

## Women in Finance: Building a More Sustainable and Inclusive Financial System

Tuesday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Time: 10:00am GST

Format: Hybrid

### Keynote Remarks:



#### **Amb. Martina Strong**

*Ambassador, U.S. Mission to the United Arab Emirates*

Martina Strong is honored to lead the U.S. Mission to the United Arab Emirates. A career Senior Foreign Service Officer, Ambassador Strong previously served as Chargé d’Affaires in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as Deputy Chief of Mission in Bulgaria. Her diplomatic career has spanned 27 years and included two assignments in Iraq, as the Political Minister Counselor in Baghdad and as the U.S. Army’s Political Advisor in Basrah. Earlier in her career, Ambassador Strong was posted in Poland, the Czech Republic, Barbados, Bosnia Herzegovina, and France. She spent two years as Director on the National Security Council at the White House, where she headed the U.S. government’s multi-agency effort to organize the 2004 G-8 Summit in Sea Island, as well as two other G-8 Summits and various multilateral meetings. Ambassador Strong is the recipient of the Meritorious

Presidential Rank Award, numerous Department of State awards, and both the Meritorious Civilian Service Award and the Superior Civilian Service Award for her service in Iraq. In Bulgaria, the Defense Minister conferred on Ambassador Strong the Meritorious Service Medal for her contributions to the U.S.-Bulgarian security partnership. Ambassador Strong is married to Colonel (ret.) John L. Strong, and they have one daughter.

### Panelsits



#### **Shaikha Al Nowais**

*Corporate Vice President – Owner Relationship Management, Rotana*

**Shaikha Al Nowais** is is Corporate Vice President of Owner Relationship Management at Rotana, one of the leading hotel management companies in the region with hotels across the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Türkiye. In 2023, Al Nowais was appointed board member of the Abu Dhabi Businesswomen Council, a subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Chamber. In line with its aim to advance the involvement of female entrepreneurs in society and enhance the role of businesswomen in driving the growth of Abu Dhabi’s private sector, Al Nowais focuses on engaging and supporting businesswomen in the community. This includes organising workshops to assist business owners in keeping abreast of techniques to strengthen and expand their enterprises, spearheading trade exhibitions to spotlight various businesses to respective

stakeholders, and connecting businesswomen with communities and organisations that helps further their knowledge and achieve their goals through funding and mentorship. Al Nowais joined Rotana as Director of Internal Audit in May 2011, where she leveraged her considerable knowledge and expertise to maintain consistently high standards and drive improved efficiencies throughout its operations. During her time in this role, she successfully led the internal audit team to ensure that all properties were in full compliance with Rotana’s company policies and procedures, as well as external regulations outlined by UAE Federal Law, the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, and the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority. Prior to joining Rotana,

Al Nowais honed her financial and analytical skills during a two-and-a-half-year tenure at KPMG, where she was responsible for performing audits of financial statements, developing robust audit plans and strategies, and examining internal controls to assess the efficiency of procedures. Al Nowais is a graduate of Dubai's Zayed University, where she attained a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Sciences – Finance in 2006.

**Linda Fitz-Alan**

*Registrar and Chief Executive, Abu Dhabi Global Market Courts*

**Linda Fitz-Alan** joined ADGM Courts as Registrar and Chief Executive in September 2015, where she has made ADGM an international trailblazer for innovative judicial services, and for pioneering game-changing technology in dispute resolution. She leads the administration and operations of ADGM Courts, including both the management of cases and the design and delivery of the Court's comprehensive digital services and unique eCourts Platform. Fitz-Alan also leads ADGM's extensive dispute resolution services, including the court-annexed mediation scheme, and overseeing the state-of-the-art ADGM Arbitration Centre. Fitz-Alan designed ADGM Courts' unique ADGM eCourts Platform in 2018 to offer extraordinary access and connection to the Court removing any geographical or time boundary and allowing parties to participate in hearings from anywhere in the world. She also established the world's first fully digital ADGM Courtroom, giving all parties real-time access to the same documents and remote witness evidence. As a champion for gender equality, Fitz-Alan serves on the Advisory Council of Masdar's Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy (WiSER) platform, and also leads ADGM's Gender Equality Initiative, which has strategic partnerships with several local and international organisations. She previously served as CEO and Principal Registrar of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Australia, where she was responsible for the successful enhancement of the Court's electronic filing and case management capability, the design, refurbishment and consolidation of the Court's civil and criminal registries as well as the development of its human resources and training. Fitz-Alan has also been a Partner of two Australian law firms and held a senior legal position with a large commercial insurer, located in New York, USA. She is a CEDR accredited mediator. In 2022, Fitz-Alan was listed in Forbes Middle East's "50 Most Powerful Businesswomen" and received the Professional Achievement Award at the inaugural Middle East Women In Law Awards by LexisNexis, with both organisations recognising her instrumental efforts in the trailblazing digital transformation of the justice sector. She was also recognised by her Australian community in June 2022 by being awarded the 2022 Australian Business Person of the Year. In February 2023, Fitz-Alan was listed in Forbes Middle East's "100 Most Powerful Businesswomen 2023", and in April 2023, she was listed in Arabian Business' "50 Inspiring Women Business Leaders".

**Patricia Gomes**

*Regional Head of Commercial Banking, MENAT, HSBC*

Based in Dubai, **Patricia Gomes** is the Regional Head of Commercial Banking for the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkiye at HSBC. In this role Gomes is responsible for all Commercial Banking activities across the region including Client Coverage, Credit & Lending, Global Trade and Receivables Finance (GTRF), and Global Payment Solutions (GPS). Previously, Gomes was Head of Global Trade and Receivables Finance for North America, based in New York. She was responsible for leading and managing the GTRF business across Wholesale and Institutional clients. With over 25 years of experience in banking, Gomes brings strong expertise across a number of roles in Client Coverages, Product, and Credit Risk. Gomes has extensive international experience, having held roles in London, Dubai, Hong Kong, and New York both for HSBC and prior to that, Citigroup. Gomes has an MBA from INSEAD (Paris and Singapore) and a Masters in Economics from Universidade Catolica Portuguesa, in Lisbon, Portugal.

**Thereshini Peter**

*Chief Financial Officer for GCC, Visa Inc*

**Thereshini Peter** brings over 25 years of senior finance leadership to the table, spanning diverse industries such as finance, FMCG, and payments. With an international outlook, she has navigated finance landscapes across Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa. She has held multifaceted financial and commercial roles throughout her journey. Having made notable contributions at esteemed companies like Pepsi, Unilever, and Kao Brands, Peter embarked on a new chapter by joining Visa Inc. 3 years ago. Presently, she holds the esteemed position of GCC Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for Visa Inc., underscoring her strategic insights in the finance domain. Peter boasts credentials as a Chartered Management Accountant and extends her expertise as a board member of Barberry Holdings in South Africa and Gems World Academy in the UAE. Her track record as a strategic business partner echoes in the consistent delivery of robust business outcomes. While she hails from South Africa, Peter's career path has traversed global territories, including South Africa, London, Trinidad and Tobago, and is currently based in the United Arab Emirates. Beyond her professional journey, she is a dedicated mother of two, Kuvar and Liam Peter projecting a passion for coaching, fostering diversity, and promoting inclusion.

**Moderator****Abeer Abu Omar**

*Economics and Government Reporter, Bloomberg LP*

**Abeer Abu Omar** joined Bloomberg News in 2018 and has been covering Middle East government and economic affairs for the majority of her career, interviewing decision makers including government officials, presidents and regional economic policymakers. She has taken part in global Bloomberg initiatives promoting diversity and inclusion across the newsroom, working on adding more women voices in the company's database and into stories. Prior to her time at Bloomberg, Abu Omar worked as a press editor at Argam Investments. She holds a bachelor's degree in mass communication – journalism from the American University of Sharjah.