

**Inauguration of the new building for the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs**  
**May 29, 2014**

**Remarks of President Peter Dorman**

Your Excellencies, Trustees, Trustee Michael Fares, members of the Fares family, Dame Zaha Hadid, AUB colleagues, dear friends

It is with enormous pleasure that I welcome you to the American University of Beirut on this very special day.

We have much to celebrate:

First, we are inaugurating the new permanent home of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, a home that exemplifies its ambitions as the leading academic think-tank for the Arab region;

Second, we are welcoming an exciting, and daring new landmark to our historic campus - the first building completed in the Middle East by one of the most celebrated and iconic architects of our time, Dame Zaha Hadid.

Finally, we want to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to this Institute's patron – one of AUB's greatest friends and supporters—His Excellency Mr. Issam Fares.

*IFI and AUB*

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century AUB's founders had in mind to build a school based on the American model of higher education. Their aspiration was to establish a beacon of learning that that would serve as a bastion for rational deliberation, scientific inquiry, and the free expression of ideas.

Now well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this core mission still defines AUB as we approach our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

- More than ever, AUB serves as a center for discourse, debate, research and collaboration in areas of special relevance to the Arab world and to the international community.

- As importantly, in these times of civil revolt and societal reinvention, AUB serves as a model for constructive civic engagement, which is the very essence of a liberal arts education.

The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs also embraces these objectives at its core. Since its founding in 2006, the IFI has quickly established itself as a pioneer of original, regionally relevant research.

Under the dynamic leadership of its Director, Rami Khoury, the IFI has brought new dimensions to the core mission of AUB in terms of knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination. It represents the best of AUB's mission by providing a vibrant, civil, and open space in which people from across the world can engage, representing a broad range of viewpoints.

The complex issues of this region—many of which are also global concerns—require a multidisciplinary approach grounded in and multiple perspectives. The IFI harnesses the policy-related research of AUB's internationally respected faculty and fosters connections with scholars, policy makers, and civil society actors throughout the Middle East and beyond.

The collaborative framework of the IFI's mission lends itself particularly well to responding to emerging issues, such as the crisis of refugees from the Syrian conflict. Other areas of focus include Climate Change and Food Security, Youth in the Arab World, Social Justice and Development, Urbanism, and Advocacy and the Formation of Public Policy.

Already highly respected throughout the region and internationally, the IFI is growing quickly in size as well as stature. Building on this foundation, the IFI has many grand plans for the future, including a Master's degree in Public Policy and International Affairs. There will also be a Fares Fellows program for outstanding researchers to spend time at AUB; post-doctoral visiting scholars, an annual regional public policy conference, "policy roundtables" that bring together scholars and policy-makers, and a scholarly journal.

This impressive new home arrived just in time. Not only will it accommodate the IFI's growing programs and activities, but it symbolizes a vibrant and even more ambitious future.

*New home / Zaha Hadid design*

Now AUB has a magnificent and dramatic new landmark on the upper campus. Just as the historic buildings nearby salute the University's origins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this striking new

home for the Issam Fares Institute will represent AUB's ambitions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This building asserts confidently that we are not a university that stays rooted in time and place—rather we challenge conventional thinking and actively promote change and new ideas.

I congratulate the original architectural design competition jurors, under the chairmanship of former AUB President John Waterbury, in selecting the exhilarating design submitted by Dame Zaha Hadid. According to one of the jurors, one of the reasons the design was chosen was because of how it “dialogues with the surroundings, how it relates to movement along the campus, its expression, and especially the quality of space with which [its architect] incorporates all aspects of the institution.”

Let me admit that the insertion of a neo-futuristic structure into a university quadrangle that many view as uniquely historic has caused much discussion, debate and controversy—but that is what a great University is for. Yet no one can deny that the new Institute brings an excitement to this Green Oval like an unexpected rush of adrenaline.

### *Issam Fares*

However scintillating the space and however ambitious the Institute's plans, none of this would have been possible without the forward-looking vision and unbounded generosity of the Institute's namesake, His Excellency Mr. Issam Michael Fares.

It is especially appropriate that this Institute bears his name, because Issam Fares is a true global citizen: a visionary and a man who has long been at the forefront of this region.

Issam Fares is a devoted son of this great country, who believes passionately in a Lebanon that is free, open, democratic, and pluralistic. As a former Deputy Prime Minister, statesman and philanthropist, he has expended great effort to assure the peace, stability, and advancement of his homeland.

In particular, Issam Fares is a great believer in the power of education to bring about greater understanding between East and West, and to help the people of Lebanon and the region rise above and triumph over the civil strife that has riddled this proud and historic part of the world.

For more than 40 years, AUB has benefitted from the generous support of Issam Fares and his family. We are proud to have the Issam Fares Institute at the forefront of our academic programs. And today, we are also very proud to inaugurate this permanent home on the Green Oval that will forever bear his name alongside the great historic names of AUB.

We also regret that Issam Fares could not be here in person today, but are honored by the presence of his son and our Trustee, Michael Fares, his wife Lara, and members of their family.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Rami Khoury, Karim Makdisi, and Nasser Yassin as well as their colleagues at the IFI including Michael Huijer and Rabih Mahmassani, specifically for their great work on the inauguration. Very special appreciation to Robert Foster, Bassem Barhoumi and Alain Eid and our dedicated staff in the Facilities Planning and Design Unit, and everyone else that has been involved in delivering this wonderful project.

Congratulations to you all.

Please join me in welcoming the Chairman of AUB's Board of Trustees, **Dr. Philip Khoury**.

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**Peter Dorman: introduction of Issam Fares's pre-recorded video message**

Thank you, Chairman Khoury.

Although it was not possible for Issam Fares to be with us today in person, but wishing to participate in this landmark event, he recorded this message for us just a few days ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen, H.E. Issam Fares.

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**Peter Dorman: introduction of Zaha Hadid**

Now I have the great pleasure of introducing the master architect behind the design of this elegant and provocative building: **Dame Zaha Hadid**.

Inspiring, controversial, breathtaking, avant-garde.... these are some of the words used to describe Zaha Hadid's creations. From the Guangzhou Opera house in China to the National Museum of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Arts in Rome, her work is seen and celebrated around the world.

Hadid has received numerous awards and honors, including being the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize, known as the “Nobel Prize of Architecture”. She has also won the prestigious Stirling Prize—not once but twice—received an honorary doctorate from AUB in 2006, and was made a Dame of the British Empire.

Born in Iraq, Hadid has spent the majority of her life in Britain, and spent a few years studying mathematics at AUB before finding her true calling at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. There she worked with architectural giants Rem Koolhaas and Elie Zenghelis and later became their colleagues. Striking out on her own in 1980, she founded Zaha Hadid Architects.

Since then, her scintillating designs have cropped up around the world, eliciting public and critical responses ranging from rapture to bewilderment. Her buildings speak to the future and embrace a new concept of urbanism. With sinuous curves and dramatic angles, they are at once other-worldly and yet very much a part of their unique physical context.

Zaha Hadid is now one of the most famous architects in the world, and for good reason. Her impact in the world of architecture and urban design is undeniable. AUB is truly honored to have her first completed building in the Middle East grace our campus.

It is also a great privilege to welcome Zaha Hadid back to our campus and we are very grateful that she was able to be rearrange her phenomenally busy schedule in order to be with us today.

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### **Peter Dorman: introduction of Rami Khoury**

The incredible achievements of the Issam Fares Institute over the past 8 years would have been possible without the vision and determination of our next speaker, Mr. Rami Khouri.

As the founding director of the Institute, Rami Khouri has been instrumental in defining the vision and scope of this burgeoning policy think-tank; recruiting a highly-qualified and vibrant team to work with him; and making the connections with people, agencies, and institutions that are critical to realizing IFI’s mission. In fact, Rami Khouri seems to know just about everyone!

Rami's inclusive managerial style and ability to juggle multiple priorities, honed from years as an executive editor at the Daily Star and editor-in-chief at the Jordan Times, have made it possible for the IFI to pursue several ambitious programs focusing on areas of particular relevance to this region.

As a Palestinian-Jordanian with U.S. citizenship and a long-time resident of Lebanon, Khouri has a truly international perspective with a profound appreciation of regional history and a deeply rooted understanding of current events in the Middle East. This has proven a vital component of his success in establishing the Issam Fares Institute as a locus of scholarly activity and policy action.

Rami Khouri is widely published in the international media and is a prominent commentator and lecturer on current events in the Middle East and North Africa and is a fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School, among others. His commitment to this region and its people is evidenced in his prolific writings as well as his charismatic leadership of the Issam Fares Institute.

Rami's work here at AUB has already made a positive impact across campus, in Lebanon, and throughout the region. He has endowed this Institute with a firm foundation and a dynamic structure which will allow the IFI to pursue its ambitious plans for the future and to thrive.

We have been enormously lucky to have Rami Khouri at the helm of the IFI for the past eight years and we look forward to continue benefiting from his expertise as he prepares to take on new and different opportunities inside and outside AUB. I take this opportunity to offer him our sincere and most grateful thanks.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Rami Khouri.

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**Peter Dorman: closing**

Thank you Rami.

This brings us to the end of our official program. I know that many of you would be interested in seeing the inside of this fantastic building. Space is limited in the building, but there will be opportunities to tour the building over the rest of the evening and during dinner.

Please join us for refreshments [gesture with right arm to side of Green Oval near IFI] and then please find your way to your seats by 7:30, when dinner will be served.

Thank you again for joining us this evening.