

f H. M. King of Bahrain Visits China

巴林国王夫人在中国

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In September 2002, the women's delegation of Bahrain, led by H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, wife of H. M. King of Bahrain and Chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Women of Bahrain, paid a 10-day visit to China. Our reporter interviewed Her Highness.

今年九月，由巴林国王夫人、巴林妇女最高委员会主席塞碧凯·宾特·易布拉欣·阿勒哈利法率领的巴林妇女代表团对中国进行了为期十天的正式访问，本刊记者对巴林国王夫人进行了专访。

H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, wife of H. M. King of Bahrain and Chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Women of Bahrain, recently led a 42-person delegation to China during a 10-day visit. The delegation was invited by the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). The delegation's main goal was to expand cooperation with the ACWF, understand ACWF's successes in promoting women's development, and to promote friendly relations between the countries.

State Councilor Wu Yi, ACWF President and NPC Standing Committee Vice-chairperson Peng Peiyun and Vice-chairman of



Peng Peiyun (left), ACWF President and NPC Standing Committee Vice-chairperson, and H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka (right) sign a memorandum of understanding and cooperation at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

全国人大常委会副委员长、全国妇联主席彭佩云（左）与巴林国王夫人、巴林妇女最高委员会主席塞碧凯·宾特·易布拉欣·阿勒哈利法（右）在北京人民大会堂签署合作谅解备忘录



Posing for a group photo after visiting the Palace Museum
参观故宫后留影

the National Committee of the CPPCC Wang Wenyuan met with H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka in Beijing. They held wide-ranging discussions.

A *Women of China* reporter interviewed H.H. Shaikha Sabeeka during her Beijing visit.

Women of China Reporter (WOC): Is this your first visit

to China as Chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Women of Bahrain (SCWB)? What was your view of China before this visit?

H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka (H): It's not my first official visit, but it's my first to China. I had read a lot of official reports and general information about this great country. That gave me a clear concept about modern China, and my visit to this friendly country helps me better understand China. I hope to visit China again in the near future.

WOC: What do you feel about your visit to China? What's your impression about Chinese women and the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)?

H: This visit allows me the chance to see the developing attitudes of the Chinese people, and understand the developing programs. I do appreciate Chinese women for improving their lives. And I do admire the ACWF's efforts in the development of Chinese women's lives, and the support and care ACWF provides to the needy people.

WOC: What are the differences and similarities between





ACWF and SCWB?

1: All-China Women's Federation and the Supreme Council for Women of Bahrain are similar. Both work to improve women's economic, social, cultural and political situations. Both work to help women eliminate development obstacles.

The difference: SCWB is completely official while ACWF combines non-governmental and official programs. ACWF's relationship with China's National Working Committee for Women and Children clearly defines this characteristic. The commission is responsible for legislation; ACWF tries to implement the legislation.

H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka, accompanied by ACWF Vice-president Hua Fuzhou (left in the front row) and delegates, visits the Great Wall

巴林国王夫人和巴林妇女代表团一行在全国妇联副主席华福周（前排左）的陪同下游览长城

1 A visit to the All-China Women's Federation Mansion, accompanied by Hua Fuzhou (middle), ACWF Vice-president and Zhao Shaohua (right in the front row), Member of the Secretariat of the ACWF

在全国妇联副主席华福周（中）和书记处书记赵少华（前排右）的陪同下参观中华全国妇女联合会大厦

2 Visiting the Beijing Guang'anmen Hospital of Chinese Medicine
参观北京广安门中医院

3 H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka receives the honorary title of Professor of Sociology from China Women's College
巴林国王夫人接受中华女子学院社会学名誉教授证书

WOC: In what areas does the SCWB look forward to cooperating with China?

H: The Supreme Council for Women of Bahrain hopes the visit will be a starting point for cooperation with China. SCWB and ACWF have signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation, which is a first step towards good



H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka leads her delegation during a visit to Women of China. She had an informal discussion with the magazine's directors
巴林国王夫人率代表团参观 WOMEN OF CHINA 并与期刊社领导座谈



Women of China's directors present a gift to H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka
WOMEN OF CHINA 社领导向国王夫人赠送礼品

cooperation. We hope this MOU will lead to a series of cooperation programs to benefit women in both countries.

WOC: Have you heard about our magazine? Is there similar magazines in Bahrain? What is your opinion of women's magazines in China?

H: We received some copies of your magazine before our visit, and it's a pleasure to be here with you. There is no such magazine in Bahrain. However, SCWB plans to publish a women's magazine in the near future. We recommend women's magazines worldwide.

WOC: We also have questions about Bahraini women's situations. First, women make up 65 percent of university students in Bahrain, and 17 percent of the uneducated population. This indicates a high level of education among women in Bahrain. It also highlights the importance the Bahraini Government places on education. How have the Bahraini Government and SCWB supported women's education?

H: The government has done a lot to promote education. In 2001, there were 203 government-run schools, of which 103 were for girls.

Education in Bahrain is free from the first level up to high school. The government provides a lot of scholarships to prominent stu-

dents so they can study overseas. Thirty percent of Bahrain's university students have free education. Recently, H. M. King of Bahrain reduced university charges to encourage people to continue with higher education.

The importance we have placed on education has helped reduce dropout rates and illiteracy. It has also helped increase the number of highly educated people in various sectors.

One of the SCWB's goals is to support women as they pursue their educations. The SCWB designates a special committee, from among its 10 committees, to train and empower women with skills and knowledge to facilitate their entry into the labor market.

WOC: We noticed that in the 1930s the jobs available for Bahraini women were limited to the teaching and nursing

H. H. Shaikha Sa beeka (5th right) and Vice-chairperson of the National Committee of the CPPCC Wang Wenyuan (4th right) posing for a group photo

全国政协副主席王文元亲切会见国王夫人并合影留念



fields. Bahrain's women have had greater options since the 1960s. Why? What was the role of Bahrain's government in this change?

H: The government established Bahrain University, where men and women are treated equally. That has helped improve women's involvement in various domains. Most women are qualified to work in both the private and public sectors. Nevertheless, compared with men, the number of women in high executive positions, in both the public and private sectors, remains low.

This is not due to our legislation — it doesn't distinguish between men and women, rather it is like most other countries where such positions are filled by men.

Nowadays, women worldwide have better chances to fill these positions. Statistics in Bahrain indicate women have greater opportunities to fill executive positions in both public and private sectors. In addition, women's participation in politics still depends on people's awareness; though in legislation, such rights are already guaranteed to both men and women.

WOC: In West China, many women still live in poverty. What is the situation in Bahrain? What is being done in Bahrain to help women escape poverty?

H: There is a special ministry for employment and social affairs in Bahrain. It is responsible for providing job opportunities, and for providing daily necessities to the poor. The concept of poverty in Bahrain is different from other countries, because our education and health care are free. Our "poverty" refers to unemployment.

Brief Introduction of the Supreme Council for Women of Bahrain 巴林妇女最高委员会简介

The Supreme Council for Women of Bahrain was established in August, 2001. Its purpose is to enhance the positions and roles of Bahraini women, to enable them to participate in the kingdom's development. The council's first, and current, Chairwoman is Shaikha Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, wife of H. M. King of Bahrain.

The council designated 10 committees to plan and implement initiatives and projects within the scope of the council's objectives.

- Education and Training Committee
- Research and Study Committee
- Health, Population and Environment Committee
- Committee for Culture and Communications
- Committee for Economic Development
- Social Affairs Committee
- Legal Affairs Committee
- Committee on Political Participation
- Committee on Non-Government Organizations
- International Communications Committee



H. H. Shaikha Sabeeka granted an interview to Women of China's reporter at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, where she and her delegation stayed

在钓鱼台国宾馆下榻处，国王夫人接受WOMEN OF CHINA记者专访

H. M. King of Bahrain implemented various monetary programs to support the unemployed, poor families, orphans and widows. Housing projects have also been initiated.

WOC: Thank you for taking time for this interview.

H: I believe our visit will play a key role in enhancing the relationship between our countries, and it will strengthen cooperation between the Supreme Council of Women of Bahrain and All-China Women's Federation.

I would like to thank the ACWF for the warm reception we received. I look forward to future meetings.

Some Facts and Figures on the Status of Bahrain's Women 有关巴林妇女地位的相关数据

- The first Bahraini woman to hold a ministerial post was appointed in November 2002—the Secretary General of the Bahrain Supreme Council of Women. She was also the first woman to hold a ministerial post in the gulf region;
- Twenty-five Bahraini women hold assistant secretarial posts—in the fields of social affairs, culture, civil service and women's affairs;
- One hundred and ninety Bahraini women hold doctoral degrees, compared with 490 Bahraini men;
- Bahraini women comprise 23.5 percent of the gross national workforce, compared with 5 percent in 1971;
- The unemployment rate among Bahraini women is 10.5 percent;
- Some 52.2 percent of Bahrain's women have General Secondary Certificates or higher qualifications; and
- The illiteracy rate among Bahraini women is 17 percent (from a total population of 405,667 people).

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