

## **AUB launches Landscape Architecture as new profession in Lebanon and Arab World** Wednesday, October 27, 2010

The Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management at the American University of Beirut launched the first initiative in Lebanon and the region to formalize the profession of landscape architecture as a new and independent profession. The University organized Beirut Landscape Symposium 2010 on October 22-23, 2010 under the auspices of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) and the European Federation of Landscape Architects (EFLA) and with financial support from Solidere.



“The symposium was a necessary first step to seek professional recognition at the national, regional, and international levels through the collaboration of different partners to secure best practice codes and quality professional services,” said Jala Makhzoumi, AUB professor of landscape architecture.

The 40 participants who joined the two-day symposium included academics, practicing professionals, representatives of the landscape horticulture industry, students, and delegates from neighboring countries, Europe, Canada, and the USA.

The symposium sought the formal recognition of landscape architecture as a new profession in Lebanon and the Arab World; although the field’s potential contribution to healthy and sustainable living environments has often been overlooked.

The serene setting of the AUB campus in the Beqa’a provided an ideal and inspiring venue for heated discussions that focused on a number of themes. Regional determinants guiding landscape architecture both as a practice and academic discipline were discussed.

Discussions also centered on how the absence of quality contractors for implementation and management of landscapes may impact results, and how the industry continues to import concepts and material while disregarding context and local needs. The participants discussed steps to ensuring state and international recognition by establishing the Lebanese Association of Landscape Architecture and applying for membership to the IFLA.

Desiree Martinez, IFLA president, and Nigel Thorn, EFLA president, confirmed their support and eagerness for recognition of the profession in the Arab Middle East.

“All over the world landscape architects are struggling to be recognized professionally and independently from gardening, agriculture, and architecture,” said Martinez. “I emphasize the importance and benefits for your country of landscape architecture, for example environmental improvement, social wellbeing and in protecting your cultural and natural heritage.”

“Landscape architecture affects the lives of everyone in every country. The drive and passion and enthusiasm that has been evident throughout this symposium we hope will ensure a platform for a much enhanced future for the landscape architecture profession within Lebanon and across the Arab World,” added Thorn.