

Dear Colleagues, dear laureates, dear distinguished representatives of KSA authorities and Civil Society, dear friends,

I would like, together with my colleagues from our member States, to welcome you all at the Delegation of the European Union to the KSA. It is a pleasure to celebrate together with you today, two important events, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that we celebrate on 10 December and the award of the Chaillot Prize to Glowork, in order to reward it for its important work and contribution.

Let me start with the first, In 1948, after the devastating Second World War, which brought painful divisions in Europe and occupation for many European countries, the international community committed to define, promote and protect human rights and adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that we celebrate on 10 December, since it was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10 in 1948. This declaration has enshrined these shared principles and influenced the development of the world, although not adopted by all the UN countries.

But still, almost seventy years on, we are far from the full respect of these commitments all over the world, and we recognize that we must all do more in this respect. This year, the Human Rights Day also marks the launch of a year-long campaign to celebrate the 70th anniversary in 2018. The EU will also continue to be the strongest supporter of the multilateral system as a pillar of the promotion and protection of human rights, starting from the United Nations to regional institutions such as the Council of Europe.

As the European Union, from the very beginning we have made the protection of human rights not only the foundation of our common internal and external policies, but of our Union itself. These are the values which we share with many countries around the world. In Saudi Arabia, we cooperate with the authorities, the Human Rights Commission, which I welcome here, as well as the National Society for Human Rights, to promote most of these common values. Sometimes, we cannot agree on everything but as friends and partners we respectfully dialogue on HR issues, which is an important step. Dialogue entails mutual respect and understanding, which is precious.

As way of constructively promoting Human Rights in the region, the European Union Delegation in Riyadh together with the Embassies of the Member states, awards every year the Chaillot Prize to an NGO or individuals, for their efforts in the promotion of Human Rights. This year, I have the honour to award the Chaillot Prize to Glowork and its founder Mr Mr Alkhudair, in recognition of their continuous efforts in the promotion of empowering women in the Saudi Labour Market. Glowork supports women empowerment, and in this sense also

all the important reforms undertaken by the Saudi authorities in transforming the country and its society.

Many of these important reforms are encompassed in the Vision 2030, an ambitious strategy for economic and "wellbeing" reforms, that aim to modernize the economy, decrease unemployment, and achieve a reasonable degree of diversification. If only a limited number of its targets are attained, it will be successful. The economy as well as social considerations provide the key to promote reforms, which bring societal transformation such as women driving and entertainment, both important achievements, which we welcome.

It is important for the European Union that KSA succeeds in its overall reform agenda; **support for Vision 2030 is a critical long-term EU interest.** Many EU MS (UK, DE and others) and International partners have already publicly voiced their support for Vision 2030, which allows for further economic and sectorial cooperation and hopefully could pave the way for identifying and initiating EU cooperation programs – energy, transport and economic diversification represent all key priorities. Our expertise and know-how could be of important support to the Kingdom as a useful instrument in this important stage of transformation

But let us focus now on Glowork and its founder Mr Alkhudair, which we are here to honour today. A couple of years ago, the then 28-year-old Alkhudair left a comfortable auditor job and set up Glowork, a company that focuses on solving female unemployment in Saudi Arabia. Glowork has now helped over 26,000 women find direct jobs in the kingdom, while a far greater number have benefited from access to the firm's advice and career fairs.

In the process, Glowork has gone from 3 employees to more than 60 and is building on its extensive database From e-commerce to apps, and from gyms to rapid regional expansion, Glowork has set an important precedent in the region, one which we acknowledge and recognise with this Chaillot Prize.

From a wider perspective, Glowork has been at the heart of a quiet yet important shift in the Arab world's largest economy, recognising the vital contribution that women can make to the workforce. There are now eight times as many working Saudi women – 490,000 in total – than there were a couple of years ago. That push is being helped by Glowork, which has been trying to open up new sectors in which Saudi women can work.

But now I would like to invite – Mr Alkhudair to hand him over his Prize, to congratulate him and to ask him to take the floor to explain us his vision.