issues contribute to the abuse of women's rights or help prevent such abuse?

10:15-10:30 **Networking Coffee Break**

10:30-11:45 Panel IV: Education and Taboos

Education and training are important vectors in social and economic development, and the promotion of men and women's roles in society. A country's educational policies are in the end the necessary vehicle for the elaboration and nurturing of the role and image of women in society.

This panel will discuss the following issues:

- What are the basic constituents and technical means of educational policies and programs?
- Is there a special role to be played by women in the elaboration of educational policies and programs?
- How are women portrayed in school books generally and history books specifically?
- Problems and obstacles that impact the nature and quality of education: religion and social practices, traditions, perceived sexual roles, etc.

11:45-13:00 Panel V: Women novels and Taboos

A Recent development in Arab societies has been a surge in literary works by women including novels that are unprecedented in their language, orientation and structure, as well as their boldness in exposing the private and intimate lives of women. Some critics content that sexuality that has long been one of the three main taboo subjects in Arabic literature, in addition to religion and politics, lost this status over the last decade or so as it became a more prevalent subject in Arabic writing generally and in literature in particular. More significant is those women writers have been more daring than men in broaching this subject to the extent that their writing has been accused of tending towards the erotic.

**Actresses will perform readings from novels written
by Arab writers as an introduction to the panel**

This panel will discuss the following issues:

- How can the tendency of Arab women to write novels, and bold ones at that, be explained, and to what extent was their long suffering from discrimination a contributory factor to the rise of this free and open literature?
- Can this new phenomenon in the Arab world be described as a spurt or a fad, or will these works by Arab women usher in a new age in Arab storytelling? How has this new wave contributed to contemporary Arab literature?
- Is this phenomenon a result of the fact that Arab poetry as a literary medium has not understood and expressed the experience of Arab women and what they would like to say about themselves and their society? Why have Arab women chosen the novel as the main or only medium of expression?
- What is the reaction of some women novelists towards criticism of their writing as erotic and pornographic, dissolute, or reflecting repression?

**This program is subject to change as seen necessary by the organizers*