

Two prominent women from the UAE awarded with the French order for arts and letters on the occasion of the launching of the second season of the Emirati-French Cultural Dialogue in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi – 25 September, 2018 - The Ambassador of France to the United Arab Emirates, H.E. Ludovic Pouille, has honored Mrs. Hissa Al Dhaheri and Mrs. Manal Ataya with the award of “Chevaliers de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres” (Knights of the Order of Arts and Letters) at a ceremony held at the residence of France, in Abu Dhabi on 25th September, 2018. A prominent award from the French ministry of culture in recognition of their significant contribution to the success of the Emirati-French Cultural cooperation on the occasion of the launching of the second part of the Emirati-French Cultural Dialogue.

On this occasion, the Ambassador of France, H.E. Ludovic Pouille declared: *“I am thrilled to honor these two exceptional women from the United Arab Emirates, Mrs. Hissa Al Dhaheri and Mrs. Manal Ataya, who played a major role, with their work in the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Sharjah Museums Authority, in the dialogue between France and the United Arab Emirates in the fields of arts and culture. Arts and culture have always been at the core of the friendship and cooperation between the two countries, which have built up strong ties since the creation of the Federation in 1971.”*

Hissa Al Dhaheri, who started her career in 2010 in TDIC, was appointed in 2016 Deputy Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi and work on the opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, first universal museum in the Arab world which is the icon of the dialogue between France and the United Arab Emirates and the openness to the world. She said: *“I would like to thank the leadership of both our nations for having the vision for creating an innovative cultural institution, the Louvre Abu Dhabi. I was privileged with the opportunity to serve to bring this vision to life, and today I am extremely honored for this recognition.”*

Manal Ataya, Director-General of the Sharjah Museums Authority, participated to the exhibition portraying “40 years of archaeological cooperation between France and the UAE” in 2017. An exhibition in the Sharjah Archaeology Museum organized in partnership with the Institut français in the United Arab Emirates / the Cultural Department of the French Embassy with the support of UNESCO featuring more than 100 priceless objects excavated by the French Archaeological Mission to the UAE since 1977. Manal Ataya declared: *“I am extremely honored to be receiving this recognition. I would like to thank the Government of France for this monumental honor. It is with my great pleasure and gratitude to serve the United Arab Emirates, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my immense gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi for being an inspiring role model to me and for his continuous support.”*

The ceremony was also the occasion to launch second season of the Emirati-French Cultural Dialogue. Following the success of Louvre Abu Dhabi opening in November 2017, France and the UAE signed a cooperation agreement that gave birth to the Emirati-French Cultural Dialogue, whose second season was kicked off by Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic and H.E. Noura Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development on 4th September, 2018 in the Louvre Abu Dhabi. The rich program of the second season honors all forms of arts in France and the United Arab Emirates, from painting (first retrospective of the avant-garde Emirati artist Abdulqader Al Rais in Paris at the Arab World Institute [*Institut du monde arabe*] until October 30th), to music (in the frame of Abu Dhabi Classics and the Abu Dhabi festival), jewelry (l’Ecole Van Cleef & Arpels in Dubai) or design (14 young French designers presented in the exhibition “Le French Design, how innovation creates History” in the Dubai Design Week)...

The Emirati-French Cultural Dialogue pays tribute to the vision of the founder of the United Arab Emirates, late Sheikh Zayed, on the occasion of the century of his birth with the exhibition organized by the European Union delegation to the UAE “Sheikh Zayed & Europe: a journey” presenting unique archives and objects, like his French made perfume created by the Grasse-based perfumed house Henry Jacques.

It also explores new fields, like artificial intelligence with the “Entretiens de Royaumont” on September the 30th in the Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, another icon, with the Louvre Abu Dhabi, of the outstanding cultural and educational partnership between France and the United Arab Emirates. An

event organized by the French Business Group and of which His Excellency Omar Al Olama, Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, accepted to be part of.

The Emirati-French Cultural Dialogue is also about learning shared languages. In this respect, while the UAE ambitions to play a greater role within the International organization for Francophonie, the teaching of the French language is being reintroduced in Emirati public schools for the first time since 1988. At the same time, new programs are being set up in order to foster the learning of Arabic by a French audience of all ages and origins.

As part of their cultural dialogue, France and the UAE also continue to work together on the safeguard of endangered cultural heritage in conflict zones, within the framework of the ALIPH fund (Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas), which gathers international donations to preserve and restore cultural endangered heritage sites around the world.

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