

Mr. and Mrs. Tatsuo Watanabe Congratulate First Emirati Women Reaching Kilimanjaro Summit



Dr. Nawal Khalifa Al Hosany (left) and Ms. Ruba Yousef Al Hassan (right)
with Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe at their residence

On March 7, Mr. and Mrs. Tatsuo Watanabe, Ambassador of Japan, welcomed at their residence Dr. Nawal Khalifa Al Hosany, Associate Manger of Sustainability at Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar), and Ms. Ruba Yousef Al Hassan, Social Development Advisor at the General Secretariat of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, congratulating them on their accomplishment, as the First Emirati Women, of the adventure to reach the summit of the tallest free-standing mountain in the world, Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, on February 7, 2010.

Dr. Nawal and her closest friend Ms. Ruba enthusiastically told exiting episodes of their adventure, its impact on the way they see life and also their image towards Japan and its culture. Pointing out hardships and severe weather conditions they had to endure , Dr. Nawal and Ms. Ruba affirmed the importance of determination in overcoming challenges, as well as highlighting how they have a renewed outlook on life.

Watching the beautiful pictures of Mount Fuji in Japan in the photograph collection book presented by Mr. Watanabe, they are now inspired to set Fuji

as their next target, commenting that Japan has always been among the top of their favorite countries list and a place they are both very keen to visit.

Following is the dialogue between Dr. Nawal and Mr. & Mrs. Watanabe:

Q: What made you decide to climb Kilimanjaro in the first place?

A: Actually, it was not a conscious decision. But Ruba and I have traveled to Kenya before, and since then, we continued to talk, “Someday let’s climb Mount Kilimanjaro.” And, finally, we came to realize we won’t be able to turn our dream into reality as long as we simply dream. So, that’s how we decided. Anyway, the dream will not be a reality as long as you do not take action. Laila, Ruba’s sister, was too worried about making such an adventure, since the route we took was actually closed in 2006 after a series of tragic incidents, but anyway, we decided to step forward.



Ms. Ruba (left) and Dr. Nawal (right) in Kilimanjaro

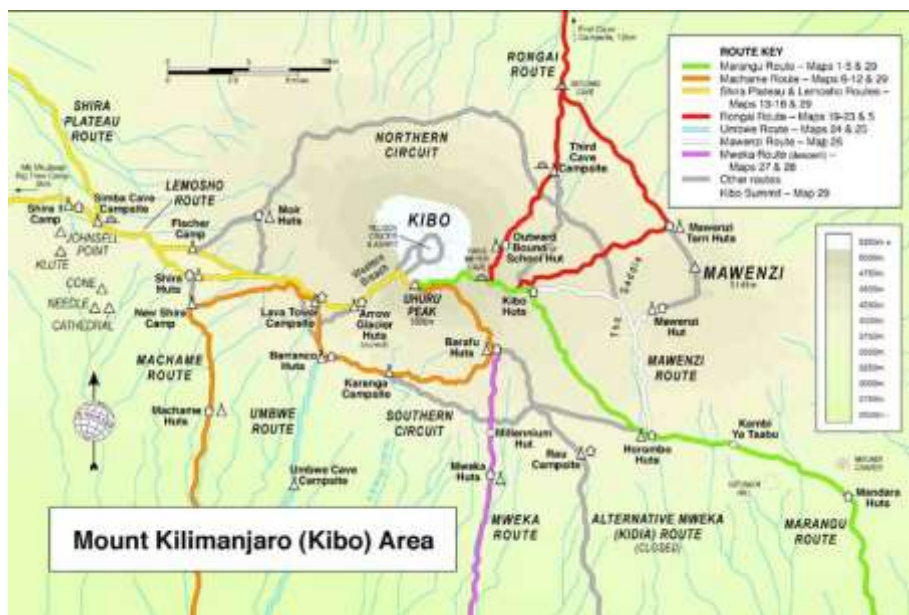
Q: How did you prepare for the climbing?

A: Since we made the decision, we have embarked on 2 to 3 hours daily exercises for around 3 months. In addition, we practiced by climbing the Green Mountain in Oman. Also we tried to have a visualization of the image of ourselves after the arrival at Kilimanjaro summit. For instance, Ruba sent to me an e-mail before we climbed Kilimanjaro, dated a day after our supposed return from the adventure detailing our wonderful experience. In this way, we were very encouraged and prepared both physically and mentally.

Q: Was there any hardships which challenged you during the adventure?

A: Of course. Our journey was full of hardships. We first arrived at Nairobi Airport, in Kenya from Dubai and then we took another flight to Tanzania to arrive at Kilimanjaro Airport, from where we started our adventure.

We climbed using the Lemosho route, which is considered the most scenic but also one of the most challenging. We spent the first night at Forest camp, and the second night at Shira 1 Camp. The third night was at Moir Hut, and the fourth and the fifth nights in Lava Tower camp. The sixth night, the freezing night, was in Arrow Glacier Camp. Our descend route was Mweka Route. We had lunch at Barafu Hut and spent the seventh night at Mweka Camp.



Routes of Kilimanjaro

From *Climb Mount KILIMANJARO* [<http://www.climbmountkilimanjaro.com>]

All the climbers should be accompanied by native registered guides. And actually, their assistance was indispensable to us. I slipped over the snow-covered steep slope three times, and I must say without kidding that I was almost on the verge of death. But thanks God, every time I slipped, my Tanzanian guide picked me up. They also carried some of our heavy equipment, and served us with foods containing rich nutrition necessary for climbers, especially those high in carbohydrates. So we are very thankful to

them.

Anyway, we were always concentrating on just surviving the cruel weather condition. We were freezing in the sub-zero temperature, sometimes reaching minus 30 degrees. In addition, it was the first time for us to have slept in a tent. We respectively slept in a small tent of one square meter size only.

Q: Please tell us any interesting episode in the climbing.

A: Before our climbing, we were amazed by beautiful birds flying over our heads. And one of our Tanzanian guides told us that each group of climbers will be followed by its own accompanying bird. At first we thought he was kidding, but after we started climbing, we found one bird (white necked raven) always following us until the last day. It gave us a sort of comfort.

In addition, some of the Tanzanian supporters were Maasai, the indigenous ethnic group in Kenya and Northern Tanzania. Our sharing the hardships with them actually gave us many insights and understanding of their unique customs, culture and traditions. That was a valuable experience for us.

Q: How was your feeling when you reached the summit?

A: And of course, the scenery from the summit was incredible. We forgot everything once we reached the signpost at the summit. And we had tears of joy thanking God for being with us during the harsh journey. By the way, it was a fun for us to have found a Japanese TV crew with a Japanese actress at the summit. For 20 days, those Japanese were experiencing and covering the Kilimanjaro diverse sceneries.

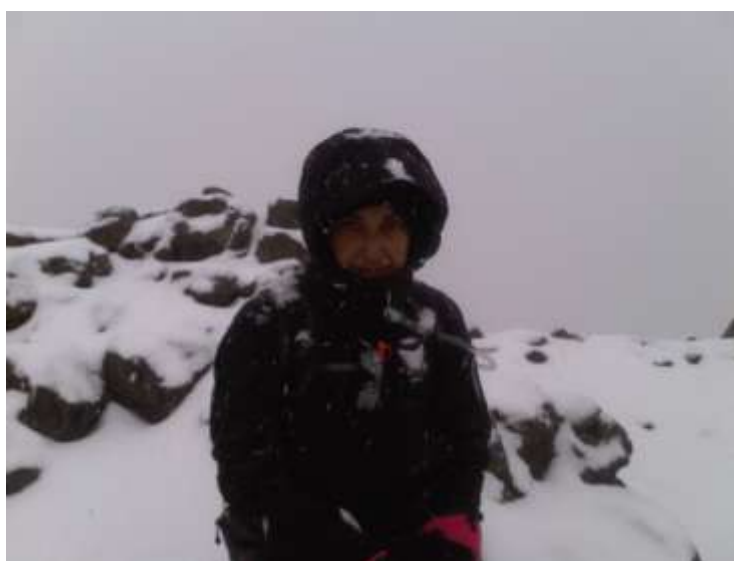
After reaching the summit, we renewed our belief that determination could help people overcome any challenges. And that is the message we would like to send to people.

Q: Did your adventure have some influence on your way of seeing the life?

A: Yes, definitely. It somehow changed our view toward work in our life. Before our adventure, work has always been occupying higher priorities than my family, friends and social life. However, after our exposure to the great nature of Kilimanjaro, we noticed that life is more than that, I mean, there is so much in the world and so much to see and experience that there must be

more to life than work. Also, it seems that we are now able to accept and cope with difficulties we face in work more easily. We are more ready to face the hardships in life and are up for any challenge.

You know, nowadays, people in the UAE are enjoying very affluent style of living, without being forced to face inconvenience and hardships in their life, to the extent that we are rarely obliged to walk. But in my opinion, depending always on such a blessed environment and life style often blinds us to the importance of endurance and challenging yourself and having the patience and determination to succeed. So in this sense, our experience in Kilimanjaro gave us a precious opportunity to rethink our way of living. We had to endure and be patient and suffered a lot during our journey. We didn't wear makeup, nor did we have electricity and water and we realized we could manage without those things and learnt an important lesson on the true value of life.



Dr. Nawal in the sub-zero temperature

Q: Now let's put aside Kilimanjaro episodes, and please tell us your opinions about Japan and its culture.

A: Last year, during the holy month of Ramadan, there was a famous TV program aired by MBC titled "Al-Khawatir", introducing Japanese culture, especially high moral standard of Japanese society. Actually, the program caused a kind of "Japanese boom" among young UAE citizens. It introduced, for example, how pupils in Japanese schools are respecting their teachers,

and vice versa. That points out the deeply-rooted custom of the respect for others in Japanese society. Since the respect for others is also regarded as one of the important elements of our Islamic culture, that's very impressive to us. We also find Japanese sincerely apologize about inconvenience they cause to others, and the act of apology itself is a respect for others.

We also learned from the program that the Japanese society pays special attention to the physically challenged persons so that they can lead their life as smoothly as possible. The roads have special signals on the surface for the blinds. In my opinion, this is quite an important point we must learn from Japan. In this regard, we would like to know more about Japanese social system and the way it encourages Japanese to keep such a high moral standard.



Dr. Nawal (left) and Ms. Ruba (right) at Kilimanjaro Summit

Q: Finally, what's the next target of your adventure?

A: We DO want to try Mount Fuji in Japan, hopefully during the coming summer season. Anyway, Japan is always among the top of our favorite countries list and the one we hope to visit soon. We love Japan and its culture. We would be happy if we could also get chances to see and participate in traditional festivals during our trip to Japan.

We are very much appreciating today's occasion and hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe and are honored by their hospitality and encouragement

of our adventures and their strong support of Emirati women's achievements.
Thank you very much.