

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 7-11-2017

Top universities collaborate with AUB **to tackle refugee crisis**

Scholars from 21 prominent universities around the world came to the American University of Beirut (AUB) for the fourth conference of the Alliance of Lead Universities on Migration (ALUM) to address the issue of “Universities Responding to the Refugee Crisis.”

The aim of this two-day conference was to deliberate on the challenges facing refugees—including health and wellbeing, job creation, and access to education—and how universities can ameliorate the situation of refugees by providing realistic, innovative ideas and policy proposals. The conference was organized by the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at AUB and the Institute of Global Affairs at the London School of Economics (LSE), under the ALUM network umbrella.

ALUM was created in 2015 among top universities in Europe to help bridge the gap between research and policy in the management of the current migrant and refugee crisis. Nasser Yassin, director of research at IFI and a professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), helped open the conference and explained that AUB joined the ALUM network last year after convincing the members that “this is where refugee issues are happening.”

Dr. Yassin also explained that one of the major outputs of this conference would be the “Beirut Declaration” which will be drafted by a team of ALUM members that will provide a blueprint for how universities can and should respond to the refugee and migration crises.

As one of the conference organizers, Dr. Erik Berglof, director of the LSE Institute of Global Affairs, talked about the concept behind ALUM as well as a new collaborative partnership called Universities Without Borders.

“Not only do we want to be activists and be out there, and try to have an impact, but we also want to learn about how best to do this,” explained Berglof. “We want to combine activism and research into what we call ‘activist research’ and this is very much the spirit of the ALUM network but it is also the spirit of Universities Without Borders.”

Representing AUB, Provost Mohamed Harajli said that AUB has adopted a “whole university” approach to address the refugee crisis, with 72 projects across all units, brought together under the #AUB4Refugees Initiative. He also addressed the responsibility of universities to make higher education accessible to disadvantaged communities.

“We want to make sure that any member of the refugee community, regardless of their financial status, is able to enter AUB,” declared Harajli. “Our graduates’ positive impact echoes for years within their societies; hence we believe that education is the best investment for the betterment of humanity.”

Mireille Girard, representative for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon, talked at the opening ceremony about the important work that universities are doing in helping to shape refugee policies.

“Universities of Lebanon have always played a critical role in the advancing of policies and the development of doctrine,” explained Girard. “These are very critical contributions in response to crises in the world, and this role is not going to end. If anything, it will gain in magnitude as we move forward.”

The conference involved back-to-back sessions over two days with researchers from Europe, North America, and the Middle East as well as governmental officials, business leaders, and representatives from major NGOs. The agenda also included two roundtables: one exploring the role of academics in terms of advocacy and influencing policy, and another on how the private sector can contribute to addressing the refugee crisis.

During the first day of the conference, #AUB4Refugees was trending in Lebanon with tweets such as:

FAS Dean Nuwayhid: Our agenda carries an activist component. We try to diffuse it to students and reflect it in our research #AUB4Refugees <https://t.co/9Tsh2BGtzT> .

In addition to Dean Nuwayhid, keynote speeches were given by Professor Marek Belka, former prime minister and finance minister of Poland, and Dr. Francisco Marmolejo, tertiary education global coordinator and lead tertiary education specialist of the World Bank.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: 03427024 Office: 01374374 Ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

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.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>
Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon