



# The Middle East Partnership Initiative

## *Arab Women Leaders Hone Political Skills*

*October 2005*

More than 50 women from 14 Middle East and North Africa countries plus the West Bank and Gaza gathered in Kuwait from September 25-28, 2005 for the fourth *Partners in Participation Regional Campaign School*. Keynote speakers included Kuwait's first female cabinet minister, **Maasouma Al Mubarak**; Algerian Member of Parliament **Samia Moualfi**; and **Amina Ouchelh**, a Member of Parliament from Morocco, as well as **Kim Campbell**, former Prime Minister of Canada and U.S. Congresswoman **Jane Harman**, senior Democrat on the House Select Intelligence Committee.

Many of the participants are candidates in upcoming election campaigns in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza, and Kuwait, where women won the right to vote earlier this year. In 2007, Kuwaiti women will run for office as well as vote. Many of the attendees plan to run in their countries' next elections.

The workshops focused on skills necessary for their candidacies to be effective as the political space in their countries becomes more open.

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<http://www.arabnews.com/?page=7&section=0&article=71182&d=5&m=10&y=2005>

*"...our Arab world faces many challenges in this millennium. Democracy is one of those challenges. We cannot face this without the capabilities and participation of both men and women." Moroccan lawmaker Armina Ouchelh*

Subjects included campaigning and writing a platform of values and programs, communication with potential voters, managing organizations democratically, and monitoring elections.

The teachers at the campaign schools were pro-democracy activists, campaign experts and

female politicians who have traveled similar roads to office. Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell noted that it took a century for Canada to elect a woman to the highest office of the land and said that many men and women everywhere still held pre-conceived gender bias against women.

The campaign school, sponsored by the Middle East Partnership Initiative was organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), in cooperation with the Kuwait Economic Society's Women's Committee, the Women's Social and Cultural Society in Kuwait, and the International Republican Institute (IRI). The first three campaign schools held in Qatar, Tunisia and Jordan trained more than 150 women from the Gulf, North Africa and the Middle East to take active roles in political life.

<http://www.gulf-news.com/Search/searchResultsNF.asp?CurPage=5&txtSearch=women>

**MEPI** is a Presidential initiative that supports economic, political, and educational reform efforts and women's empowerment in the Middle East and expanded opportunity for all people of the region.

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