Opening Speech of His Excellency Dr. Salim El Hoss at the “Research in Developing Countries” Conference:

“It is indeed a great pleasure to be asked to open this Conference held in collaboration with The Dasman diabetes institute and the Nuffield Council for Bioethics which addresses the topic of Research in Developing Countries.

To begin with, this conference is held under the kind patronage of a very dear friend, Mr. Abdullatif Al Hamad whose distinguished character, ethicality and generosity are incomparable. I thus take the opportunity to greet you, Abdullatif, and thank you for being the leading supporter of this conference in general and most importantly of the Bioethics and Professionalism Program at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine and Medical center in particular. A program designed to serve the entire Middle East Region and with which I was given the honor to associate my name.

I have also been following closely on the activities of the SHBPP and would like to take the opportunity and share with all of you that, while the SHBPP was launched in April 2010, it has offered, to date, 9 National Conferences, 3 National Workshops, 6 Regional Conferences (this being the 6th) and 44 Ethics Matters lectures by internationally renowned speakers. I understand the 44th lecture will be held at the Dasman Diabetes Institute. All this is in addition to its clinical ethics services that are impacting patient care, its educational reform in medical education, its role in transplant and research ethics committees, its launching of the humanism and professionalism award, to name but a few.

Research in Developing Countries is a topic that is particularly important to me because when we speak of research we are speaking of the research participant who can easily be used as a means to an end if the research is not ethically sound and we all know how easily corruption can make its way to research for purposes other than serving the best interest of the people. Bioethics is viewed as a discipline needed to immunize the medical profession against human frailties, as it endows it with the means to observe the dicta of moral standards, ensuring a healthy confluence between fine professional practice and responsible social awareness.

I am confident that it will not be long before there will be similar creditable initiatives in other domains: in marketing, in industrial research and expertise, in agricultural entrepreneurship and labor, in tourist ventures, in banking and financial concerns, and in parallel professions like law, engineering, and pharmacology. Life on this planet would
certainly be happier and more flourishing if and when standards of professional ethics are propagated to embrace all walks of life, if and when communities come to be guided in their economic and political pursuits by explicit codes of ethics and moral standards. Medical ethics serve to draw the line between one’s being a credit to his profession and thence to his community, and being a drag on his profession and thence on his society.

Last but not least, this Regional conference which UNITES people from all over the Arab World led by a common cause (the ethics of research in developing countries) independent of any political intervention, of any political bias, joined by the mere fact of their being Arabs thinking together to make matters better is for me one way of actualizing a dream dear to my heart, a lifelong desire of having one United Arab Nation devoid of personal prejudices and joint by virtue of a common language, cause and proud history.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our visitors and professionals from the UK and the US for being with us at this conference and for sharing their expertise on a topic that is still bourgeoning in this area of the world. I also seize this occasion to thank my friends Abdullatif and Talia for having participated in actualizing my dream, albeit partially.

I wish you all a successful and productive conference.”