Balance of power: Promoting more women in leadership

Speaker bios

Rima Al SORAIHI
Human Resources Director, PepsiCo

Rima Al SORAIHI is Human Resources Director at PepsiCo. The majority of her work focuses on diversity and inclusion, Saudization, women’s representation in leadership, and management. Rima has worked in Human Resources since she joined PepsiCo 13 years ago, holding numerous positions such as Training Manager, HR Manager, and HR Business Partner. She has been responsible for planning and designing annual HR initiatives to support the company’s strategic objectives, managing functional communication plans and HR programs, and defining communication channels and controls to carry out policies establishing a proper flow of information at all levels of the organization. Throughout her time at PepsiCo, she has been able to witness the development of PepsiCo’s differing women empowerment initiatives.

Reem ASAAD
Vice President for Middle East and Africa, Cisco

Reem ASAAD is the first female and local leader in the role of Vice President at Cisco Middle East and Africa. She is responsible for overseeing the work of 2,500 employees and contractors, while driving the company’s position as a leading technology provider and consultant across 74 markets in the region. Recognized by Forbes as one of the Most Influential Women in the Middle East, Reem is a highly successful business leader with over 25 years’ experience across industries including technology, financial services, and customer experience. Prior to joining Cisco, she was the CEO at Raya Customer Experience, a business process outsourcing service provider based in Cairo with operations in Europe, Middle East, and Africa, servicing multi-national and Fortune 500 companies. In March 2021, Egypt’s Minister of Communications and Information Technology H.E. Amr Talaat appointed Reem to serve on the Board of Directors for the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA), which helps drive digital transformation and competitiveness as well as contributes towards economic growth. As a board member, Reem works alongside a wider team of industry leaders to identify the needs of the local IT industry and address those needs by fostering ties with local and international players, implementing suitable programs, and advising on policy.
Leanne Caret  
Executive Vice President and Senior Advisor, Boeing

Leanne Caret is Executive Vice President and Senior Advisor for the Boeing Company and a member of the company’s Executive Council. Most recently, Leanne served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Boeing Defense, Space, & Security, which provides solutions for defense, government, space, intelligence, and security customers worldwide. Defense, Space & Security has prominent operations in many countries beyond the United States, including Australia, India, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom. In 2021, Boeing’s revenue from defense and space platforms and services exceeded $33 billion. Leanne was previously President of the company’s Global Services & Support organization; Chief Financial Officer of Defense, Space, & Security; Vice President and General Manager of Vertical Lift; Vice president of H-47 Programs; and General Manager of Global Transport & Executive Systems. She is a second-generation Boeing employee who started working for the company in 1988. Fortune magazine named Leanne to its Most Powerful Women list in 2021 for the fifth consecutive year. In addition to being a 2019 inductee of the Women in Aviation International Pioneer Hall of Fame, Caret is a Royal Aeronautical Society Fellow and an American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Associate Fellow. She is also on the George W. Bush Institute’s Women’s Initiative Policy Advisory Council; the board of directors for the Kansas State University Foundation; the board of directors for Deere & Company; and the board of directors for FIRST, a leading youth-serving nonprofit advancing STEM education.

Penelope Naas  
President for International Public Affairs and Sustainability, UPS

Penelope (Penny) Naas is UPS President for International Public Affairs and Sustainability. She began her UPS career in May 2012, managing the Public Affairs team for the EMEA Region, where she enhanced governmental understanding of UPS and the issues impacting the logistics industry. In 2014, Penelope was also asked to oversee sustainability in Europe, and has worked to advance internal and external appreciation of the importance of sustainability for UPS. She then served as UPS Vice President and District Manager for International Public Affairs and Sustainability from January 2015 until early 2020. Previously, Penelope worked for Citigroup in the Global Government Affairs team and at the US Department of Commerce (DOC), where she worked for 13 years in various roles covering international trade and commercial issues. Penelope has a bachelor’s degree in economics and a master’s degree in public policy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She co-chairs the World Economic Forum’s Global Future Council on Trade and Investment. She is a former board member of the American Chamber of Commerce to the EU and the University of Michigan Alumni Board, the American European Community Association, and the Fulbright Commission for Belgium and Luxembourg. She is active in UPS’ Women’s Leadership Development program.
Moderator bio

Tamara Pupic
Managing Editor, Entrepreneur Middle East

Tamara Pupic is a Dubai-based journalist who has extensive experience in the field of business journalism of both well-established corporations and high-growth startups, having followed her passion for writing after a successful career in international law. She holds the position of Managing Editor of Entrepreneur Middle East magazine, a division of Dubai-based BNC Publishing which is officially licensed by the US-based publication. Among the many highly renowned leaders and personalities that she has interviewed are Sir Bob Geldof, Milken Institute Chairman Michael Milken, Huda Beauty co-founders Huda and Mona Kattan, Deepak Chopra, Dr. Wladimir Klitschko, British entrepreneur Jo Malone, the author of The Pursuit of Happyness Chris Gardner, the fifth-generation family member leading Galeries Lafayette Nicolas Houzé, and Didi Chuxing’s President Jean Liu. In 2020, Tamara launched her series of interviews with women leaders entitled “Against All Odds” within the Entrepreneur Middle East Live series, featuring the only Indian woman on Forbes’ list of the World’s Self-Made Women Billionaires Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Oscar nominated and BAFTA award-winning filmmaker Farah Nabulsi, Intisar Foundation founder Her Highness Sheikha Intisar AlSabah, co-founder of Thrive Global Agapi Stassinopoulos, the first Arab woman to climb Mount Everest Suzanne Al Houby, and social media influencer and TV host Joelle Mardinian, among many others. Tamara holds a master’s degree in international law and economics (M.I.L.E.) from the World Trade Institute in Bern (Switzerland) and a bachelor’s degree in international law from the Faculty of Law University of Belgrade (2004).

Opening remarks

Amjad Ahmad
Chairman, empowerME, Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council

Amjad Ahmad is Chairman of empowerME at the Atlantic Council’s Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. He focuses on shaping innovative investments to empower entrepreneurs, women, and the private sector in the Middle East. He develops strategies and policies to drive sustainable prosperity through the creation of dynamic entrepreneurial economies, the economic participation of women, and educational transformation. Amjad is also managing partner of the venture capital firm Precinct Partners and serves on the boards of Homzmart, Tapal Tea, RSA Global, Mr. Usta, and The Luxury Closet. He was recently appointed to the board of Amideast, a leading US nonprofit organization engaged in international education, training, and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as building cross-cultural understanding between the United States and the region. Based in the United Arab Emirates for fifteen years prior to moving to Washington, DC, Amjad has collaborated with business leaders and entrepreneurs to build leading companies in the Middle East. Through his work as a venture capital and growth investor, Amjad established two investment firms in the region that provided over $1 billion in funding to over fifty companies in sectors ranging from technology and education to healthcare and finance. During the past five years, Amjad has focused his investments on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology. Amjad holds a master’s degree in international affairs with a concentration in international finance and economics from Columbia University and is a graduate of the general management program at Harvard Business School.