

## Breast cancer: Awareness is the key to cure



Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi addresses the delegates at the opening ceremony of the Women's Cancer Conference in Jeddah on Wednesday. (AN photo)

By **ROGER HARRISON** | ARAB NEWS

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**JEDDAH: The Women's Cancer Conference was launched officially on Wednesday by Princess Sita bint Abdullah and marked the start of a new era in raising the profile of the disease in Saudi Arabia.**

It was, said Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi, an opportunity both for the region's top scientists to discuss ways to improve women's health and for advocates and government leaders to unite and plan the fight against breast cancer.

She added that it showcased the Kingdom as a world leader in the provision of high quality awareness and education to women throughout the region.



In a video address to the conference, former US First Lady Laura Bush said that the foundations for cooperation between the Al-Amoudi Center and Susan G. Komen for the Cure were laid in Qassim in 2005, resulting in the current conference.

A representative from the US State Department met with members of King Abdulaziz Women's Association. "At that meeting, as the women talked about their breast cancer awareness program, they saw the similarities between their program and our initiatives in the United States, like the Susan G. Komen for the Cure," Bush said.

"The women began to plan for a real exchange of breast cancer resources and discoveries between the United States and the Middle East."

Bush referred to her trip to Saudi Arabia in October 2007, where she announced the United States Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research.

"Since the announcement of this partnership, the United States and Saudi Arabia along with other countries from the Middle East have partnered the Institute Awareness Campaigns and shared discoveries and data that will lead to world class research."

Also in a video address, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Cancer Control Nancy G. Brinker, regarded as the leader of the global breast cancer movement, said that the founders and supporters of the joint initiative between the Komen foundation and Al-Amoudi Center had made astonishing progress in such a short time.

"We are eager to continue building on the message of awareness, education and helping women with breast cancer throughout the Middle East and the world," she said.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure is the world's largest breast cancer organization and a founding partner of the Middle East Partnership Initiative for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research.

It has provided educational materials and training programs for new advocates through its Course for the Cure program.

Brinker's journey to do everything possible to end the shame, pain, fear and hopelessness caused by this disease began with a simple promise in 1982 to her dying sister Susan G. Komen, who was 36.

"We are working to educate and support women of the Middle East. We want to help them seek breast cancer screening and treatment, especially in the early stages of the disease when breast cancer is most easily treated."



After the opening ceremony and addresses, the conference turned to the presentations and detailed panel discussions on the various aspects of diagnosis and control of breast cancer.

The event concludes Thursday with a session on guidelines and recommendations for the way forward in the fight against the disease.