



WDN hosts Roundtable Discussion with Amat Al Alim Alsoswa of the UNDP

New United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Assistant Administrator for the Arab States Bureau, **Amat Alsoswa**, was the featured speaker in a roundtable discussion at the International Republican Institute on October 20. Addressing representatives from the U.S. Government and nongovernmental organizations, Ms. Alsoswa spoke of the many ongoing projects of the UNDP at the state and regional level in the Arab States and highlighted her priorities as the new Assistant Administrator.

She noted that in a general sense the UNDP in the Arab world focuses on education, especially the education of girls, given that illiteracy among women is a significant obstacle to development in the Arab world. The advancement of women will be one of the priorities of Ms. Alsoswa's tenure, which coincides with the forthcoming release of the fourth Arab Human Development Report that will focus on women in the Arab world.

In her comments, Ms. Alsoswa cited the recent participation of women in elections in Yemen as an example of a small step forward for women in the region. Unfortunately, she pointed out that while women did run as candidates, only a small percentage were elected and they had trouble garnering support from their own parties. The issue of women's advancement in the business sector was raised during the question and answer session and Ms. Alsoswa spoke of progress in this arena, "Women are doing very well in some countries in terms of expanding business opportunities." For example, Saudi Arabia has 54,000 registered businesswomen, and Kuwaiti women and women in Lebanon and Egypt are also high achievers. An area where the UNDP can help focus attention, according to Ms. Alsoswa, is correct implementation of laws and regulations that already exist to help women achieve their potential in politics and business.

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