

For Immediate Release



## **Announcing the Sheikh Khaldoun Bakri Barakat-Ibsar Research Fund for interdisciplinary research in the natural and social sciences**

Beirut, Lebanon- 12/01/2011 - Sheikh Khaldoun Bakri Barakat, a long-time funder of AUB's extra faculty programs, has announced the establishment of the Sheikh Barakat Research Fund for interdisciplinary research in the natural and social sciences. Due to this fund a memorandum of understanding based on research collaboration was established between the University of Bangor, Wales and AUB.

The fund will bolster AUB's social and environmental research capacity and provide support to its nature conservation center, Ibsar.

Through the fund, Sheikh Barakat supplied research support for Arbi Sarkissian, a PhD candidate and former Ibsar intern, who is conducting a thesis on human-environmental relationships.

Sarkissian will explore how institutions use social, political, and economic frameworks to manage natural resources by analyzing several restoration projects in Lebanon.

Sarkissian's research is being supervised by Professor of Environmental Economy Neal Hockley and Professor of Policy and Development Studies Amin Kamete at Bangor University's School of the Environment, Natural Resource Management and Geography (SENRGY) in Wales, UK, and Professor Salma Talhouk, chair of the Landscape Design and Ecosystems Management Department at AUB's Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences.

Sheikh Barakat's prior support for AUB-Ibsar's "Seeds of Hope, Trees for Tomorrow" campaign sustained the center's Power of Planting program that is restoring biodiversity through native tree planting throughout Lebanon.

The businessman's first donation to Ibsar came in 2008 and enabled the center to install a greenhouse at the newly established native tree nursery at AREC (AUB's Agricultural Research and Education Center), in the West Bekaa. In addition, the money allowed Ibsar to publish a series of promotional and educational materials including "Seeds of Hope" seed planting manuals and biodiversity awareness flyers that were distributed to Beirut schools and rural communities throughout Lebanon.

His gift also supported Ibsar's campaign to plant over 3,000 seedlings in a dozen municipalities within the Al-Shouf Biosphere Reserve.

In addition to his financial generosity, Sheikh Barakat also supported Ibsar by making a surprise visit to participate in its annual fundraising auction in April 2010. His participation bolstered the center's fundraising efforts to continue planting native trees with partnering communities.

Sheikh Barakat has demonstrated his deep commitment to Ibsar's "Power of Planting" program, becoming an important champion of AUB's efforts to preserve Lebanon's natural and cultural heritage.

Research support from private philanthropists such as Sheikh Barakat is especially critical in the region due to very limited government funding. It is their largesse that enables promising young academics such as Sarkissian to conduct cutting-edge research that benefits local and regional communities.

ENDS

**For more information please contact:**

Maha Al-Azar, Assistant Director for Media Relations, [ma110@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ma110@aub.edu.lb), 01-353 228

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 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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](http://www.aub.edu.lb)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: [http://twitter.com/AUB\\_Lebanon](http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon)