

## Press Release

### **Leaders in Dubai forum sees call for new ways of doing business**

- Sheikha Hanadi Nasser Bin Khaled Al Thani says focus should shift from family-owned enterprises to individual entrepreneurship
- Warns that a failure to adapt to the demands of the global market will lead to unemployment, stagnation and unrest

**Dubai, November 21, 2007:** In order to compete on a global level, the economies of the GCC states need to shift emphasis away from traditional, family-run business enterprises and foster a spirit of pioneering entrepreneurship among regional youths. This was the message from Sheikha Hanadi Nasser Bin Khaled Al Thani, Founder and Chairperson of Qatari investment giant Amwal, speaking at the recent Leaders in Dubai forum.

“Unless we do something to develop the talents of our young people,” Sheikha Hanadi said, “we are facing a future marked by increased unemployment, economic stagnation and social unrest.”

Sheikha Hanadi made her remarks before an audience of international business and political leaders, in a panel discussion titled “Strategy for the Future—A Regional Outlook.” Her fellow panel members were Dr. Sami Mohsen Baroum, MD of Savola Group, Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair, CEO of Mashreq and Speaker of the House for the FNC; Mutlaq H. Morished, Vice President of Corporate Finance for SABIC and Chairman of YANSAB; and Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa, Chief Executive of the Bahrain Economic Development Board.

“While I’m not suggesting we scrap tradition, regional economies would benefit greatly from the injection of new ideas and new ways of doing things,” Sheikha Hanadi said, adding that family businesses, while often profitable, do not foster a sense of genuine entrepreneurship. “There is an inherent conservatism in the region’s family-run business culture that is prohibitive in this regard,” she said.

Sheikha Hanadi allowed that great strides had been made in the diversification of regional economies, resulting in a boost for such non-oil sectors as tourism and real estate, but stressed that this alone will not be enough to generate long-term economic growth. “It is all well and good to plough billions of dollars into mega-developments,” she said, “but sustainable prosperity will ultimately rest on enterprises far more modest than these.”

The solutions proposed by Sheikha Hanadi included a concerted effort to attract and distribute venture capital in the region, which would provide encouragement and support for people launching small and medium businesses. And while she agreed that the region-wide nationalization drive gives nationals a chance to partake in the region’s economic revival, she stressed that such programmes should not outstrip efforts to prepare people for the workplace.

“The focus should shift from creating jobs for nationals,” she said, “to creating nationals for jobs.”

Key to the region’s economic wellbeing, Sheikha Hanadi concluded, is the development of its human potential, which will not only entail providing formal education and training, but creating the right social and psychological conditions for entrepreneurship to flourish.

“We need a fundamental change in the way we think about doing business,” she said. “Our tendency to be risk-averse, for instance, carries with it an ingrained

fear of failure. We must endow our young people with the belief that failure is not a shameful thing, but a necessary part of innovation.”

She added, “We should encourage the imaginative flights of our budding entrepreneurs.”

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