

**AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri**

**PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE Dialogue on YOUTH, EDUCATION, JOBS and TECHNOLOGY**

**November 30, 2018**

Mr. Vice President, (Ferid Belhaj,) esteemed colleagues and partners, dear friends,

Good afternoon.

Today we are gathered for the launch of two reports that document and reinforce a common mission and unified vision: a commitment to invest in and better enhance human capital in this region. For the past 152 years, AUB has taken upon itself not only to prepare its youth for the real world but also to arm them with knowledge and skills that qualify them to contribute innovative solutions for the world's present and future challenges while best matching those skills with labor market needs. That commitment is every bit as vital today as when the university was first founded.

At AUB, through our activities that comprise research excellence, civic responsibility, and preparation for leadership, the defining role of our institution is to invest in human capital. We recognize the importance of unleashing the potential of our youth, with people under 25 making up 60% of the population of our region. Investing in youth is therefore the key driver to economic and social growth. Through experiential, interactive, and holistic education, our students share our commitment to seize the challenges and opportunities that today's changing world offers.

AUB has been consistently ranked according to the international survey conducted by QS in the top 250 universities in the world and among the top 50 universities worldwide for the employability of our graduates. These graduates join the world's most innovative, creative, prosperous, entrepreneurial, and/or philanthropic individuals around the world.

But the world is changing. And our job is to anticipate change and prepare for it with far-sighted and sustainable solutions. Benjamin Franklin said: "When you're finished changing, you're finished." The fast spread of technology is affecting both what the world needs and how this need can be satisfied. New job roles are being created, just as many others are becoming obsolete. The World Economic Forum estimates that 33% of jobs in 2020, don't even exist yet and the consultants Mckinsey have published a report stating that 45% of all current tasks could be automated with present-day technology. Job roles are disappearing and new skillsets are required. The impact of spreading technology is touching every aspect of everyone's everyday life. With the right approach of transformative and continuous learning—mastering a growing number of new and changing fundamental skills to utilize in emerging technologies—the ultimate goal of the advancement of the human condition in the future can be attained.

At AUB, we study how the digital economy is being shaped and is shaping the future, and through our extensive STEM programs, we partner with universities within the region and beyond to build the knowledge and skills required in our shared economies of the future. We also champion the value of liberal arts and humanism in education, adding to those hard skills that are developed in

STEM with soft skills that will continue to lie at the heart of human interaction and professional service. These are writing and communication, ethics, interdisciplinary collaboration. Education must be a pathway for learners and teachers to address the big questions our societies face. These are political, economic, social, environmental, intellectual, scientific, and technological challenges that are often wrapped into each other, and cannot be tackled from just one angle. Specialization lets us address the pointed, specialized, and urgent questions of this age, but it takes a whole university united in the production and transmission of knowledge to make a lasting impact. But a humanistic, liberal arts education therefore graduates conscientious, collaborative world citizens that cater to the needs of their own and surrounding environments.

**The World Bank report 2019** looks at **the Changing Nature of Work** and the opportunities that technology bring to our region. It also looks at the degree of preparedness it requires and the resulting change in skills that employers will seek. Employees need to be innovative and adept at complex problem-solving. Governments, as partners to educators, need to adapt to this change, working to protect the vulnerable, include the excluded, and regulate all policies. And yes, as the report states: MENA countries need to invest more and better in lifelong learning opportunities outside of formal education.

This brings us to the second report being launched today: **the MENA education flagship report**. How can we, as educators and otherwise, unleash our youth's potential? The report looks at four key axes that are holding back education in the region: credentials and skills, discipline and inquiry, control and autonomy, and tradition and modernity.

It outlines a framework: "A concerted push for learning that starts early for all children regardless of background, with qualified and motivated educators, that leverages technology and uses modern approaches and monitors learning." A coordinated multi-system reform by all stakeholders, beyond the education system, has become a necessity.

At AUB, we strongly believe in collaboration and reform within and beyond the education system, within and beyond our region. We will proceed forward with our unified vision for innovation, optimal accommodation with the wave of change, and taking advantage of the digital economy that is taking over. Indeed, this has become a regional priority for economic growth and social development. And this is an institution that has never had trouble with taking calculated risks, having departed from religious instruction towards a secular, liberal arts education, having admitted women almost half a century before the finer universities of the West did, and having adapted into an engine for transformative societal change through two world wars, the Lebanese Civil war and the Palestinian and Syrian tragedies. We have produced change makers and job creators for many generations, and we will adapt carefully but vigorously in order to do so for another 150 years or longer.

It gives me great pleasure to see our valued faculty and dear alumni contributing to the fundamental discussions that will take place today. I look forward to reading the outcome and to working together on joint initiatives that advance our region and world into a better tomorrow. Thank you.