**Pearl Initiative presents whistleblowing as a   
best practice tool to enhance business credibility**

*Roundtable in Bahrain reaffirms the strong link between whistleblowing*

*and a culture of integrity within regional businesses*

**Bahrain, 23 September 2019**:

The Pearl Initiative, a business-led non-profit organisation promoting corporate accountability in the Gulf Region’s private sector, recently held a roundtable event in Bahrain titled “Whistleblowing: A Pillar of Sound Corporate Governance”.

The roundtable convened senior professionals and industry leaders from public and private companies to learn the importance of whistleblowing policies implemented in the Gulf Region, and to discuss how an effective whistleblowing programme is built and managed.

The panel was facilitated by Dawood Al Ashhab, Assistant General Manager, Bahrain Islamic Bank; Dr Jaffar Mohammed Ahmed, Head of Operational Risk & Internal Controls, National Bank of Bahrain; and Jeyapriya Partiban, Partner andHead of Risk Consulting, KPMG in Bahrain, who led the discussions on whistleblowing as an essential element for safeguarding business interests and promoting a culture of internal accountability and integrity.

The event helped stakeholders understand and acknowledge the existence of cultural, social and legal barriers to corporate whistleblowing and explore the implementation of different set-ups and incentives to minimise their effects.

The discussion shed light on the close relationship between whistleblowing and corporate governance. Attendees emphasised the need for an open and transparent corporate environment where policies on wrongdoing and whistleblowing are well-defined and communicated to all stakeholders, both internal and external.

Dawood Al Ashhab initiated the discussion by providing attendees with a brief background of his experience with whistleblowing programmes and presented real-life case studies of operational whistleblowing programmes.

Dr Jaffar Mohammed Ahmed then briefly introduced how whistleblowing helps organisations set a tone of integrity. “You would not need a whistleblowing framework in a meaningful, robust, and tested corporate governance ecosystem.”

Jeyapriya Partiban added “Organisations need to view a Whistleblowing Program as an effective tool to improve their performance. A robust Whistleblowing/ Hotline program can enhance an organization’s governance and overall performance, while also protecting it from contentious behavior and potential risks – financial, operational and reputational.”

Al Ashhab, Dr Ahmed and Partiban also underlined select methods and rational initiatives successfully applied by private businesses in the Gulf Region, and how doing so enabled them to enhance transparency in their business mechanisms while reducing the turnaround time for these processes to make a tangible impact.

Al Ashhab highlighted that “Whistleblowing should be embedded in the corporate culture and should be part of Corporate values.”

Commenting on the event, Yasmine Omari, Executive Director at the Pearl Initiative, stated, “Whistleblowing provides all stakeholders of a business an equal opportunity through which to report genuine concerns. It also creates a veritable information resource that helps management identify various lapses in its processes.”

Omari added: “Having clear whistleblowing policies and procedures demonstrates an organisation’s commitment to integrity practices by actively facilitating the transfer of information to management from employees in a secure manner. The prevalence of whistleblowing will grow and yield positive results for only those organisations where whistleblowers are guaranteed protection against disclosures.”

The roundtable concluded with a consensus that it is essential to prevent, monitor and detect malpractice, reducing the risk of any incidents that may be detrimental to a business with the integration of whistleblowing programmes within its governance procedures.

The event was held as part of the **Pearl Initiative’s Anti-Corruption Best Practices programme**, which is supported by the Siemens Integrity Initiative. It aligns with the organisation’s mission to promote a corporate culture of accountability and transparency as a key driver of competitiveness across the Gulf Region.

The Pearl Initiative developed the Gulf Integrity Indicator as a free tool to measure integrity practices within an organisation. Associated reports are available for access on the Pearl Initiative’s [Resource Centre](http://www.pearlinitiative.org/resource-centre) in Arabic and English on the effective implementation of business integrity policies and initiatives.

The Pearl Initiative confirms that they will be holding similar events in future to provide Gulf’s private businesses the opportunity to learn more about integrity practices.

Founded in 2010, Pearl Initiative is a Gulf business–led organisation promoting a corporate culture of accountability and transparency as a driver of competitiveness and sustainable economic growth across the Gulf region of the Middle East. The organisation develops programmes and publishes regional research reports and case studies, with aims to influence the regional business and student community towards implementing higher standards of corporate governance within the Gulf Region.

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**Photocaptions:**

**1-2: During the “Whistleblowing: A Pillar of Sound Corporate Governance” roundtable organised by the Pearl Initiative in Bahrain**

**3: Yasmine Omari**

**About the Pearl Initiative**

Prominent business leaders from across the Gulf Region formed the Pearl Initiative in 2010 to create a non-profit vehicle for the Private Sector to collectively take the lead in adopting higher standards in corporate governance, accountability and transparency to enhance business innovation, opportunity and value creation.

With over 40 regional and international partners, the Pearl Initiative brings together business, government and civil society decision-makers to share best business practices and to help maximise the economic opportunities available to companies within the region. The Pearl Initiative also supports Gulf-based university students to identify and embrace strong ethics as they embark on their future careers.

The Pearl Initiative seeks joint collaborative action between regional and global business leaders, international institutions, government bodies and wider initiatives within the Gulf Region, exhibiting positive leadership and sharing knowledge and experience in order to influence the entire regional business and student community.

For more information, please visit www.pearlinitiative.org or contact us on +971 6 515 4605 or via email at [enquiries@pearlinitiative.org](mailto:enquiries@pearlinitiative.org)

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