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Throughout my life, I've looked up to my mom as she embodies a particular strength and confidence. Growing up, she emphasized the strength all women carry within. Hence, upon hearing about the creation of the Alliance for Afghan Women's Economic Resilience (AWER), I was inspired to join.

It has been an honor to be a part of the AWER team, led by the dedicated and supportive Professor Rachel Brule. It has been exciting to witness our work with AWER transform into the AWER Summit in the U.S. State Department in February 2024.

Attending the Summit alongside Professor Brule, Dean Scott Taylor, and the AWER team, was an incredibly inspiring experience. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken opened the Summit by stating that Afghanistan is losing \$1 billion a year as it restricts women from economic life. Throughout the event, we heard from U.S. government leaders, non-profit founders, academics, and private sector leaders committed to improving the social and economic status of women in Afghanistan. Focused on fostering private-public sector partnerships, the panelists discussed their own work and emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in implementing effective change.

Witnessing such collaboration on a large scale was deeply interesting. Amidst the challenges and uncertainties that face women in Afghanistan, there was a palpable sense of hope and determination—a collective resolve to enact meaningful change. Surrounded by passionate changemakers was invaluable as it provided me a glimpse into the work I hope to pursue. As a sophomore majoring in Economics and minoring in International Relations, I was particularly excited to see how my personal passion for gender equality and coursework can be translated into substantial policy and initiatives that directly impact people.

I am deeply grateful to have attended the Summit and look forward to continuing learning from and working alongside the AWER team as we continue to work to empower Afghan women in the educational, economic, and entrepreneurial spheres.