



Speech by  
**Her Excellency Mrs. Fawzia bint Abdulla Zainal,**  
**Speaker of the Kingdom of Bahrain's Council of  
Representatives**

**The 13<sup>th</sup> Summit of Women Speakers of  
Parliament on**

***“Promoting Women’s Economic  
Empowerment and Financial Inclusion”***

**17 - 18 August 2020**



***Your Excellency, Dr. Andrea Eder-Gitschthaler, President of the Federal Council of Austria,***

***Your Excellency, Ms. Doris Bures, Vice-President of the National Council of Austria,***

***Your Excellency Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)***

***Honorable Speakers, Honorable Members of Parliaments, Distinguished guests and participants,***

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action issued by the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (4WCSP), which represented a major milestone in humanity's march towards achieving gender equality, eliminating all aspects of discrimination against women and becoming an essential component in the national policies of various countries, and within the sustainable development goals SDGs. The economic empowerment and financial inclusion of women is a key input towards achieving these goals.

It is clear that the outlook of 2020, through the eyes of the United Nations observers, has shifted from a decisive opportunity to achieve equality and equal opportunities between women and men, to a sensitive turning point that may make the limited global gains achieved in the past decades for women vulnerable to a setback.

***Excellencies,***

There is no doubt that the successful experience in this regard represents the shortest way to reach the desired goals. Therefore, I put in your hands highlights and features of the efforts made by the Kingdom of Bahrain in this regard.



The idea of equality between women and men is based on the principle of equal opportunities as a firm doctrine and a fundamental pillar of the comprehensive reform project that was brought by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

As a result, plans and strategies were developed, institutions and societies concerned with women's issues were established, foremost of which is the Supreme Council of Women (SCW), led by the First Lady of Bahrain, Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of the country's beloved monarch. Her Highness contributed to making Bahrain a pioneer in creating quality initiatives that the countries of the world have not previously approached.

### ***Excellencies,***

The results of the endeavors in the Kingdom of Bahrain today is clear and evident. The efforts at the beginning were about the advancement of Bahraini women, then the empowerment of women, but today we are talking about the progress of Bahraini women in all economic, social and political sectors. A reality that everyone is witnessing.

The distinguishing sign in the march of the Kingdom of Bahrain in this direction is that they were never emergency initiatives, but rather an integrated and comprehensive vision, not disrupted by exceptional circumstances. Therefore, with the onset of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, we found issuance of royal directives to implement "work from home" for all working mothers in the ministries and governmental institutions and bodies, in accordance to achieving maximum family stability.

This was not the only initiative, but was followed by the initiative of the First Lady of Bahrain, which resulted in a campaign under the name of "Together" to support

Bahraini women. Among its services was providing economic support to women, helping them reconcile their duties, job responsibilities and family duties, in addition to supporting the sustainability of their participation in the labor market. Also, it provided specialized economic consultations to support struggling women entrepreneurs to deal with the challenges of the current circumstances and ways to overcome them.

These highlights are only the tip of the iceberg, and I am not only mentioning them to review some of the Kingdom of Bahrain's achievements, but to address an experience that can be adopted and circulated in order to achieve what we all aspire to regarding the topic of research related to (promoting women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion), but rather to go further than that, by empowering women in all fields, achieving stability for them, translating their aspirations, and highlighting their capabilities in building societies and advancing nations towards advanced developmental steps.

**Accordingly,**

The need to create specific initiatives to practical realities is set through our work as international parliaments, by devoting legislative efforts, in order to deepen and enhance the global march towards empowering and advancing women in all fields.

***May peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you.***