



Pearl Initiative and NAMA Women host panel discussion in celebration of International Women's Day, discussing how organisations can support women's advancement in the workplace

Sharjah, 16th March, 2021: In celebration of International Women's Day, the Pearl Initiative, a leading Gulf business-led non-profit organisation promoting a corporate culture of accountability and transparency, in collaboration with NAMA Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA), hosted a webinar recently to discuss the role of women in the workplace, and examine how organisations can increase diversity representation and create an enabling environment to support women, which is a key pillar of the Gulf region's long term vision.

Her Excellency Reem BinKaram, Director of NAMA Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA), keynote speech by was followed by a discussion between Ms. Rana Zumai, Head of Corporate Communications for Nesma Holding based in Saudi Arabia, and Ms. Maryam Zaman, Partner and Head of Governance Services at KPMG Lower Gulf, and moderated by the Pearl Initiative's Executive Director, Ms. Ranya Saadawi.

Describing the webinar's participants as "gamechangers" in her opening address, Her Excellency Reem BinKaram, Director of NAMA Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA), said: "The stories of these extraordinary individuals will show us what is possible when the right choices and decisions impacting gender equality are made."

She emphasised that NAMA launched Irtiqa – a global platform for women in 2019 - to foster a stronger understanding of both the business and social value of women's economic inclusion. "Through Irtiqa, NAMA strives to increase the uptake of the global Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) by closing knowledge gaps, actioning inclusion, and driving change to realise gender equity as a fundamental for societies and economies to thrive."

The webinar facilitated a conversation between the female leaders which covered topics such as the role of senior leadership and incorporating diversity on corporate boards without it becoming a check-box exercise; policies that companies in the region can implement to build and grow a diverse workforce; how companies can upskill women in their organisation's long term; and practises that shape a company culture where females can enjoy a healthy work life balance and, ultimately, flourish.

Panelist Ms Rana Zumai, Head of Corporate Communications for Nesma Holding, said, “I was honoured to represent Nesma and be a part of this discussion facilitated by NAMA and the Pearl Initiative. This discussion is another opportunity to create conversation on how companies can do better and do more to ensure inclusion for women, falling in line with the visions of our governing entities.”

Rana continued by stating the importance of leadership and their values to promote women in the workplace. Nesma has implemented a number of initiatives and practises to shape a culture where females can prosper. These included mentorship programmes for women, study and training opportunities as well as integrating corporate responsibility throughout the organisation. The company’s efforts align with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 which includes regulations to promote females in the workforce.

Ms. Maryam Zaman, Partner and Head of Governance Services at KPMG Lower Gulf, said “The Pearl Initiative is helping to create conversations which confront the structure and policies of corporate organisations and educating on the importance of providing a supportive environment for women. Organisations should be placing focus on creating a space where women can celebrate a healthy work life balance, which is an important element for women’s retention within a company. Companies such as KPMG are leading the way for workplace diversity and inclusion by putting support into place for all female employees, such as extended and flexible maternity leave. In addition, they encourage innovative and forward-thinking women to share actively put forward their ideas, to support them in their upward mobility. Companies should use conversations such as this, and examples set by those such as KPMG, as an opportunity to listen and learn.”

Commenting on the successful conclusion of the panel discussion, Executive Director of the Pearl Initiative, Ranya Saadawi thanked the panellists for their inspiring and thought-provoking conversations and mentioned that sharing their personal experiences is breaking the glass ceiling of corporate industries and the role of women in the workplace.

Saadawi continued by thanking Her Excellency Reem BinKaram for NAMA’s constant support and said “It is imperative that we provide a platform for these conversations, which support our shared vision of creating a level playing field for women, particularly in the corporate environment. It’s important to highlight the business case that more diversity leads to more resilient and profitable companies.”

Current programmes run by the Pearl Initiative include Anti-Corruption Best Practices, Diversity in Business Leadership, Governance in MSMEs, Governance in Family Firms, The Business Pledge, and Governance in Philanthropy.

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Pearl Initiative

Business leaders from across the Gulf Region formed the Pearl Initiative in 2010 to create a non-profit organisation for the Private Sector to collectively embrace the business case 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, policy and social sector decision-makers to share best practice and help maximise sustainable and inclusive growth across the region. The Pearl Initiative also supports Gulf-based university students to identify and embrace strong ethics and integrity as they embark on their future careers.

For more information, please visit www.pearlinitiative.org or contact us at enquiries@pearlinitiative.org.

Follow us @PearlInitiative on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter and @ThePearlInitiative on LinkedIn.

NAMA Women Advancement Establishment

NAMA Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA) was founded in 2015 by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, Wife of His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah. NAMA is tasked with mobilising the means required to create enabling environments to advance gender equity and inclusive economic and social growth. The organisation's efforts stem from its core philosophy that women advancement is a fundamental requirement for the sustainable development of nations.

Through its three affiliates, Sharjah Business Women Council, Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council, and Badiri Education and Development Academy, NAMA designs and implements initiatives that support women across the economic, professional and social sectors. NAMA also engages with grass-roots and international organisations as part of its comprehensive approach towards developing an ecosystem in which women's full potential is realized.

For more information, visit www.namawomen.ae

Media Coverage

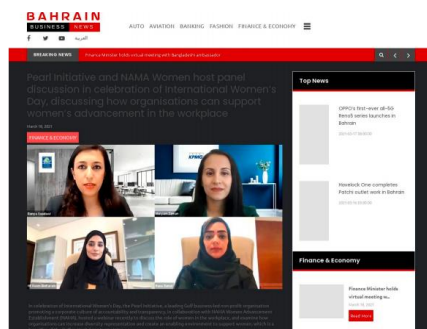
The press release was featured in numerous new outlets across the Gulf Region, Middle East & North Africa and Europe, including:

- GULF TODAY

NAMA, Pearl Initiative discuss role of women at workplace



- BAHRAIN BIZ NEWS



- MENAFN

