



## Congratulations to the Class of 2016!

### Modern English School Cairo's Fourteenth Annual Graduation Ceremony

MES Cairo's Graduation Ceremony for the Class of 2016 took place on a very warm evening in June. As MES Cairo's VIP guests, teachers, and the graduates' families and guests arrived, they were entertained by the delightful sound of musical items being played by a selection of young pianists enrolled in MES Cairo's Instrumental Programme.

The atmosphere was filled with anticipation and excitement and it was clear from the start that the ceremony of 2016 was going to be as glamorous and stylish as MES Cairo's graduation ceremonies always are, with everybody enjoying the fantastic décor of the arena and the striking appearance of the beautifully turned-out guests.

As the ceremony began, the audience was suddenly silenced as a dramatic sound filled the air and Rudyard Kipling's poem, 'If', was beautifully recited by current Drama students and a group of MES Cairo Alumni MESConians who had returned to MES to support the school's Graduation ceremony and the Class of 2016. The music that accompanied the poem so effectively was composed by Jonathan Todd (Dean of Students, Grades Nine and Ten), who also directed the performance. The theme of Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If' revolves around the coming of age and the poem lists different virtues that would help a young person become an honourable adult.

Younger volunteer students carried flags and lined the red carpet as the poem came to an end and all eagerly expected the arrival of the Class of 2016 into the Arena. Mr P T Godfrey



**Mrs Sawzan L Dajani, Chairman of the Board, addresses the graduation ceremony**







(Member of Board of Directors), announced the arrival of the graduands and we soon heard the sound of Copland's 'Fanfare for the Common Man' as the Class of 2016 marched into the Graduation Arena. The processional march was proudly led by Ms Nicola Singleton (Secondary Principal, British and IBDP Sections) and Ms Dodie Ballard (Secondary Principal, American Section).

The National Anthem of the Arab Republic of Egypt was performed by the High School Choir followed by a beautiful Quran recital by Seif Wael Saleh (G12R), Class of 2016.

With great enthusiasm, the Secondary High School Choir then sang the school song 'To MES Be True' (by Ghada Dajani and Daniel Tomlin), followed by a moving rendition of 'Tala'a al badro Alayna' (traditional Arabic nasheed).

Mr Peter Godfrey reminded the guests of the school's 'Outstanding'

inspection report recently awarded by the British School's Overseas organisation and highlighted how this could not have been achieved without the teamwork and cooperation of all of MES Cairo's stakeholders – a truly tremendous achievement by all involved at the school. Mr Godfrey cited extracts from the BSO report that praised the school's Board of Directors as being outstanding and he accredited the school's success to its visionary leader, Mrs Sawsan Dajani (Chairman of the Board).

A pioneering leader, Sawsan Dajani is a role model for women everywhere. This is evidenced in the women she inspires around her on a daily basis and

interestingly reflected in the data that shows the equal successes of girls and boys at MES Cairo. Mrs Dajani's success is based on a passionate belief in the power of education to improve the world. Anyone who has met her is immediately struck by her magnetism, vision, determination and her truly inspirational spirit.

She inspired the Class of 2016 with her parting words to them in an address that was based on the theme of 'living in the moment'. "Tomorrow with all its possibilities, burdens, promises and potential adversities will come, whether in splendour of light or under a shroud of darkness...it will come. Until it does, we have no control over it until it's born and becomes Today. Think about it, you can fight the battles of one day...it is only when you add upon them the burdens of eternity (Yesterday and Tomorrow) that it fills

you with either remorse and bitterness or anxiety and dread and sometimes a combination of them all... Which leaves us with the simple reality that living in the moment, fully, completely...makes life worth living and cherishing..."

Mrs Dajani connected the theme to memories of the recently



**Ambassador Mervat Tallawy**

deceased Mohamad Hasanein Heikal, who was the guest speaker at the very first MES Cairo Graduation Ceremony 14 years ago. "He was a national and international treasure; a thinker, a historian, a writer, a philosopher, a father and a very proud grandfather... He spoke about why his grandchildren, indeed all MES Cairo students, were lucky to be afforded the opportunity to learn in an open, civil and progressive environment. He mentioned what happens in our daily lives that allows us to forget to stop and notice. So much so, that we tend to forget and subsequently take life for granted..." Full of wisdom and heartfelt advice, Mrs Dajani's speech captivated the audience and as they reflected in silence, she introduced MES Cairo's Graduation Guest speaker, Ambassador Mervat Tallawy.

"Ambassador Tallawy is arguably one of Egypt's most recognisable female figures. She is a career diplomat with over 40 years of experience and has held many prominent positions in the service of her country and in the diplomatic corps... Ambassador Tallawy has been awarded the National Order of the Cedar by the Lebanese Republic, the State Medal of Honour of Austria and has been decorated for being one of the first women to hold the position of Ambassador representing Egypt. Ambassador Tallawy recently spearheaded the adoption of a UN blueprint to combat violence against





women and continuously strives to ensure that equality for women

remains at the top of the UN agenda. We are privileged to have her with us tonight and it is with great honour and pleasure that I introduce her to you and invite her to address you."

Ambassador Tallawy spoke about Education being the cornerstone of one's life and how Education enables people to progress and make a difference. An inspiration to all young learners everywhere, she was not permitted to go to university when she first graduated from school due to the traditions of the very conservative and patriarchal society in Upper Egypt where she lived. She was determined, however, on reading for her degree (which she described as a 'right') and to prove her commitment, she took exams for her Secondary school certificate for three consecutive years as the certificate had to be recent in order for her to be accepted into university.

It was her true grit that convinced her father to allow her go to university and as a consequence, she was able to influence the world in so many positive ways. Her final words: "Believe in yourself", struck a deep chord and the audience was then entertained by a musical feature composed especially for the occasion by an MES Cairo parent, Mr Amr Mostafa. 'Tahya Masr', was beautifully performed by Year Six Choir and the MES Cairo Staff Band.

Representing the whole Class of 2016, the Graduating student address was a highlight of the Ceremony. This speech was presented by Carol Botros (American Section Scholar), Nour Bahaa Eldin (IB Diploma Programme



Section Scholar) and Salma Osman (British Section Scholar). 'Our teachers' was theme of their brilliantly delivered address. "We will always be grateful to the many types of teachers who worked together to turn a blank canvas into the colourful Class of 2016, ready to go out into the world with so much knowledge and with so much to give. None of us could have reached graduation today without our families, teachers, and friends.

"This is dedicated to all those who have guided and so caringly led each and every one of us to the graduation stage we are standing on today..." They spoke with passion and their diction was superb, a real testimony to the excellent education they have had. It was clear in their tone that they were very proud representatives of the graduating Class. The speech was very well-received by teachers, peers and guests. Their message was one of gratitude for the past and hope for the future, along with a determined pledge to give back to their community and country as they continue on with their life-long learning journeys.

Rula Zaki performed a traditional favourite at MES Cairo graduation ceremonies; 'Helwa Ya Baladi' (by Dalida). At the end of the song, as the crowd warmly expressed their appreciation for Rula Zaki's lovely

performance, the High School Choir and MES Cairo Staff Choir sang 'Time After Time' (by Cahn and Styne). Then the MES Cairo Staff Band and the recently formed Year Six Choir joined them to perform a powerful performance of 'You Raise Me Up' (by Lovland and Groben). As the graduates and their guests listened to the beautiful sound, they watched a stirring video made up of images of the Class of 2016, and the contrast between their infant and adult photos served as a poignant reminder of how quickly time passes and of the significance of the many formative years these young people have spent together at MES Cairo.

This was followed by the Presentation of the High School Diploma and Leaving Certificates. Each graduate was proudly introduced by Ms Ghada Dajani (Managing Director) and warmly congratulated by Mrs Sawsan L Dajani (Chairman of the Board), our esteemed guest Ambassador Mervat Tallawy, Mr P T Godfrey (Board member), and the Secondary Principals. The Class of 2016 threw their graduation caps high up into the air and as they soared into the night sky the image was reminiscent of a flock of birds flying out into the unknown, united yet strongly independent.