Opening of the Student Activities Center at AREC  
November 1, 2015  
Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri

Madame Dean, Members of the President's Club, friends, colleagues and faculty, students and staff of AUB, welcome to AREC on this first day of November.

We are gathered here today in Lebanon's bread bowl, to recognize an important gift by the AUB's President's Club in support of a fundamental part of our mission, that of agricultural stewardship and transformation of food safety of not only Lebanon and the Bekaa valley but of the Mediterranean basin and the Arab World at large. And the only way we will be able to transform this region and this world is through research and through strategic partnerships.

Among the most vital of those partnerships is our alliance with ICARDA, guardians of the irreplaceable Doomsday Seeds and a bastion of agricultural research and preservation in the world. ICARDA approached AUB to initiate this partnership, recognizing full well the primacy of the AUB Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, as the most progressive and productive force for these disciplines in the Arab World.

But over the last few decades, as Lebanon struggled with issues of security and statehood, AUB has taken a bit of a back seat in the region, allowing its influence to recede into the safe(r) haven of Beirut, and therefore perhaps voluntarily or subconsciously, becoming more and more the American University in Beirut, rather than of Beirut and for the world. That can no longer be the case.

If we are indeed to re-emerge as a transformative force for fair social change, for education and research and service in the Arab World, we can no longer abdicate our mission to be an agent of positive change in all aspects of Lebanon and eventually of the Arab World and the Mediterranean Basin. We must therefore seize the reins of research in this particular region, in AREC, with both hands. We cannot agree to validate research in this region if it is anything other than first rate research. We cannot acknowledge teaching if it is not of the highest, AUB caliber pedagogy. We must commit to once again using this vital, and for AUB, integral part of ourselves as a critical part of our mission, as a bridge to progress and revitalization for the university, of the economic and educational state of the people of the Bekaa, and of the nation. We must not only acknowledge and embrace Lebanon's agrarian roots, but partner with great organizations, such as ICARDA, to generate new knowledge, great education and transformative social change.
Madame Dean, Members of the President's Club, Friends, Colleagues, students, faculty and staff, we are gathered here today to open a new chapter for AUB, albeit one from an old and much revered book. A book that once more drives home the message of our great institution as a force for great good, for world class education and research, for the fulfillment of nothing less than our mission. We, who follow so many generations of great women and men of AUB, can accept no less than our charge and our responsibility to be champions for change in these perilous times, such that the peoples of Lebanon and the region can once more expect from us that we, as part of our sacred pledge, will ensure that they, like we who have found our way in the world precisely because of AUB, which for generation after generation has ensured "that they may have life and have it more abundantly."

Thank you for your generosity, for your time, and for joining us today as we celebrate this vital part of our enterprise.