Opening Word of Dr. Thalia Arawi at the “Research in Developing Countries” conference:

“Mr. Abdul Latif Al Hamad, Mrs. Hoss (representing HE Dr. Salim El Hoss), Dr. Bahbehani, Colleagues and friends:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program’s 6th Regional Conference, which is held in collaboration with the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, the Dasman Diabites Institute and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics.

The SHBPP is an interdisciplinary resource for faculty, students, and healthcare providers who are involved in bioethics education, research, or consultation in Lebanon and the region. Launched in April 2010, it is the first targeted initiative in the Arab world that strives to educate, research, and champion issues related to professionalism and bioethics. Thus, the SHBPP aims at enhancing public awareness and understanding as well as scholarly work on contemporary issues related to bioethics and professionalism. It promotes and encourages the development of the requisite skills, attitudes, and behaviors among those who practice medicine on issues such as end of life care, stem cell research, medical economics, health administration, law and policy, and ethics and research. It supports education, research, and community outreach-focused on AUB in particular, but including also Lebanon and the region.

Research that involves human subjects or participants raises unique and complex ethical, legal, social and political issues, to mention but a few, especially when we are talking about research in developing countries. It will be naïve to claim that we can cover and discuss all the complex issues that might arise from these in two days. However, we are proud to say that just as science, medicine and art have started with the Arabs such as Al Razi who was a medical researcher, Al Zahrawi, a surgeon, Ibn Sina and Ibn Al Nafis, physicians, Jaber Ibn Hayyan, an Alchemist, etc, we would like to see research ethics develop from within the Arab circles as well. This is one of the main aims of this conference which unites the minds of different professionals from different regions of the neighboring Arab world with the kind cooperation of our colleagues from the West.
We are going through a time of profound change in our understanding of ethics as it is applied to research. As rapid developments in technology leave traces on our history, we cannot but keep in mind a number of key phrases that describe the system of ethical protection that the contemporary social and medical research establishments have created to try to better safeguard the rights of their research participants. Some crucial principles resonate: voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, autonomy, justice, safeguarding the confidentiality of data, and others, and yet, producing good quality research. These principles are not mere nebulous concepts, rather, they ought to be respected and applied for the service of humanity. Arabs have always been the pioneers in many fields, it is my belief that nothing stands in our way to be pioneers in bioethics as well, particularly now that the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program is dedicated to launching the first Arab Bioethics Society of which you will soon hear. I wish us all the best of luck as well as a fruitful and enjoyable conference!”