

For Immediate Release



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## **AUB Goes Solar for Clean and Economical Energy**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) has launched its first Photovoltaic Power Plant to mitigate the high environmental and economic costs of electricity generation through combustion of diesel. Starting with a solar panel system that is now operational over on building rooftops of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (FEA), the University intends to extend this project over the entire campus to effect large savings in operating costs and CO2 emissions.

Solar energy has come to the fore as the energy source that offers the best chance of solving the climate change problem. Through this project and subsequent phases, AUB will be contributing to the fulfillment of the national commitment of having 12% of Lebanon's electricity generated from renewable resources by 2020. The global COP21 climate conference held in Paris last year emphasized the solar role in the transition away from the current carbon-intensive energy system. This urged swift action by the solar industry and the photovoltaic system has increasingly become a desirable option.

The Photovoltaic system (or PV system) converts sunlight directly into electricity through photovoltaic modules. The system is made up of a multitude of solar modules or panels that are mounted on support structures and interconnected together to form the direct current bus. These feed into an electronic inverter that injects the generated power into the electrical distribution network. AUB adopted a grid connectable system that eliminates the need to use batteries for storage.

A team from AUB's Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, led by Assistant to the Dean for Laboratories and Facilities Mohamad Khaled Joujou, assisted the UNDP CEDRO project in setting up 474 PV modules each generating a peak power of 315 watts, covering an area of 1,500 m<sup>2</sup>. The installation is split over the roofs of Bechtel Building and the CCC Scientific Research Building on the University campus.

“The ultimate goal is to cover the whole campus with an estimated area of 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of PV power generation. AUB buildings and carparks offer a lot of space that can be utilized for this

purpose. This promises potential savings in power consumption and CO2 emissions,” Joujou said.

“For almost two decades now, concepts relating to energy sustainability have been integrated in our curriculum at FEA, and the number of relevant courses and programs has been on the rise,” said Dean of FEA Makram Suidan. The faculty has been remodeling its buildings to enhance energy conservation through a number of measures including energy efficient lighting, double glazing of windows, better insulation, motion sensors, LEED certification for energy-efficient design, and the latest PV plant installation on their roofs.

“Solar PV energy should be regarded as an important part of the University’s, and in fact the country’s energy mix. Shifting towards cleaner technologies is becoming a win-win alternative, since it generates cheaper and at the same time cleaner power,” added Dean Suidan.

The inaugurated panel system was funded by the European Union’s ENPI CBC Mediterranean Seas Basin MEDSOLAR project (covering 85% of total cost), the FEA, and a local NGO called MONEERA, a non-profit NGO that aims to build small scale clean power generation and transmission facilities to serve rural power users in Lebanon.

“This is the first PV power plant in AUB and until now it is the largest project of its kind in an academic institution in Lebanon,” said Chair of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department Farid Chaaban.

The launching ceremony was attended by President Fadlo Khuri; Minister of Agriculture and Chair of Environment Parliamentary Committee Akram Chehayeb; representative of the Ministry of Energy and Water Pierre Khoury; representatives from the Delegation of the European Union in Lebanon, the UNDP, and NGOs; in addition to senior AUB administration, faculty, staff, and students.

“In the next few years and decades we will see the reconstruction of major societies in our part of the world,” said President Fadlo Khuri at the inauguration, “but this is contingent upon our being resourceful and responsible stewards of the environment.”

AUB President Dr. Fadlo R .Khuri called for a public-private-academic partnership that will put in action “remarkably entrepreneurial and progressive ideas” that were considered by the Lebanese government as early as the 1960s for efficient utilization of resources such as electricity, water, and agriculture but not implemented due to the war.

“The opportunity is now to start to implement these ideas ... The primary driver of our agenda as an administration is to have a more intellectually, economically, and environmentally sustainable

AUB. We have to be, not just good citizens, but leaders in the stewardship of our resources and the national resources. This is a small but very significant first step,” he added.

In an effort to secure more funds to expand the Photovoltaic system at AUB, a fund raising campaign will soon be launched that offers the naming of full roofs or single PV panels after their sponsors. The audience was shown the designs of other roofs on campus that could accommodate further PV panels.

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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 130 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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