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Expo 2020 Dubai partnered with the UAE Gender Balance Council. Under the leadership and guidance of HH Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Council will host an array of sessions at the Women's Pavilion.



Malala Yousafzai, youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, visited the Women's Pavilion on January 28th. During her visit she advocated strongly for girls' access to education and emphasized the need to

There's so much optimism and enthusiasm for the future when we educate and empower women, and, at the same time, there's a reminder that millions of women do not have access to equal rights."



Sheroes Shattering Stereotypes

Women in Arabia and Islam | Super Sheroes: How Arab and Muslim Women Use Media to Connect and Shatter Stereotypes

At our Women in Arabia and Islam session in Travel and Connectivity Week, we focused our discussions on Muslim women using different media platforms to shatter stereotypes and faulty biases. We were joined by Muna AbuSulayman, Saudi media icon and businesswoman; Tima Shomali, creator and director of Netflix original *AlRawabi School for Girls*; and Nicole Al Rais, researcher and TikTok content creator. These trailblazing women have been breaking boundaries and sparking difficult societal conversations through their own media interventions and productions.

Underlining the importance of taking responsibility for their role and being conscious of the impact their content has on their audiences, they address the bias and encourage their viewers to do the same. Each using their own medium and platform, they demonstrate that Muslim women are owning their power and tackling gender and cultural diversity by discussing the issues of equality that matter to them, addressing the taboos that women and girls face every day, and shattering stereotypes and misconceptions. They do

narrative being imposed on them.

Their media manifestations have made them both loved and questioned. Regardless, from addressing controversies including sexual harassment, honor killings, religious conversion or in past times simply dancing on a television show, these women are opening up space to have important conversations, also by drawing men and boys into the conversation. This is often a first step towards reducing some of the gender and cultural biases held by many.

Closing the Digital Gender Gap

Women's World Majlis | All Online? Not Yet: Closing the Digital Gender Gap

Technology can equalize and connect the world. Or divide it. Technological advancements in for example the realm of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning and Virtual Reality (VR) show that the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution is well and truly underway. These innovations create new opportunities to empower women and tackle gender bias, in ways we were unable to do before. However, the pitfalls remain. As with all previous technological and industrial revolutions, women are in danger of being left out. Still today women and girls have less access to basic technological devices and skills, as well as to the internet. This in its own turn limits access to financing, the ability to set up e-commerce businesses and in general limits their opportunity to connect with others around the world.

Our Women's World Majlis panelists Cristina Falcone, VP of Public Affairs at UPS Europe, and Asma Shabab, Senior Manager of Innovation Strategy at Accenture UAE, highlighted that now, with the Fourth Industrial Revolution underway, is the moment to take a close look at how we are digitalizing. Looking at access and skills, as well as at the way the technology itself is being coded and developed. AI and machine learning depend on the data we feed into algorithms and how coding instructs their behavior. At the moment, much of the data is biased towards male standards, while it is mostly men doing the coding. As Asma Shabab put it: "sexism and bias will be coded into the system", unless we ensure women are part of the conversations around how we code and with what.



SDG 5 on Gender Equality: The Mother of All SDGs

Women's World Majlis | Gender Equality as the Mother of all SDGs

During Global Goals Week, we also looked at how, with a diverse line up of events and speakers, the Women's Pavilion approached Global Goals Week through the narrative that **"SDG5" on gender equality should be acknowledged as the mother of all other SDGs**. After all, it is the prerequisite and in many ways the catalyst for the achievement of many other goals. Across the world awareness for the need for gender equality has grown, and though we have yet to achieve gender equality we know what tools, policies, and mindsets are needed to get us there.

International leaders HE Helen Clark, HE Epsy Campbell, HE Stella Ronner-Grubacic and HE Sonja Hyland spoke about the challenges to implementation and the work that remains to be done, but also pointed out that perhaps the biggest successes so far are the strong conceptual and normative frameworks and policy instruments that are in place nowadays.

A recent positive trend our panelists highlighted is the awareness and passion young people possess about the issue, indicating that with the right attitudes and consistent policies, gender equality might just be a matter of time. At the same time, we also need to remain proactive and vigilant. As recent crises such as the pandemic and Afghanistan have demonstrated, progress remains vulnerable to setbacks. Ensuring girls' education, combating violence against women, and eliminating biases will need to continue

Thus, although we have made progress, and the position of younger generations is promising, patriarchal structures will take time and require consistent effort to truly rewire. For this to happen, we need to be more mindful that gender equality and women empowerment are not seen as a separate agenda item but instead are “mainstreamed” into all areas of policy. Men and boys need to be included in these conversations and solutions, as this would help dispel the notion of “women’s issues” and show that they are indeed “society’s issues”.

The panelists emphasized the need to enforce more gender-equal and gender-responsive leadership and structure these ideas throughout an organization, including putting in place mechanisms for accountability. The need for gender equality for societies to thrive, is clear, including the evidence base. However, we cannot start sleeping at the wheel and need to continue our efforts to develop and invoke deliberate instruments, including quotas and blind reviews for example, to make the structural changes we all advocate for.

Islam as Inspiration for Sustainable Development

Women in Arabia and Islam | How Islam Inspires Sustainable Development in the Region and the World

Islam inspires sustainable development in the region and in the world. In a thought-inspiring keynote, HE Omar al Ghobash kicked off an exploration of the compatibility of the SDGs with Islam, tentatively concluding that while Islamic tenets point in the same direction as the SDGs, Muslims have a duty to actively give this shape and meaning in their daily lives.

Other speakers, which included Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, Maya Marissa Malek, Huda Jawad and Jawaher Almheiry, echoed and further substantiated the need to reclaim responsibility to focus on the public goods, not just on individual worships. The greatly untapped potential of using Islamic tenets more towards community goals, is for example clear from the story of Islamic (social) finance, which in the past forty years has creatively and massively contributed to global financing towards objectives of sustainable development, whether laid down in SDGs or in Islamic concepts.

The discussion also focused on the alignment of the tenets of Islam with the spirit and objectives of SDG5 on gender equality. As pointed out by young thinker Jawaher Almheiry and also by Musawah’s co-director Huda Jawad, Islam is in its essence inherently and decisively gender-neutral and provides equal rewards to men and women. To (re)claim this, women’s agency needs to stop being taken away from them. As Huda Jawad neatly pointed out: “We are feminist because we are Muslim, not despite that fact.”

In this intimate series of fireside chats with prominent personalities from across the globe, we discussed visions and personal journeys towards a more gender equal future.



In a discussion with **HE Fatmire Isaki**, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, we touched upon issues from women in diplomacy, to fighting violence against women and to being a female role model. HE Isaki had a clear vision: when one works hard, towards a specific goal, it will be achieved. This holds also for women, and for promoting gender equality in general. Women should not wait, but stand up for their rights and for certain positions and work together to do so. For HE Isaki herself, it was working with children that sparked her interest in gender issues. She believes change is on its way: when she grew up herself, some professions simply seemed not appropriate for women, such as being pilots or being doctors, while nowadays women can be what they want to be. She has taken her drive for gender equality into her current role in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example by organizing an international conference on women in foreign policy and by establishing internal working groups – in which men also are represented. When it comes to her country, she is proud that the state institutions of North Macedonia have also set themselves ambitious goals for equal representation.

HE Epsy Campbell Barr, the Vice President of Costa Rica, spoke about how although her achieving this position is a generational milestone, women, particularly women of color and women of the global south, still face tremendous challenges. As one of the few women of color in a Vice President position, she feels

representing women of color everywhere. For her, this means putting central the vision of equality and justice for all minority groups, and fostering a culture of tolerance and respect on the local, national, and international levels. She does this by working at the grassroots level as well as by changing institutions from the top. HE Campbell Barr learned to stand up for herself and argue for equality from a young age, telling her mother “mama, this is not justice” when the girls in the house had to do chores daily while the boys only did yard work on weekends. Indeed, the home is one of the first places gender roles are being taught. To counter inequality from a young age, children and their parents need to be educated without stereotypes, gender, racial, or otherwise. HE Campbell Barr sees such stereotypes are one of the biggest obstacles to achieving equality. Equal representation in leadership and taking equality seriously, are essential steps.

In a dialogue with Maher Nasser, Commissioner General of the United Nations, **HE Melissa Fleming**, herself Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications of the United Nations, reflected on the worldwide nature of the struggle for gender equality. HE Fleming pointed for example that in places often understood as “gender-equal” still a lot of work needs to be done – even when the right laws, policies and structures were put in place. HE Fleming also pointed at the clear correlation between gender equality and countries’ “scores” with regard to Sustainable Development Goals. Proud to be able to take her own organization, the United Nations, as a positive example, she emphasized the role of leadership. There, the man currently at the top has actively and openly declared himself a feminist and has really put effort in gender equality in leadership, while also stressing the need to understand one’s own biases and ensure not to transmit these in conversations and recruitment processes. This is a challenge faced worldwide, as subconscious biases keep permeating modus operandi in the UN, national government, the private sector, and our private lives. On a very personal level, HE Fleming shared the story of how she dealt with a “stage three” breast cancer diagnosis, which happened at “the pinnacle of her career”. After a period of denial, she actually started to write about it and shared her story in order to help other women. The most shocking discovery she had in this context was the shame women often experience after such a diagnosis. It is one of the examples where taboos, biases and stereotypes still desperately need shattering.



OUTLIER SERIES

This series reflects the rich variety of partnerships of the Women's Pavilion as we bring together stakeholders from a wide range of sectors and geographic areas.



Zara Rutherford landed at Expo 2020 Dubai on her journey to becoming the youngest woman to fly solo around the world. She was joined on stage by Aysha Alhameli, the UAE's first female pilot, and Marwa Al Matrooshi, the first female Emirati Air Traffic Control Officer (ATCO). The panelists spoke about the challenges they face as female pilots and discussed the barriers they face as women in aviation and STEM professions. The two main barriers they identified were stereotypes and the persistent social norms with regard to education and professional life. Stereotypes such as that 'women cannot be pilots' discouraged them initially from entering the field. Support from family, inspiration from role models, and passion for the industry in the end made them pursue their careers despite this societal resistance.



NAMA hosted a high-profile panel discussion in partnership with **UN Women** at Expo 2020 Dubai. The session highlighted the critical role of gender-responsive procurement (GRP) with regard to delivering directly on most Sustainable Development Goals. It also outlined experiences, best practices and emerging trends for GRP, a systemic approach that involves working with buyers and suppliers to make the procurement process lead to social impact, especially for women. To illustrate the necessity and the potential gains, the panel shared success stories of implementation of gender-responsive procurement in different parts of the world, including South Africa and the UAE.



NAMA & Daim, industry and public sector experts discussed how developing business, digital, industry specific, and personal skills today, will be important to be adaptable and resilient in the future. Pointing to a silver lining in the pandemic, they emphasized how the flexibility of remote working models allows many women to retrain and reskill in ways that would prepare them for future jobs. Particularly notable was the increase in women's engagement on microcredentials, short virtual courses, especially in the STEM fields. Although these courses have not (yet) replaced formal university degrees in job requirements, they are increasingly popular. The panelists also stressed the need for private and public sector collaboration to ensure appropriate guidance on workforce retraining, particularly in the face of pandemic-related job losses and the unfolding of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



In the context of Global Goals Week at Expo 2020 Dubai, **Chile** (and its Ministry of Women and Gender Equality as well as ProChile), in collaboration with Canada and Mexico, shared best practices and actions to push forward women's participation in international trade, including trade policy instruments and participation in multilateral fora. The countries advocated for mainstreaming gender in policy, saying that women's participation in international trade requires a holistic approach. Examples of ways in which these countries already do this are capacity building for businesses, ensuring equal access to education, encouraging women and girls to enter male-dominated fields and including gender chapters in free trade agreements.



Following the screening of the documentary 'A Light in the Darkness', organized by the **Spanish Embassy**, three young panelists, including the protagonist in the documentary, Marta Borrell, reflected on their own educational journeys thus far as well as education gaps. They explored the impact of (digital) resources on the quality of education, and how the lack thereof may reduce the quality of education offered. They also reflected on the importance of teacher training and guidance, as even the most motivated teacher can only do so much without it. For example, guidance on teaching methods that go beyond regurgitating what is in the books, and instead creating an atmosphere of collaboration and interactive learning.



Generale hosted a new edition of its “Series of Talks” on the challenges, best practices, research, and insights from experienced leaders and partners in the region. For this session, Societe Generale collaborated with Tharawat and their impact initiative: Women in Family Business.



The **Spanish Embassy** together with **Andreu World** organized a panel discussion on women and the challenge of sustainability, highlighting perspectives from the fields of architecture, design, education and business. The panellists, all experts in their respective fields, spoke about how sustainable design produced under gender equal conditions are central in the work they deliver. As Jesús Llinares, CEO of Andreu World, stated: “a radical approach is needed in order to achieve sustainability.” The panellists and their organizations all focus on the circular economy, using sustainable materials and being conscious of the lifecycles of their designs, as well as being transparent and communicative about this to their audiences. Important to achieving sustainable design, is the diversity of the designers. This encourages creativity, and brings new perspectives to the table which allow for progress and innovation.

[Download The Women's Pavilion Programme Pack](#)

The Women's Pavilion and its key partners, Cartier and the UAE Gender Balance Council, would like to thank all the speakers and visitors throughout the month of December 2021.



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