

For Immediate Release



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## **AUB launches the Non-Governmental Organizations Initiative (NGOi)**

The Global Health Institute (GHI) and the office of Regional External Programs (REP) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) launched the Non-Governmental Organizations Initiative (NGOi) in an effort to empower the NGO sector in Lebanon, considered amongst the most vibrant in the Middle East.

“More than 10,000 NGOs operate in Lebanon, playing a key role in different fields. Despite the variety in these NGOs' size, scope of operation, and structure, it remains our responsibility to ensure that, irrespective of this variability, these NGOs are operating in alignment with a minimum level of organizational and operational standards. This would help the whole sector further gain credibility and recognition from beneficiaries, governments, donors, and international community," said Dr. Shadi Saleh, founding director of GHI.

Launched by AUB, the NGOi is the first-of-its-kind initiative in the Middle East region. It aims at being the regional hub for NGO sector certification, development, and knowledge exchange. The initiative comes as a response to an urgent need arising as Lebanon houses the largest number of NGOs relative to its population size, estimated to exceed 10,000 NGOs.

The launching event, which featured Minister of Interior and Municipalities Raya El Hassan as keynote speaker, brought together representatives from the government and embassies in Lebanon, AUB's leadership, and NGOs, and offered a platform for further exchange and collaboration.

“The NGOi that is being launched is an effort that I support fully," said Minister El Hassan in a video message where she emphasized that opening the Ministry of Interior's doors to civil society organizations in Lebanon is one of her top priorities. “I stand behind AUB's effort to build the institutional capacity of NGOs and to provide a conducive platform for the sharing of best practices and resources ... This institution is dear to my heart and I would like to support it and other educational institutions of its caliber during my tenure as minister of interior and municipalities. Thank you Dr. Fadlo Khuri for being such a great inspiration to AUB students, its

faculty, and its alumni body." A comprehensive message of support and proposed collaboration was presented on behalf of the minister by advisor Karim Majdalani, who was delegated to represent the minister and engage with the NGOs.

The launching ceremony was followed by an overview of the four services currently offered to the NGO community by the NGOi: organizational certification, training and capacity building, a knowledge resource center, and a convening platform.

"For the past 43 years, AUB has had a positive impact on educational, health, agricultural, business, and governmental institutions in the region via the REP office. The NGO Initiative is yet another way that we are making impact and outreach beyond AUB's walls and academia," stated Dr. Hassan Diab, vice president for REP.

"AUB has long played a role beyond its core academic mission, our mission is not just to be transformative for AUB, but for Lebanon and the region," said AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri. "To do that, we have to work directly with communities in Lebanon and the region to enhance wellbeing ... This is where we see our university, we would like to make this a comfortable, fair, open, and inclusive forum for NGOs to meet, share knowledge, share issues, and discuss relevant matters ... It is important for us to reach out, in order for us to rise up."

**ENDS**

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**Note to Editors**

### **About AUB**

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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