



## Press Release

26/10/2009

**Swiss Garments Company, a subsidiary of Al Arafa for Investment & Consultancies, has merited the "Gender Equity Seal". The seal is a designation that attests to a company's commitment to the promotion of policies for gender equality.**

Swiss Garments Company, a subsidiary of Al Arafa for Investment & Consultancies, was one of ten Egyptian champions that have voluntarily participated in the Ministry of Investment, World Bank and UNIFEM's initiative "**One Business Community...Equal Opportunity**". The initiative is intended to encourage companies to adopt internal policies to promote gender equality. Major challenges addressed by the program include wage differentials and time use inequalities between men and women, and low participation of women in positions of leadership.

The economic participation of women—their presence in the workforce in quantitative terms—is important not only for lowering the disproportionate levels of poverty among women, but also as an important step toward raising household income and encouraging economic development in countries as a whole.

We at Al Arafa believe that empowering women and achieving gender equality are key to driving economies and reducing feminized poverty. The groups Apparel & Tailoring companies in Egypt employ over 6,800 workers, of which 46% are female, a figure that is well above the national average female labor participation rate of 22%.

Al Arafa, as a group is proud to announce that Swiss Garments Company has obtained the Gender Equity Seal with a grade of (90%) valid for the years 2009-2011.

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### **About Al Arafa for Investments & Consultancies**

Arafa for Investment and Consultancies is a leading player in the textiles industry operating a vertically integrated business model that places it as one of the largest export oriented and integrated apparel and textiles manufacturers in Egypt and the Middle East, and a prominent apparel retailer and wholesaler in Egypt, the UK and Scandinavia.

Our local retail operations include 43-stores under Concrete brand in Egypt, while our foreign retail operations include the Baird Group as a sub-holding company That holds a market share of 20% of the UK suits market through its ownership stakes in; BMB the largest men's clothing concessionaire in the United Kingdom, Specialty Retail Group Limited (SRG) one of UK's leading menswear retail chains with a nationwide coverage running 76 stores across the UK and MELKA Trading, a Swedish pan European men's casual wear business.

Al Arafa's international presence was further solidified by the acquisition of a 35% stake in Forall Group the owner of several prestigious brands including "PAL ZILERI" and "LAB by PAL ZILERI" among others.

### **About Swiss Garments Company**

Swiss Garments Company, a subsidiary of Al Arafa for Investment & Consultancies, was established in 1989. The Swiss Garments Company is engaged in the production of export-oriented formal menswear to the United Kingdom to renowned department stores such as Debenhams and House of Fraser and casual wear for top quality outlets in the United States; such as JC Penney, Macys, Talbots, GAP, Bloomingdales; to name just a few

### **About UNIFEM**

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations, dedicated to advancing women's rights and achieving gender equality. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programs and strategies that foster women's empowerment. UNIFEM works on the premise that it is the fundamental right of every woman to live a life free from discrimination and violence, and that gender equality is essential to achieving development and to building just societies.

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