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**The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at AUB
Launches Research Report: *Towards a Productive 'New' Lebanon***

On March 10, 2025, the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted the official launch and discussion of "*Towards a Productive 'New' Lebanon*", a research report co-authored by Dr. Amer Bisat, newly appointed Lebanese minister of economy and trade, and Dr. Ishac Diwan, economics professor at AUB.

Dr. Joseph Bahout, IFI director, introduced the report and explained that the idea was born in 2021, and was led by now Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, with a group of experts, academics, and practitioners, following the 2019 public upheavals, to discuss what could be done one day "if the country had the chance to be on the right track." Now is the right time to publish the paper, he said, and debate what a productive economy could look like, but also discuss what Lebanon's economy as a whole should be. He added that this discussion represents what IFI's role is, "translating knowledge production, research and expertise into policy recommendations."

IFI Communications Manager Marina Chamma, who moderated the session, noted that "it was refreshing to talk of a productive economy when for decades, Lebanon's economy was characterized as a rentier economy and people made to believe it was a miracle economy, a myth that collapsed in 2019."

Dr. Diwan, co-author of the report, provided a detailed overview of its basis, sourced from a series of workshop panels tackling: Lebanon's comparative advantages; entrepreneurship, innovation and social impact; promising business models in traditional areas; agriculture, environment and agro-business; as well as transition and sustainability. With the recognition that the post-civil war economic model was dead, future prosperity "can only be achieved through production and export of goods and services," he noted, leading to an economy that is more sustainable, socially, environmentally, and financially.

Minister Bisat, co-author of the report, noted that there was a real opportunity today to turn this research paper from wishful thinking to a potential actual work plan of Lebanon's new cabinet. Bisat believed that with a new president and government, as well as a population that has converged on the idea that we need to move forward, Lebanon "is ripe for explosive growth." The

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economy should be driven by value-added production, not rent-seeking, “built on strong macro foundations,” he said. “We want to grow with an economy where inflation is low, where the government is disciplined, and where the balance of payments is covered.”

Putting sectoral reform – including power, telecommunications and infrastructure – on the right track will be the “ignition that starts the economy,” Bisat asserted, which will go hand in hand with strengthening the role of the government and its institutions, to improve regulation, and ensure markets are working properly. “The government is an important part of any growth model,” Bisat said, and trust must be resuscitated in the government for it to play its part in economic growth.

The full research report can be found on [IFI's website](#), along with the recording of the event on the [institute's YouTube channel](#). An Arabic translation of the report will also be available soon.

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Note to Editors

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