

Dubai Women's College Hosts Middle East Technology Leadership Summit in UAE

The Middle East Women and Technology Leadership Summit developed strategic plans to establish the first Center for Women and Technology for the Arab Region. The Summit was successful in assembling the support of over fifteen (15) international organizations currently advocating for women's full participation and leadership of women in science and technology.



This summit took place under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Chancellor Higher Colleges of Technology, UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UNGAID) and in partnership with the Dubai Women's College, and the International Taskforce on Women and Information and Communication Technology.

Dubai Women's College provided leadership in the organization of the meeting in partnership with the Multinational Development of Women in Technology (MDWIT), Microsoft and the World Bank. The three day *invitation-only* event brought together thought leaders to develop and launch the regional center. Attendees were asked to create a strategic plan that would expand current effective practices in the region, identify current gaps in products and services that need to be developed, and build a business plan for a three year process to achieve the objectives developed by the stakeholders in four key focus areas: secondary and tertiary education, workforce development, entrepreneurship and leadership.

"This event was a direct result of a collaborative friendship that developed between Ms. Morrell (MDWIT) and me, among others, back in 2005 at an event hosted in Maryland USA. Over three years we have been working together recognizing our shared goals – to benefit economic growth for all and to ensure all our children benefit."

The summit ended with the establishment of five working committees that will enable the fifteen (15) Arab state members to develop and implement a detailed business plan. "We see this initial working group meeting as the first step in our efforts; we welcome all in the region that share our values, vision, and passion to achieve measurable impact to join us as equal partners" stated Dr. Behjat Al Yousuf, Associate Director of Dubai Women's College. "We have set up a collective online site for enhancing collaboration. Having the support of Microsoft and HP, both as sponsors and tactical participants, contributed to the realistic outcomes of the summit."

Key organizations and countries step forward

The summit hosted over 20 organizations including Arab Women Organization, Cisco, Dubai International Academic City, Dubai School of Government, Dubai Women's College, E-Educational Regional Company, Emirates Group, Hewlett Packard, ICT Division/ESCWA, MENA, Multinational Development of Women in Technology (MDWIT), Microsoft/Middle East, The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR), Susan Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization, TECOM, The Research Center, The World Bank, UNESCO, UNGAID, U.N.F.T., and WIT. Participating countries included Egypt, France, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America.

“This is a milestone event for the Middle East region and women in technology. Through collaborative efforts like this we are able to bring together academia, NGOs, and government agencies to address and advance women issues worldwide,” noted Claudia Morrell, CEO of the MDWIT and Founding Chair of the International Taskforce of Women and ICTs



Selected examples of outcomes include:

Education: Ensure that girls recognize the importance of their full participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics through programs like Microsoft digigirls, the Cisco Learning Academy, and the many current examples of effective programs in the region and internationally. Compiling a list of these programs and current formal educational programs is a first step in understanding the current state of girls and technology education in the region.

Workforce: Expand the recruitment and retention of women in technical positions to increase economic development through building informal networks of support. From working with human resource directors to highlighting companies that are contributing to women’s success, the team will develop multiple means to address this area.

Entrepreneurship: Train and develop women in both technology business start-ups and technology-enabled business to ensure all women benefit from the knowledge society.

Leadership: Identify and elevate organizational and individual leaders as role models for girls and women to see and appreciate in making their own educational and workforce decisions, including a focus on diversity and emerging leaders.

The working committees will determine targets for measuring the success of the programs developed and identify and assess the critical need areas for the development of future activities and programs.

“This summit is a clear example of Microsoft’s commitment to the region and the promotion of socioeconomic development through education and technology innovation, states Dr. Zaki Houry, Microsoft Gulf Citizenship Lead, “by ensuring access for women to relevant and affordable technologies in this region we transform the knowledge society and foster innovation. Microsoft is committed to the successful implementation of the resulting action plan.”