

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Event Summary

An Evening with Her Royal Highness Ambassador Reema Bandar Al Saud

Hosted by the Maine World Affairs Council

July 23, 2020

Zoom Interactive Event

7:00-8:00 p.m. EDT

Ambassador Reema Bandar Al Saud addressed a virtual event, hosted by the Maine World Affairs Council on Thursday, July 23, 2020. After being introduced by Harold Pachios, Advisory Board Member and Founding Partner of Preti Flaherty, Ambassador Reema focused her remarks on several areas surrounding the robust 75-year U.S.-Saudi partnership. She then participated in a question and answer session with the attendees.

Ambassador Reema spoke passionately on the relationship and ties between the people of the Kingdom and Maine, highlighting the shared values of the two. She further applauded the mission of the Maine World Affairs Council for bringing cultures from around the world and an international perspective to the Pine Tree State. Additionally, Ambassador Reema spoke on the importance of Saudi students studying at Maine's colleges and universities, the shared cultural experiences through Bates College's Saudi contemporary art display, and Deering High School in Portland, Maine providing hijabs for Muslim women participating in sports.

Ambassador Reema further discussed the bold and inspiring transformation occurring in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030. From diversifying the Saudi economy to opening Saudi Arabia to tourism, Vision 2030 touches every government department and Saudi citizen. Vision 2030 additionally seeks to empower women, an effort recently recognized by the World Bank Group whose yearly Women, Business, and the Law report recognized Saudi Arabia as having made the biggest yearly improvement. Specifically, the report recognized Saudi Arabia for barring sexual harassment in both the public and private employment sectors, legally protecting pregnant employees from discriminatory dismissal, setting the retirement age the same for men as for women, and mandating equal pay for women as their male counterparts. Ambassador Reema spoke extensively on these changes and provided real-world examples as to how significant these changes are for women in the Kingdom.

Additional topics covered by Ambassador Reema included:

- How COVID-19 has impacted Saudi Arabia.
- The honor of being the Saudi Ambassador to the United States, and the first female to serve in this capacity.
- Energy diversification and Saudi Arabia's solar panel fields that are the largest in the world and the other sustainability efforts in the Kingdom.
- The partnership between the Kingdom and the United Nations to advance human rights.
- The Kingdom's efforts seeking a political solution to the conflict in Yemen and Saudi Arabia as a stabilizing force in the Middle East.
- Athletics culture and how it relates to both men and women and the importance of sports in our culture and economy.

The event concluded with Ambassador Reema thanking the panelists and encouraging all attendees to visit the Kingdom once COVID-19 allows travel.