

For Immediate Release



## **AUB delegates at COP21 welcome landmark climate accord**

Beirut, Lebanon- 16/12/2015 - A historic agreement to combat climate change and unleash action and investment towards a low carbon, resilient and sustainable future was committed to by all 195 signatories to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris on Saturday, 12 December, 2015. A team from AUB was on the ground as the accord setting new direction to global effort was announced.

For the sixth year, AUB, represented by the Issam Fares Institute (IFI) for Public Policy and International Affairs, continues to participate in the shaping and implementation of international policy on climate change. Academics from AUB attended the world conference and continue to provide the Lebanese government with research papers, analyses, and recommendations post their observations of the conference proceedings.

As part of the Lebanese delegation to the Conference of the Parties' Twenty-first session (COP21) held in Paris November 30 - December 11, 2015, a team from IFI's Climate Change and Environment Program provided research and support, in addition to tracking negotiation and communicating analyses to AUB and the Lebanese community on the various key elements in preparation for and during COP21. Representing the IFI team was Faculty Research Director of the Climate Change and Environment Program, Dr. Nadim Farajalla, and the Program's Senior Program Coordinator, Mrs. Rana El Hajj.

Giving us first-hand observations, Dr. Nadim Farajalla describes the tension reached as deadlines for a draft declaration were repeatedly pushed back at the conference.

"We started to scale down our expectations; people were saying we're not going to get a deal this time either, it was a sense of déjà vu from previous inconclusive conferences and you can imagine the disappointment we were feeling."

Saturday afternoon, a turn of events offered a pleasant surprise. The delegates started to hear of a possible outcome. Sure enough, the draft was out at 3:00 pm. "We got the draft and started going through it like crazy to see if it was going to be a meaningful agreement on climate change. As we read we realized that it in fact looked better than expected, things were not as watered down as we expected. It was not as airtight as it could possibly be - without any wiggle room for the rich countries - but the key thing was that at least it was an agreement and we were happy," said Farajalla.

President of COP21 Laurent Fabius announced that the Paris climate accord had been accepted. A historical moment and a scene that sticks to the mind. "That gavel was down. We were so happy and relieved. The Lebanese delegation was all cheering and people were hugging one another."

Farajalla explains that the accord is especially good for Lebanon and other small countries who will get more than initially expected for adaptation: Better funding is allocated to capacitate Lebanon to adapt to future changes in climate, switch to renewable energy, change crop growth locations, and other environment-friendly action.

“On the way back home to Beirut, the more we thought about the accord, the more content we became about it,” said Farajalla. “We had members of the private sector on our delegation too, one whose carbon trading business went bust after the downturn. Now with this accord he will be able to restart his business. In other words there is something for everyone - not everyone got everything they wanted - but everyone got something.” Lebanon submitted its climate action plan to the UNFCCC ahead of the new universal climate change agreement. Despite its low share of global emissions (0.07%), Lebanon plans to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% conditional to the provision of international support and by as much as 15% unconditionally, both by 2030.

AUB, represented by IFI’s climate change and environment program, has an observer status to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change. On top of that, AUB has, since the Copenhagen COP15 held in 2009, been participating in the negotiations as part of the official Lebanese delegation as both IFI and the Ministry of Environment realize the important role that policy and research institutes such as IFI play in providing support to the Lebanese team.

“It is part of IFI’s mandate as a policy institute to bridge between research and policy, researchers and policy makers,” Mrs. Rana El Hajj told us. “It is important for IFI to closely observe negotiation proceedings such as those of COP21 and their outcome results to be able to align its research agenda to the current global interests and the arising national need to join such agreements.”

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 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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