

Tuesday, 19 February 2013

Saudi Shura Council members, including 30 women, take oath before king



Members of the Saudi Shura Council, including 30 women for the first time in history, were sworn in on Tuesday in the presence of King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz.

"I am happy to meet you in the opening session of the Shura Council Sixth Term, the first term in which a woman participates," King Abdullah said in his speech.

"Our goal is based on activating the work of the council with a realization founded on rationality that does not rush into urgency which carries noise with no result," he added.

The women took their seats in the same room with their 130 male colleagues and were sworn in collectively, state television said.

"The development we are working at must be gradual," King Abdullah said in a brief statement broadcast on state television.

The Shura Council will begin the first session of its Sixth Term on February 24.

A royal decree last month amended two articles in the council's statute introducing a 20 percent quota for women in the country's Shura Council, and the king appointed 30 women to join the consultative assembly.

The assembly, whose members are appointed by the king, works as the formal advisory body of Saudi Arabia. It can propose draft laws which would be presented to the king, who, in turn, would either pass or reject them.

Saudi Arabia is known for its conservative culture where women are not allowed to drive despite the

King Abdullah has introduced cautious economic and social reforms aimed at reconciling Saudi Arabia's religious traditions with the needs of a modern economy and youthful population.