Message of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak
To The Fourth Women as Global Leaders Conference

Conference Delegates, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Greetings and welcome to the United Arab Emirates for this important conference. I am pleased that this Fourth Women as Global Leaders Conference has attracted delegates from so many different countries. I am confident that your experience will be fruitful and enjoyable.

I am particularly glad to be the conference patroness for two reasons: It is an international student conference that promotes dialog and understanding, and your focus is on issues that are extremely important to virtually all aspects of life in our globalized world.

You, the student delegates, represent our hopes for the future. I admire your enthusiasm. I am impressed with your determination to immerse yourselves in the important issues of the day. I am inspired by your promise. You will become the leaders of tomorrow with the opportunity, as well as the responsibility, to use your education, your intelligence, and your dedication to strengthen your communities and build a better world. This conference gives you a special opportunity to bond with like-minded colleagues from other countries. Working together, you will achieve your goals.

As participants in an international conference, you celebrate international dialog and global awareness. You are helping us
understand how the people of the world might live together in peace and harmony.

These values are at the core of our national vision for the present and the future of the United Arab Emirates. As you come to know the United Arab Emirates, you will see a country that is truly peaceful. We take quite seriously our role in fostering regional and global peace and cooperation. Millions of people with different nationalities, from different cultures, and with diverse religious beliefs live among us in freedom and friendship and make extremely valuable contributions to society. Under the historic leadership of our founding president, my late husband Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayan, May the peace and mercy of God always be with him, we have created a society that has moved away from viewing others through the lens of ignorance, suspicion, stereotype, and intolerance. As you look around, you will see a country of stable and effective political, economic, and social institutions. You will see a society with solid foundations, committed to the peaceful pursuit of solutions to the conflicts and problems of humankind.

You the leaders of tomorrow must appreciate that the ways we relate to one another will have a profound impact on our communities and on our world. Global interdependence requires tolerance, mutual understanding, and cooperation across religious and cultural boundaries. You women leaders must work together to affirm these essential values, and to change mindsets. We must work together to remove social and economic barriers. We need to mentor and nurture young women, not just in schools and colleges but throughout their whole careers. We must ensure that women can advance in
their careers, so that more women are in positions to lead. And we must help young women set their sights so high that they will never be able to enclose their aspirations under a glass ceiling.

In the UAE, we believe strongly that the empowerment of women is important to the future of our country. Without the complete participation of our nation’s women, we will not reach our maximum potential. In our drive for economic and social development under the leadership and guidance of His Highness the President, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahayan, our country requires the active participation of everyone—every woman, every man. Our women have to develop and exercise their full potential for employment in their chosen fields. It is the joint responsibility of all institutions of society, the UAE society and societies elsewhere, to support women in reaching their full potential. This conference responds to that responsibility, and your participation in it affirms that you are motivated to seize the opportunity and determined to lead in the economic and social development of your society. And given the theme of this conference, it must be that you seek a particular kind of development, namely, sustainable development.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**
The United Nations has defined sustainable development as that which and I quote: “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” End quote. This conference captures the essence of the UN definition of sustainable development. It also recognizes that there are powerful forces working against global efforts to achieve the goals of sustainable development. For centuries those countries now thought of as the leaders in
economic and technological development grew their economies and their quality of life through exploitation of natural resources, often with little concern about environmental impact or wise usage of natural resources. Those countries have trouble breaking old habits. And it should be no surprise that the world’s currently developing countries, with their multitudes of poor and disadvantaged peoples, are tempted to follow the old model that has already achieved prosperity for the developed countries. It is in everyone’s self-interest to help leaders of all countries act in historically new ways to improve the lives of their citizens, ways that will not leave their future generations further impoverished in a barren environment.

As we know, “truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believed.” When leaders communicate the truth so that people understand it, sustainability will become a common belief. Leaders must help their communities realize that our survival and well-being depend, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony. Sustainability establishes the conditions permitting the fulfillment of the social, economic, and aesthetic needs of present and future generations.

And here I must say that Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates have seized their opportunities and are moving aggressively into a sustainable future. Our plans for its future lay the foundation for a socially cohesive and economically sustainable community that preserves the country’s unique cultural heritage while gathering power from its connections with other cultures. Our leaders have carefully fixed both the goals toward which the UAE will move
and the complex methods for most effectively reaching those goals. Wisdom informs these plans at every turn. Effective leaders, particularly at national levels, will act in this fashion to create formal plans that fully reveal their vision for a sustainable future. A carefully articulated vision can educate the population so that it understands the significance of its actions or inactions.

Ladies and gentlemen, I totally agree with the promise and hopes implied in this global conference – that the energy and the idealism of young women are important forces for transforming our world – that the sacrifices and persistence of women through the decades to achieve basic rights and participate in the development of society are truly inspirational. I also agree that the challenges we face in the field of sustainable development require a global approach involving dialog and cooperation.

I agree with you that sustainability must become more than just a fashionable word, more even than a noble concept understood and believed. It must become the dominant motive for global actions– actions that will balance economic, social, environmental, and aesthetic needs – actions that will respect the needs of all communities and promote world peace. Leaders must strengthen the will of the people in their communities to act on their belief, to act for sustainability.

Remember, we people who are living on this planet are destroying it. We need leaders who will lead and inspire us in battle against our own destructive natures.
Women are fighters. Women are leaders. Welcome to you women eager to lead the world. Your full and unhindered contributions are essential to the success and prosperity of local and global communities.

Once again, I thank all of you—students, prominent international guests, and the sponsors of the conference. I especially wish to thank the students, faculty, and staff of my beloved Zayed University for all their efforts to make this conference possible. Again, welcome to Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates; enjoy your time here and my best wishes to you for a productive conference.

Thank you and Peace be with you.