Launch Ceremony of the book
‘Public Health in the Arab World’ – Cambridge University Press March 2012
American University of Beirut – 15 May 2012

Speech by Dr. Peter Dorman
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Your excellency, Prime Minister Mikati, and distinguished guests.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this launching celebration for the book, Public Health in the Arab World, which we are honored to be holding under the patronage of Prime Minister Mikati.

AUB was founded on the principle of serving the people of this country and the region. In reviewing our strategic goals for the coming decade, we are revisiting this broad concept to understand what this means to us in a modern context.
Some things have not changed: we still strive to provide broad access to unparalleled undergraduate education in the American liberal arts tradition, coupled with technical and professional education to prepare our graduates for successful careers.

Since the founding of our hospital and medical school, we added to this the goal of providing the highest level of patient care and medical education. As AUB has grown and expanded, graduate education and research have also come to the fore.

Public health received deserved emphasis with the founding of the School of Public Health in 1954 – later renamed the Faculty of Health Sciences – which quickly established itself as one of the most visible and influential academic institutions of public health in the region.

The Faculty of Health Sciences has a remarkable track record of leadership and innovation in this field, and has achieved this through a unique model of networking, collaboration, and partnership with regional institutions and colleagues. This tradition of success can be attributed to two main factors:

First its institutional structure: Upon its founding 58 years ago, FHS was the first independent and stand-alone school of public health in the region and remains one of few such schools today. This model is at the core of its success in promoting high standards of academic public health. This Faculty has shown an impressive capacity to produce high-quality research, attract international research funding, promote public health practice, and develop renowned educational programs. As many of you know, FHS’ Graduate Public Health Program was the first program outside the Americas to receive accreditation by the US-based Council on Education in Public Health.

The second factor is leadership. Over the past 15 years, two outstanding scholars and leaders, Professor Huda Zurayk and Professor Iman Nuwayhid, have been at the helm of
this institution. As we heard in the introductions, both of them played a key role in this effort and I thank them on behalf of AUB for their vision and leadership.

Going back to AUB’s core mission, one important way that we can serve the people of Lebanon and the Arab World is by generating regionally impactful research. Public Health in the Arab World is a prime example of what we want to be doing and, indeed, what we do best in terms of producing research that speaks to the challenges of the region and attempts to address realizable solutions.

With over 500 pages and 38 chapters, this is the largest volume of its kind in the history of public health in the region and certainly the most ambitious effort to be led by a university in Lebanon. Both interdisciplinary and collaborative, this book is informative for academics, public health professionals, policy makers, and general scholars of the region. Ultimately, this is why we believe it will be so effective and influential.

Another important part of our mission concerns the values that we implicitly and explicitly project in terms of critical thinking, engaging in constructive dialogue, and serving the greater good. This university, and particularly the Faculty of Health Sciences, has long shown a commitment to the causes of social justice and the rights of all people to health and wellbeing, basic human dignity, and a safe living environment. Many of the chapters in this book address important challenges and concerns related to these basic human rights.

I am very proud that the editors have donated all royalties from the sale of this book to purchase copies to be distributed for free to students and institutions of public health in the Arab World.

My congratulations and thanks to all of the contributors and my special thanks to the editors—Iman Nuwayhid, Marwan Khawaja, Rita Giacaman, and lead editor Samer
Jabbour— for their dedicated stewardship of this impressive four-year effort and for working so hard to bring this important project to fruition.