



وزارة الخارجية
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MOFA Brief on
Emirati women empowerment
on the occasion of International Women's Day

March 2015

The UAE's experiment in empowering women has emerged as a shining model for many other countries in the region and the rest of the world, not only because of its qualitative achievements but also for the increasing role that women play in the local community, something that qualifies them to shoulder major responsibilities in nation building, according to a report issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the International Women's Day.

The UAE women have made remarkable achievements ever since the Union was established four decades ago, thanks to the visionary leadership of President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

The late founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, played a key role in giving women their rights as part of his pioneering and ambitious project to build both the nation and human being when he first became the ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 and then after he founded the Union 43 years ago.

The UAE woman also received significant support and guidance from H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union (GWU), Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation (FDF) and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, who helped raise her status in the community, enrich her and improve her work so as to serve her nation, community and family.

In order to ensure empowerment of women, the State has taken a series of measures, including putting in place certain national mechanisms and setting up women organizations whose prime goal is to develop women in various domains.

The General Women's Union (GWU), for instance, is working to devise national strategic plans for advancement of women. Other women organizations like the Family Development Foundation (FDF) in Abu Dhabi, Dubai Women Establishment in Dubai, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in Sharjah and the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, are all working for the development, empowerment and advancement of women.

The UAE acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and joined other nine international conventions on regulation of work time, equal remuneration and other benefits.

Further, the UAE has enacted legislation and laws, most notably the Federal Law for Combating Human Trafficking, to ensure legal protection to women and punish those who commit violent acts against women.

Leading the national efforts towards development and empowerment of women as a key partner in national development as part of the federal strategic plan, President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, said, "The State, since the inception of the Union on December 2, 1971, has been concentrating on the development and empowerment of women so that she can assume her natural role as an active contributor in sustainable development."

In a statement on December 9, 2009, President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan said; 'We view women as a key element in UAE society and a partner to man in all types of work. The progress the UAE woman has achieved was not a sudden development. Rather it was a culmination of a long, arduous march charted by the late founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who encouraged and empowered women to exercise her rights alongside the man. The UAE woman has proven that she was up to our trust and that of our people, leaving a visible hallmarks in all roles she assumed, made us confident that she will deliver more achievements and gains which will give her participation in public life a real significance and social dimension.' In a further qualitative boost to women in the UAE, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, has announced the forming of the 'UAE Gender Balance Council,' a federal entity chaired by President of Dubai Women's Establishment Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, wife of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The new body, launched during the recent Government Summit in Dubai, aims to boost the UAE's efforts to evolve and enhance women's roles as key partners in building the future of the nation.

UAE Foreign Minister H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan reiterated that the UAE's civilised march would not have been complete, if it had not been for the central role of Emirati women as a major partner in the development of the nation since the inception of the Union, as well as in the present and future of national development.

In his insightful address on the second day of the Government Summit entitled, '#WeTheUAE,' the foreign minister indicated that two years after the birth of the

Union, the first society for development of women was established under the chairmanship of 'Mother of the Nation', HH Sheikh Fatima bint Mubarak.

Since then, he said, the UAE woman had landmark achievements to her credit, affirming that women's empowerment is not just a slogan which the government boasted of, or a word which officials repeated. It is, rather, a tangible truth through accomplishments that carry the hallmarks of UAE women in various fields, including politics, aviation, museums, sports and others.

Inspired by initiatives launched by the pioneer of the women's movement and "Mother of the Nation", HH Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, and supported by the late founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the UAE woman has progressed steadily and rapidly in accomplishing unprecedented achievements, given the young age of the state.

Sheikha Fatima's relentless efforts to develop and empower UAE women has paid off in setting a prominent model for empowerment of women, along with their active participation in the development.

Since 1981, Sheikha Fatima has been honouring outstanding women graduates in higher education institutions and granting many scholarships to top achievers. She also launched, in partnership with UNICEF, the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2012-2021).

Participation of the UAE woman in the decision-making process is not confined to only entering the Federal National Council (FNC), but also in holding up leadership roles in the government as a minister, undersecretary, and director, in addition to her engagement in the diplomatic corps.

Thanks to the support of the political leadership, today the UAE woman holds a prominent and respected place in the local community and assumes leadership positions through which she can provide opinions, advice and take decisions.

Since 2008, women held four ministerial portfolios, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken an unparalleled step by appointing five women ambassadors: Sheikha Najla Al Qasimi to Portugal, Dr. Hisa Abdullah Al Otaiba to Spain, Hafsa Al Olma to Montenegro, Lana Nusseibeh, the Permanent Representative of the UAE to the United Nations, and Noura Juma, Consul-General in Milano.

There are 153 women diplomats working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while 27 others are employed in diplomatic missions abroad. These developments underscore the wise leadership vision for supporting and expanding the woman's role as an integral part of society and a key partner of man in the comprehensive development the UAE is currently witnessing.

In 2011, six women were named members of the Federal National Council and, with the election of another, the number of women in the house rose to seven, representing 17.5 percent of the total membership.

Today, the UAE woman, armed with merit and efficiency, is working side by side with man in nation-building, under the government's strategic vision for the future.