

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 6-5-2016

Announcing AUB campus a botanical garden

Khuri: "In line with our strategic and academic plan"

In a unique event reflecting its commitment to environmental causes and to the preservation of green spaces within its campus, the American University of Beirut (AUB) has announced that its campus was now designated a permanent botanical garden. The announcement was made at a special ceremony in West Hall on campus.

The ceremony was attended by AUB President Dr. Fadlo Khuri and Acting Assistant Provost Dr. Hala Muhtaseb. Also present was Founding Chair of AUBotanic Dr. Salma Talhouk, Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications Martin Asser, Special Advisor to the President for Protocol and External Relations Ibrahim Khoury, and Director of News and Media Relations Simon Kachar. Also present were speakers who were specially invited for the ceremony, and a large number of dignitaries, university professors, staff, students and concerned individuals.

Project Coordinator Maya Melhem was first to speak at the ceremony. She was followed by Dr. Salma Talhouk who said: “We announce today that the American University of Beirut is hereby designated a botanical garden. This comes along with our celebration this year of AUB’s 150th anniversary. Thus, our initiative will be a historic milestone and will reflect in the future our environmental sense of commitment”.

She added: “By botanical garden, we mean that from now on everybody will have the opportunity to visit the university and observe its plants, and learn of their importance for our well-being”.

Dr. Talhouk continued: “AUB is considered among the most attractive universities in the world, and with this initiative, it will become an inspiration for a better future. By designating AUB as a botanical garden we join a number of leading universities in the world that have been involved in similar efforts to encourage ecology and sustainability”.

Dr. Talhouk pointed out that there are more than 2,500 botanical gardens in 165 countries around the world, adding: “We are planning for a botanical garden because we are working for a peaceful future, and we want to be a role model for Arab countries; they have the fewest number of botanical gardens in the world”.

She concluded: “This launching ceremony is but the beginning of a long process where we will be looking to help each of you and double the impact of our efforts to spread botanical awareness all over Lebanon, the Middle East and the world”.

Dr. Talhouk was followed by experts in the field. Dr. Tony Miller, Director of the Centre for Middle Eastern Plants at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh (RBGE), focused in his address on how botanical gardens serve man and nature and on the novelty in AUB's decision to convert its campus to a botanical garden. He said this is very important in the center of a bustling capital. Dr. Miller had worked on similar projects in Tehran, the Gulf States and Kabul. Dr. Nayla Akel spoke next, addressing the impact of green roofs on the AUB Botanical garden project. Dr. Yasser Abu Al-Nasr spoke on how to provide the Botanical garden with ecosystems services. Dr. Maria Abu Al-Nasr talked about AUB's position and future role as a model botanical garden. Dr. Tamer Amin spoke about the educational opportunities that will result from this project. Dr. Jala Makhzoumi spoke on how to match the botanical garden within the context of the overall landscape of the university.

President Fadlo Khuri said that this was a great occasion for AUB. He added: "Our University deserves to be a protected garden for all peoples of the region. He said this this event was unique as AUB is embarking on a new master plan for its campus, along with a strategic academic plan". He asserted: "We are not in the process of changing any of the heritage of this wonderful campus; on the contrary, we are strengthening its academic mission to go along with nature". He said AUB is a continuation of the ambitions of all the sons of Beirut, Lebanon and the region and concluded by announcing officially that the AUB Campus is now a botanical garden.

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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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