

The rising female workforce in Saudi Arabia and its impact on the private sector

Opening remarks

Tuesday, July 25, 2023

12:00pm – 1:00 pm ET/ 7:00 – 8:00 pm KSA

Hybrid Format



Amjad Ahmad

Chairman, empowerME, Atlantic Council

Amjad Ahmad is chairman of empowerME at the Atlantic Council. EmpowerME focuses on shaping innovative investments to empower entrepreneurs, women, and the private sector in the Middle East. EmpowerME also develops strategies and policies to drive sustainable prosperity through the creation of dynamic entrepreneurial economies, the economic participation of women, the integration of regional economies, 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.

Keynote remarks



H.R.H. Princess Reema Bint Bandar Al Saud

Ambassador, Embassy of Saudi Arabia to the United States

Appointed Ambassador to the USA in February 2019, HRH is the first woman in the country's history to serve in this role. From 1983 to 2005, she lived in Washington, DC, when her father Prince Bandar was Ambassador. When Princess Reema returned to Saudi Arabia she focused on private sector initiatives and the empowerment of women. From 2007 – 2015 she was CEO of Alfa International Company Limited - Harvey Nichols Riyadh, a multi-brand luxury retail company, where she set the tone for female inclusion in retail. In 2013, she founded Alf Khair, a social enterprise elevating the professional capital of Saudi women through a curriculum enabling financial self-sufficiency. In 2016, Princess Reema left private sector and joined public service as Vice President of Women's Affairs at the Saudi General Sports Authority where she developed policies and programs benefiting women and children. In 2018 she was promoted to Deputy of Development and Planning before also being appointed President of the Mass Participation Federation, making her the first woman to lead a multi-sports federation in the Kingdom. In 2020 Princess Reema became the first Saudi woman to be appointed as a Member of the International Olympic Committee. Princess Reema's other roles and appointments include: Chairman of the Special Olympics (since 2019); Board Member of Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee (since 2017); Chairman of the Executive Committee & Board Member of the Fashion Commission at the Saudi Ministry of Culture; Board Member the Future Investment Initiative Institute

(2020); Board Member Panthera's Conservation Council (2020); Member of the World Bank's Advisory Council for the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (2017 - 2020); Member Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee (since 2017); and Member International Olympic Committee (IOC) Women in Sports Commission (since 2018).

**Michael Ratney**

Ambassador, Embassy of United States to Saudi Arabia to the United States

Ambassador Michael Ratney was sworn in as U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on March 21, 2023. In Saudi Arabia, Ambassador Ratney leads a team of over a thousand Americans, Saudis, and 20 other nationalities in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dhahran. As a career Senior Foreign Service Officer, Ambassador Ratney's career has taken him on assignments abroad and to Washington, DC. In recent years, he was the Acting Deputy Director of the U.S. Department of State's training center, the Foreign Service Institute, where he had also been Dean of the State Department's School of Language Studies. He was Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem in 2021, and earlier served on the faculty of the National Defense University. Ambassador Ratney was the U.S. Special Envoy for Syria from 2015 to 2018, and also served as acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Levant and Israel and Palestinian Affairs. He was the U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem from 2012 to 2015, where he was responsible for U.S. relations with Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem. He has been Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Media, overseeing a network of State Department media hubs throughout the world, and was Spokesman for the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Other assignments across his career of more than 30 years include Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Doha, as well as tours in Mexico City, Baghdad, Beirut, Casablanca, and Bridgetown. Ambassador Ratney earned a BS from Boston University, and an MA from the George Washington University. He is the recipient of multiple State Department performance awards, including six Senior Foreign Service Performance awards and a Presidential Meritorious Service award. Ambassador Ratney speaks Arabic and French.

Panelsits**Dena Elkhatib**

General Counsel, Riyadh Air

Dena H Elkhatib is general counsel for Riyadh Air. She is a transactional lawyer with over 20 years of experience with a specialty in high value transactions in various sectors including banking and aviation. Her experiences include aircraft portfolio acquisition/sales, finance/operating leases, debt financing, and restructuring transactions. She has jurisdictional experience within both the Middle East and the United States working directly with CEOs, CFOs, and COOs of organizations, as well as, experience in leading diverse teams to close high-stake congruent projects with airlines, aircraft leasing entities, OEMs, and other transactional partners. She is highly skilled in negotiating and executing complex cross-border commercial transactions. Dena has extensive expertise in business and the aviation sector of overseeing and managing crisis, communication, and helping businesses recover during challenging times. She is experienced in working with start-up organizations and even launched her own social impact fashion brand. She has assisted seasoned entities in improving their business processes, resulting in enhanced productivity and business profitability. Prior to entering the legal field, she consulted in a number of industries allowing her to balance her commercial astuteness with her legal knowledge, resulting in an impressive track record of achieving and exceeding business and financial objectives, developing training programs and assisting lawyers in navigating transactional hurdles.

She has written several articles and a book, which were published internationally. She has participated in several industry events, including speaking in 2021 at the AirFinance Journal North America conference. When not focused on aviation or banking law, Dena is on the Board of Directors and currently the Board Secretary of AmidEast, a non-profit organization engaged in international education, training, and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa. Dena H. Elkhatib holds a bachelor of arts in finance and marketing from Loyola University of Chicago, a Juris Doctorate and a Certificate in International Business & Trade Law from University of Illinois Chicago John Marshall Law School, and a Master in Public Administration and a Certificate in Management, Leadership and Decision Sciences from Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government.

**Hattan Ahmed**

Entrepreneurship Director, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)

Hattan is the Entrepreneurship Director at KAUST delivering the university's entrepreneurship vision. He believes in young people as change agents of the future and that universities play a key role in creating national economic impact. In his role as an advocate for innovation, Hattan works across the entire entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Kingdom, delivering entrepreneurship training, creating corporate innovation programs, and investing in startups that will contribute to the national transformation agenda. Hattan has a diverse background in industry, startups and academia. As a startup co-founder, he brings a successful entrepreneurial background to his

role, having navigated early stage growth to acquisition. He brings a rich background in Information Technology to his role, with experience in system design development and implementation within industries ranging from energy, travel and retail.

**Wael Ismail**

Vice President Corporate Affairs, PepsiCo – Africa, Middle East and South Asia (AMESA)

Wael Ismail is the Vice President for Corporate Affairs for the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) and South Asia as well as Head of the Office of Sustainability for the Middle East. Wael joined PepsiCo in 2016 and has assumed several roles within the Public Policy and Government Affairs function. He is a Public Affairs professional with experience spanning 20 years. He is also part of the Global Corporate Affairs Leadership Team for PepsiCo. Wael is passionate about driving PepsiCo's Winning with PepsiCo Positive Strategy and Sustainable Food Systems.. Ismail is a Jordanian national holding a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Economics from the American

University in Cairo and a Master of Arts (MA) in Middle East Studies from the same university. He has lived, studied, and worked across the Middle East in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and the UAE.

Moderated by**Hanaa Almoaibed**

Vice President for Research, The Arab Institute for Women's Empowerment

Almoaibed advises public, private, and non-profit entities on Gulf youth and women in her capacity as an academic researcher under her research company, ProlegoMENA. She publishes and speaks on education and work, sustainability and gender policy in the GCC and MENA. Almoaibed is also the Vice President of Research at the Arab Institute for Women's Empowerment, Nusf, and is on the board of Johara Global, a social enterprise dedicated to accelerating female leadership across the GCC and promoting cross-cultural integration across the Arabian Gulf and globally. She also sits on the board and CSR committees of private sector entities within Saudi Arabia.