



Interview of Mrs. Aisha Alfardan: The Role of Qatari Women: Road to 2022

1.- How would you describe the role of women in Qatari Society?

The Qatari Government under the leadership of HH Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, plays a significant role in supporting the Qatari women to achieve equal rights, and improve and enhance their position and role in society, resulting in a positive impact on the advancement and empowerment of women.

Qatari women have participated in many fields and achieved educational excellence in most specializations. Many important positions in this country are occupied by Qatari women, Notably in ministerial roles and members of the Shura council, in addition they have contributed massively to the fields of education, health, charitable institutions, culture, arts, law, media, policy, banks, and other sectors.

Internationally, Qatari women have made an impact as well and you can witness now a great leap towards assigning women in prestigious positions and sensitive tasks. We have the Assistant Foreign Minister and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H.E. Lolwah Rashid Al-Khater, also the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Ambassador Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, these are just a few of many examples of how Women are being empowered and playing a crucial role in the development of our beloved country.

I know we still have a long way to go and achieve what we are capable of, but I believe in Qatar and the Qatari women, and I know for a fact that we are doing a great job so far.

2.- In your opinion, which are the most important contributions made by Qatari women to the FIFA 2022 Qatar World Cup?

Qatar's preparations to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup present an unprecedented opportunity for everyone, including women. The country has invested extensive amounts in tourism, sports and almost all sectors and has endeavored to establish itself as a sports and tourism destination, providing massive opportunities for businesses to flourish.

Aligned with the state's direction of empowering women, businesswomen were very smart to seize the opportunity and engage in all the sectors, supporting the world cup preparations in the country that became a dynamic workshop with countless emerging opportunities in the F&B sector, real estate, luxury business as well as education and health care.

The Qatari women had invested a great deal in establishing diversified SMEs appointing also female calibers, complementing with the state's vision in supporting women as a work force. Determined to succeed, Qatari women started from the beginning of the world cup preparations to also explore the opportunities in the service sector to cater for mega projects implemented by the government.



3.- How important is the gender equality goal to you?

Gender equality is so crucial in many aspects. Gender equality is a human right, it prevents violence against women and girls. It's essential for economic prosperity. Societies that value women and men as equal are safer and healthier.

When women receive the same education and job opportunities as men, they can improve any organization they join. Studies show that diversity of all types increases an organization's productivity and innovation.

The State of Qatar has made giant, fundamental strides in enhancing the status of women and promoting gender equality since the 90s. Women's issues have been included among the State's developmental priorities and are high on the agenda of decision-makers. The country's legislation has been extensively amended, evolving along lines of relevance for the status of women, the Government has undertaken additional spending for programmes relating to the advancement of women in the fields of health, education, vocational skills and social matters generally, and institutions concerned with women's issues have been upgraded.

For me, gender equality is not important for the obvious reasons like improving the women status, improving businesses or growing economies, but it is important in saving lives and fostering peace

4.- Who are your female role models?

Of course, HH Sheikha Moza bint Nasser and the support she provided in enhancing women's role, making Her Highness a role model for Qatari women and women around the world, not only me. The local, regional, and international projects launched by HH Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, particularly in the education and societal development fields, will continue to be a source of pride for Arab women and women around the world.

Also My mother, may she rests in peace, the woman who taught me elegance, and at the same time has her position as a businesswoman. She managed her own business and finances without relying on intermediaries, and she taught me that one of the main pillars of success is communication and opening up to the different cultures and ideas, and not shutting ourselves away from people, but learning and exchanging the expertise.



5.- What would you say to a woman, living in any part of the world, who is suffering or has suffered domestic or any kind of violence?

Sadly, it can happen to anyone, it doesn't matter how rich or poor a person is, what gender or social class, or how much fame or education she possesses. Verbal, mental, and physical abuse can happen to anyone, no one is immune to domestic violence. There are a lot to say but mostly what comes to my mind now:

This doesn't define you; it is just happening to you and you can have the power to write how the story would end.

You need to stand up for yourself, speak out, seek support, of a friend, a family member, a professional. Whoever you can find to guide you or provide any emotional support through your pain. The more that we choose not to talk about domestic violence, the more we shy away from the issue, the more we lose.

And as Maya Angelo says: **"WE MAY ENCOUNTER MANY DEFEATS BUT WE MUST NOT BE DEFEATED"**