



ARAB INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S FORUM  
المنتدى العربي الدولي للمرأة

# **Arab International Women's Forum** **NGO Member of the UN Global Compact** **2021 Communication on Engagement**

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## 1 Chairman's Message



**Dr Afnan Al Shuaiby**

*Chairman of the Board  
Arab International Women's  
Forum*

**As Chairman and on behalf of the Board of the Arab International Women's Forum, I am proud to present this progress report bringing AIWF's key programmes, initiatives and events from 2018 – 2021 together in one comprehensive communication.**

I am pleased to share the commitment of AIWF to the UN Global Compact values and vision as well as to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the areas of women's and youth empowerment, economic opportunity for all, and addressing some of the Arab world's most critical development challenges, including water scarcity, food insecurity and youth unemployment.

AIWF was founded in London in 2001 as a development organisation with the clear aim of supporting and enhancing the role of women in the social and economic development of their countries and across the Middle East region. Working across the board with civil society, the private sector, academia and governments, AIWF's key areas for action are gender empowerment, diversity and inclusion; sustainability, STEM and women-led innovation; youth empowerment; and the future of work.

From the heart of the Arab world and internationally from our head office in London, AIWF brings partners in all spheres together to build bridges and build business, effect progress, correct negative stereotyping and build the capacity of Arab women at every level and in every sector.

In the last 20 years AIWF has hosted and partnered on key events, initiatives and conferences, held alternately between London, Western European capitals and major business hubs throughout the MENA as well as virtually. Events held since 2001 have examined strategies for job creation, inclusive sustainable development; the role of women as engines of economic growth; women, peace and security, refugee maternal health and refugee entrepreneurship; women in law and the professions; women-led entrepreneurship, research and innovation; food security, water scarcity, climate action and sustainable energy; and women in healthcare and STEM education.

Every one of these initiatives has brought our valued stakeholders together to understand the challenges, identify opportunities, and document a strategic plan for action in our Reports and Recommendations, which are always disseminated widely within our global advocacy network to impact both policy and practice and advance legislative reform, gender parity in policy, and better linkage between industry and education. AIWF works closely with a global network of corporate and institutional partners to promote and prioritise the engagement of women and youth towards finding innovative and actionable solutions to the multi-faceted and complex environmental, economic security, and developmental challenges the MENA region faces.

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AIWF links partners in academia with partners in industry and the private sector to address the well-known skills mismatch in the region and integrate entrepreneurship and sustainability education into mainstream curricula. AIWF also frequently supports global development events, campaigns and partner initiatives by facilitating introductions and nominations for Arab and international women to enjoy opportunities as keynote speakers and participants at high-level international conferences and events, as award nominees, and as summer school and training programme attendees.

We are proud to present this report, which features a full and detailed summary of many of our initiatives and engagements in the reporting period of 2018 - 2021 that are aligned with our commitment to the UN Global Compact Principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We look forward to advancing our call for women and youth to be real drivers of change in the Arab region. Through public-private partnerships and international co-operation, seeking improvements in institutional support and legal frameworks to provide increased opportunities for women and youth in business and in economic and political life, we can meet the challenges of the Arab region head on.



**Dr Afnan Al Shuaiby**  
Chairman of the Board  
Arab International Women's Forum

## 2 Statement of Continued Support

20 June 2021

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that the Arab International Women's Forum reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact. We welcome feedback on its contents.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organisation has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,



**Dr Afnan Al Shuaiby**  
Chairman of the Board  
Arab International Women's Forum

### 3 Description of Activities & Key Events in Reporting Period to Support UN Global Compact Principles

#### Period of activity covered by this Communication on Engagement:

**From:** September 2018

**To:** June 2021

AIWF, as an NGO Member of the UN Global Compact, is committed to integrating the SDGs into the programming of all its conferences, initiatives, and activities. Our events and initiatives are designed to identify and explore new opportunities for women leaders in business and in public service, from the MENA region and internationally, and to work closely and collaboratively with stakeholders at all levels to deliver actionable, impact-oriented recommendations and solutions to the barriers and challenges women and young people face in a rapidly changing and uncertain future world of work.

This summary of AIWF activities, engagements and initiatives is by no means comprehensive but serves as a description of actions that AIWF has undertaken in this reporting period under its core mission and commitment to support and enhance the role of women in the MENA region and beyond. Each action is linked with the corresponding Principles to which the action is most closely aligned.

#### Principles most closely aligned with the work of AIWF in this reporting period:

**Principle 1** ('Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights');

**Principle 6** ('Businesses should uphold the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation');

**Principle 7** ('Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges');

**Principle 8** ('Businesses should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility');

**Principle 9** ('Businesses should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies').

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**2018**

**28 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**AIWF / CMI Women, Water & Youth Conference held in Amman, Jordan in partnership with the CMI, PepsiCo, PwC and the Union of Arab Chambers, examining critical intersectional development challenges of water scarcity and food security, women's economic participation and youth unemployment**



The Joint Conference of AIWF and the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) was held in Amman, Jordan in 26-27 September 2018 on Women, Water & Youth: Perspectives from the MENA Region. The conference was held in partnership with the CMI and benefited tremendously from the invaluable endorsement, input and contributions of Conference Partners, the Union of Arab Chambers, PepsiCo, PwC and the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM).

The programme directly addressed the role of women in water governance in the region, examines the potential of entrepreneurship, social enterprise, 'smart' technology and 'edtech' innovation in building youth capacity in the Arab water sector, as well as the critical challenge of refugee empowerment in the context of water scarcity and food insecurity in the region. The conference

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ultimately delivered actionable solutions to mitigate all identified challenges through multi-level engagement, dialogue, innovation and collaboration.

Women, Water & Youth is a milestone in AIWF's 19-year advocacy for sustainable empowerment, economic opportunity, education, mobility and prosperity for women and young people in the Arab world. Addressing key development challenges as well as opportunities for economic growth and progress benefitting women and young people in the Arab world, the conference objectives and programme were designed in collaboration with world leading subject matter specialists at the CMI who have extensive and unparalleled expertise in the MENA region and beyond, in helping countries achieve transformative reforms, advancing refugee inclusion, promoting labour mobility, building economic and social cohesion, cross-border trade, investment, and scientific and cultural exchange to enhance Mediterranean integration.

On this occasion, AIWF was exceptionally proud to bring government representatives, the private sector, civil society, women and youth together to innovate new solutions for the food and water crises in the MENA and better understand how these challenges impact the lives of women and young people. The conference programme for Women, Water & Youth was carefully designed to align closely with the core priority policy areas of AIWF and the CMI. The discussion and interaction that took place throughout both days between the distinguished Opening Session Speakers, Panel Chairs, Guest Speakers and Delegates, attending from across Jordan, the MENA Region, the UK, EU and the United States, was deeply impactful and highly insightful, resulting in over 40 concrete recommendations for further action. Please see the AIWF website for the full event report.



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**2019**

**17 APRIL 2019**

**AIWF holds highly successful Women Leaders & Health Conference in Lebanon in April 2019 in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Medical School and the American University of Beirut**



On 16-17 April 2019, the Arab International Women's Forum was proud to hold a high-level Conference in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Beirut, Lebanon on Women Leaders & Health: Empowering women leaders in innovation, medical education and healthcare delivery.

Taking forward the momentum that AIWF has created through recent and highly successful STEM-focused initiatives in Amman (Women, Water & Youth in September 2018) and London (Women-Led Innovation in STEM in September 2018), the Women Leaders & Health initiative examined strategies to foster an inclusive and empowering environment for women-led innovation, research and discovery in medicine and healthcare delivery by learning from regional and international best practices and the vital experiences and valuable strategies of women leaders themselves.

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The full day of impactful conference sessions then explored capacity building for women in medicine through technology, training, intra/entrepreneurship, executive leadership and social enterprise. Conference participants also heard the deeply valued reflections of women leaders on meeting the region's most critical health challenges through cross-border collaboration, capacity building, medical education and initiatives to improve gender diversity in medicine and the health sciences.

A half-day interactive workshop following the conference on 17 April 2019, titled 'Addressing maternal and child health in conflict/vulnerable settings in the MENA region', welcomed distinguished speakers representing the World Bank, the ESCWA Center for Women, the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon, the Lebanese Order of Midwives, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Medecins Sans Frontieres. The workshop sessions brought together leaders in public service, international development and global advocacy to discuss the impact that the refugee crisis in the MENA has had on women in vulnerable and conflict situations in the region, and to provide insight into how these challenges can be mitigated through multi-level engagement, concerted action and dialogue.

The conference and workshop were an outstanding success for AIWF, UMMS, AUB and all valued stakeholders, bringing into focus key challenges and opportunities for women's leadership in medical education, healthcare delivery, STEM, research, innovation, sustainability and international development and drawing the Arab public and private sectors, international development organisations and institutes, civil society, women and youth together.

Please see the AIWF website for the full event report.



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**18 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**AIWF's 'Women as Engines of Economic Growth' Conference brings global women leaders together in Cairo**



The Arab International Women's Forum was proud to hold a major conference, Women as Engines of Economic Growth: Empowering women innovators, entrepreneurs, executives and educators towards fulfilment of the SDGs in the MENA Region, on 16 & 17 September 2019 at and in partnership with the American University in Cairo, with PepsiCo as Lead Conference Partner and PwC Middle East as Conference Supporting Partner.

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

The conference therefore elaborated on critical themes around women's leadership in the economy, entrepreneurship and SME growth, on corporate boards and in family business, executive leadership, innovation and economic development. The programme also recognised women's valuable role to

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the rural and agricultural sectors and identified successful strategies to strengthen women's engagement in political life and public service, whilst emphasising the vital role of women in achieving legislative reform and gender balance in policy formation.

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

AIWF was deeply impressed by the exceedingly high calibre of all our Panel Chairs, Distinguished Guest Speakers, and Conference Participants, all outstanding business, diplomatic and academic leaders who are most inspirational and accomplished in their fields, and who contributed at such a high level to the conference success.

Please see the AIWF website for the full event report.



## 2020

**AIWF Webinar Series: A series of high-impact virtual events responding to some of the Arab world's most salient development issues in 2020**



In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic 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

AIWF, like all organisations worldwide, transitioned to a virtual-only programme through 2020, bringing key stakeholders 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. To address critical challenges for development and inclusion in the MENA AIWF was deeply focused on working with our global advocacy partners, from our governmental, corporate and institutional networks, and reaching across sectors, spheres and regions to build a strong programme of virtual events.

The recordings of the nine AIWF Webinar Series 2020, which were chaired by AIWF President & Founder Haifa Al Kaylani, are available on our YouTube channel and included:

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**1 JULY 2020**

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

*Held in partnership with the World Bank*

**8 JULY 2020**

Women on the Frontline in the Fight Against COVID-19 and Beyond: In partnership with Pfizer

*Held in partnership with Pfizer*

**9 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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

*Held in partnership with the OECD*

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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

*Held in partnership with PwC*

**8 OCTOBER 2020**

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

*Held in partnership with the Union for the Mediterranean*

**21 OCTOBER 2020**

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

*Held in collaboration with the International Labour Organization*

**4 NOVEMBER 2020**

Humanising Energy: Examining the human dimension of and the need for sustainable energy

*Held in partnership with Shell*

**25 NOVEMBER 2020**

Building Back Better: Fostering the transition to a green economy

**9 DECEMBER 2020**

Saudi Women's Leadership & Economic Inclusion: Driving the SDG Agenda to 2030

Please see the AIWF website for the webinar reports.

2021

24 FEBRUARY 2021

What's Cooking: Digital Transformation of the Agri-food System



AIWF's first virtual event of 2021, 'What's Cooking: Digital Transformation of the Agrifood System', was held in partnership with the World Bank on Wednesday 24 February 2021. This session examined how digital technologies are accelerating transformation in the agrifood system, and the role of digital agriculture in improving inclusion, equity and environmental sustainability in food systems. AIWF President & Founder Haifa Al Kaylani co-chaired this event together with Marianne Grosclaude, Practice Manager for Agriculture and Food MENA, The World Bank.

AIWF was honoured to welcome special guest speakers Julian Lampietti, Practice Manager of the Global Engagement Unit of the Agriculture and Food Practice, The World Bank; Eugene Willemsen, CEO AMESA, PepsiCo; Ghada Elabed, Senior Agriculture Economist, The World Bank; and Parmesh Shah, Global Lead for Digital Agriculture, The World Bank.

Digital technologies are accelerating transformation in the agri-food industry. The role of digital agriculture is in improving inclusion, equity, and environmental sustainability and food systems, and the important role that governments institutions, farming communities and private sector play is in promoting a sustainable future for agriculture that will really put people and planet first before profit.

Haifa Al Kaylani, President & Founder of AIWF, emphasised in her Keynote Opening Remarks that “now is the time to work collaboratively and collectively to successfully adopt sustainable digital agriculture solutions that have the power to create a revolution in our global food systems, improve resilience and security of food and water, empower and develop the human talent behind the systems and behind the technology and ultimately put safeguards in place within our food systems that protect our planet from wasteful production, and unsustainable agritech methods.”



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Eugene Williamson, CEO for Africa, Middle East and South Asia at PepsiCo, said that agriculture was “at the core of PepsiCo’s sustainability strategy and one of the six key planks”. He shared: “We believe that as one of the leading food and beverage companies, we actually have an opportunity to help transform the food system and also help transform how food is grown, produced, consumed and openly being disposable. We work with about 100,000 farmers across the fields that ranges from large scale commercial farmers to very small farms. Bringing the best of technology to those small farmers to help enable them to improve yields, improve their livelihoods. And the way we do that is obviously supporting them with some digital tools. These tools gives us opportunities to reduce, for instance, the use of water”, which was one of the data points that the World Bank study references.

AIWF was proud to bring together its Global Benefactor Partner PepsiCo together with its leading institutional partner the World Bank for this valuable session on a critical development area that greatly impacts women and young people in the Arab world. Please see the AIWF website for the video recording and event recap.

### **31 MARCH 2021**

#### **AIWF and WISER jointly host ‘Women Entrepreneurs in the Green Economy’ virtual event**

On 31 March AIWF was proud to partner with #WiSER, an initiative of Masdar (Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company), for a virtual panel on ‘Women Entrepreneurs in the Green Economy’, following the MoU signed between our two organisations on 22 March by AIWF Chairman of the Board Dr Afnan Al Shuaiby and WiSER Executive Director Dr Lamya Fawwaz.

During the MoU signing ceremony, Dr Al Shuaiby said: “AIWF is thrilled to be partnering with WiSER on this important strategic partnership in 2021, our 20th anniversary year in which we are driving a strong, progressive and forward-focused agenda for women in STEM and sustainability. Through partnerships with organisations like WiSER, AIWF hopes to contribute to the creation of a dynamic, progressive environment in the Arab world in which women are empowered as champions of change, to action positive, gender-neutral developments in their industries, challenge stereotypes of the Arab world abroad, and encourage greater participation by women in sustainability innovation”.

The session on 31 March examined the emerging landscape for women-led entrepreneurship, social enterprise, innovation and advocacy in the MENA green economy; and the need to design tailored and targeted initiatives that support ‘scaling up’ in women-led green companies in the region.

This highly interactive, inspiring and informative discussion included Dr Afef Haddad, Country Program Coordinator and Deputy to the Director for the Maghreb and Malta, The World Bank, USA; Malak Al-Shaibani, External Relations Manager, Shell Oman; Dr Enass Abo-Hamed, Co-Founder and CEO, H2GO Power Ltd, UK; and Dr Salma Bougarrani, Co-Founder & CEO, Green Watech, Morocco. Please see the AIWF website for the video recording and event recap.

## 4 AIWF Global Partnerships



In this reporting period (2018 – 2021), AIWF worked closely with Global Partners on a number of joint initiatives, conferences and events, including and beyond those featured in the previous section, laying the foundation for more specialised and microtargeted initiatives to be launched in the future in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on women and young people in the region.

As a non-profit, non-governmental organisation and NGO Member of the UN Global Compact, the Arab International Women's Forum proudly acknowledges the invaluable support of our Global Benefactor Partner PepsiCo and AIWF Global Corporate Partners Shell, Pfizer, and PwC, all Corporate Members of the UN Global Compact, on all our initiatives and international advocacy programmes made possible with their continued endorsement and confidence.

Over two decades AIWF has proudly collaborated with some of the world's leading institutions and organisations as Programme Partners on events, conferences and joint initiatives held in the UK, Europe, the United States and across the MENA Region, many of them both corporate and NGO Members of the UN Global Compact.

AIWF also partners with some of the world's leading universities on events and initiatives that link academia and the private sector to support the development of market-ready MENA graduates, foster women-led innovation and entrepreneurship, and nurture the next generation of young Arab business leaders. We are especially proud of our collaborations with universities that put young people at the heart of sustainable development in the Arab region, seeing this as an important contribution to our mission as NGO Members of the UN Global Compact.

## 5 About AIWF, a development organisation for women and youth in the MENA region and internationally

The Arab International Women's Forum was founded in London in 2001 by Haifa Al Kaylani to support women's economic empowerment and leadership, and advance youth engagement in the MENA region and globally. From our base in London and from the heart of the MENA Region, AIWF convenes global and emerging leaders from government, public service, business, civil society, academia and media to create an Arab world where women are empowered to make a positive impact as equals and as leaders, in their communities, in grassroots advocacy, in parliament, in the economy, and in societal development overall.

Working closely with our Global Partners PepsiCo, Shell, Pfizer, and PwC, collaboratively with our international institutional partners, and across cultures with our global member base, AIWF facilitates multi-stakeholder dialogue and drives action to help women and young leaders unlock their full potential and exercise their agency in the MENA Region through education, economic empowerment, and leadership development. We work to raise awareness and amplify emerging voices; shape an impactful agenda for women and youth; and drive collaborative action on development challenges.

On 01 January 2021, Haifa Al Kaylani was appointed President & Founder of AIWF, and Dr Afnan Al Shuaiby was appointed Chairman of the Board of AIWF. In 2021, under Dr Al Shuaiby's leadership and as we advance towards the 2030 SDG targets, the vision of AIWF is to realise an Arab world where women, who are still greatly underrepresented and marginalised in MENA economic and political life, are empowered to make a positive impact as equals and as leaders, in their communities, in grassroots advocacy, in parliament, in the economy, and in societal development overall.

Find out more about AIWF's mission, history and programmes at [aiwfonline.com](https://aiwfonline.com).