

***LERC attends The New Arab Woman Forum (NAWF)***

2<sup>nd</sup> to 3rd December 2010, Beirut

Reported by Liliane Haddad

The 4th New Arab Woman Forum (NAWF) held under the main subject heading *Leadership and Social Responsibility* took place at the Phoenicia Intercontinental Hotel, Beirut, on the 2nd and 3rd of December 2010. Under the high patronage of the First Lady of Lebanon Wafaa Michel Sleiman, the Forum was organized by Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group and Al Hasnaa Magazine in cooperation with the League of Arab States and MBC Group.

The Forum's Opening Ceremony included speeches by Mrs. Wafaa Michel Sleiman, the First Lady of Lebanon; H.E. Dr. Tarek Mitri, the Lebanese Minister of Information; H.E. Bahia Hariri, Head of the Parliamentary Committee for Education and Culture in the Lebanese Parliament and Honorary President of the Forum; Dr. Nadine Abou Zaki, NAWF Executive Chair and Editor-in-Chief of Al Hasnaa, Lebanon. These covered the theme of Politics, Business and Social Responsibility. The Forum was attended by prominent politicians and personalities as well as by several media representatives.



Distinguished guests at the NAWF (Dec 2010).

An awards ceremony followed the opening speeches and three successful ladies, Ms. Layila El Solh Hamadeh, Deputy Chairman, Walid bin Talal Foundation, Lebanon; H.E. Ms. Suhair El Ali Member of House of Representatives of Jordan; and Ms. Raghida Dergham, Columnist and Senior Diplomatic Correspondent, Al Hayat, New York, were honored and recognized for their leadership efforts in social responsibility.



Layila El Solh Hamadeh Deputy Chairman, Walid bin Talal Foundation, receiving her award Lebanon from H.E. B. Hariri (Dec 2010).



H.E. Suhair El Ali, Member of House of Representatives of Jordan, receiving her award from H.E. B. Hariri as H.E. Dr. T. Mitri looks on (Dec 2010).



Raghida Dergham, Columnist and Senior Diplomatic Correspondent, Al Hayat, New York, with H.E. B. Hariri receiving her award (Dec 2010).

On its first day the Forum was divided into panels in order to address several topics. The first panel was titled *Women and Politics*, and the second panel *Social Media*. These panels were followed by an *Interactive Session on Environment and Sustainability*. The third panel was named *Corporate Social Responsibility*. In the afternoon, two workshops were held, entitled *Governance in Family Business* and *Social Entrepreneurship*.

The fourth panel, named *Women as Actresses of Change*, was held on the Forum's second day. This was followed by an interactive conversation and then a book-signing. The Forum concluded with the fifth panel named *Fashion of the Body*.

The forum's first panel discussed women in a political role. With regards to the slow pace at which the number of women in politics is growing, many countries have adopted various kinds of quota policies aimed at increasing the proportion of women in political office. The introduction of quota systems for women represents a qualitative jump into a policy of exact goals and means. Because of its relative efficiency, the hope for a dramatic increase in women's representation by using this system is strong. At the same time quotas raise serious questions and, in some cases, strong resistance.

The second panel found social media as designed to be disseminated through social interaction and mainly applying the latest web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. Social media, the panel explained, is a modern and powerful tool for disseminating ideas through the internet.

The interactive session discussed the environment and its sustainability. It argued that environmental issues were becoming increasingly urgent with vital concerns that should be addressed in Lebanon and the wider Arab world, especially in the light of the already felt impact of global warming on rain patterns, the water balance and food production in a number of countries in the region.

The panel *Regarding Corporate Social Responsibility* found CSR to be a continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute towards economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families, as well as that of the local community and society at large. CSR has emerged as a new management paradigm and an essential investment for business worldwide.

Concerning *Women as Actresses of Change*, the fourth panel found that Arab women have assumed increasingly important positions as writers, directors, producers, actresses, dancers, etc. Through these activities, they have played a major role in cultivating the image of a new Arab woman by employing the body and femininity to break social restrictions and preconceptions, and to achieve reconciliation with society on their own terms.

A book-signing event then took place with the following authors autographing their books: Dr. Malek Chebel, an author and an anthropologist from France; Dr. Rachid Al-Daif, an author and novelist based in Lebanon; Mrs. Mona Abou Hamzeh, a presenter at the Lebanese television channel, MTV; Dr. Nadine Abou Zaki, the NAWF Executive Chair and Al Hasnaa Editor-in-Chief, Lebanon; Mrs. Mona Tayem, a writer in Lebanon; Mrs. Rima Karaki, a presenter at the Lebanese television channel, Future TV; and Mrs. Rasha Atrach, a journalist with the *Assafir* newspaper in Lebanon.

The forum then moved on with the panel *Fashion of the Body*, which discussed fashion and models whose careers normally peak at 18, while the career of an actress peaks at 40. It is as if a woman ceases to exist after 40, or loses her femininity and is thus forced to live it in a different way, resulting in the exploitation of the female body beautiful as an object and platform for cheap commercial promotions.



A view of the audience at the NAWF (Dec 2010).

In conclusion, further discussions covered the quota system and its impact on women's empowerment, social media, corporate social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, corporate governance in family owned enterprises, environmental policy and social

responsibility, social responsibility in cinema, the theater and the performing arts in general, with attention to the importance of media, art and culture in social responsibility.

Brief addresses were also made by the Forum's sponsors, which included General Electric (Gold Sponsor), Aramex (Logistics Partner), MBC Group (Media Partner) and Mirros (PR Partner).

LERC was represented by Mrs. Liliane Haddad, Chief Indexer.