

For Immediate Release



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## **AUB hosts Multi-Stakeholder SDG Forum**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted the Multi-Stakeholder SDG Forum, organized by the Global Compact Network Lebanon (GCNL) to create a platform for discussing key issues related to sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Lebanon.

The vision of GCNL is “an engaged Lebanese community that advances sustainability practices nation-wide”. Its mission is to “encourage participants to mainstream the United Nations Global Compact’s Ten Principles in their daily activities and report on their implementation”, and to “mobilize businesses, civil society organizations, and local authorities to work together towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda.”

The forum began with the Lebanese National Anthem, and then the opening session in which the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development at the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business at AUB and the National Representative of GCNL, Dr. Dima Jamali, welcomed everyone to the forum.

After that, President of the American University of Beirut, Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri addressed the audience with his speech saying: “We at this university are true believers in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its importance for Lebanon and the Arab world, as a core component of our own 2030 strategic plan is sustainability.”

He added: “I believe that dialogue is the path forward, such that the challenges of sustainable development which seem so colossal today can be overcome. We must work together—academic institutions, public and private sectors, civil society, and the younger generation.” Khuri then said, “that is really the only way we can advance the 2030 agenda here, if the burden is genuinely shared by all, with common conversation towards a truly shared mission and vision.”

Dean of the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business at AUB Dr. Steve Harvey spoke in his turn saying: “The network has as its vision an engaged Lebanese community that advances

sustainability practices nationwide. By the numbers, we can see that in the two years of its existence, it has been successful. It's been impressive and promising, in fact. Impressive in that 135 partners have joined the network and for a country the size of Lebanon that is an extremely good start. And promising in that many of these partners have had an enormous impact already in the areas in which they have committed to. But like all things promising, we cannot sit on our laurels. We cannot assume that complacency will take care of things as we move forward."

Harvey added: "Engagement is going to be key moving forward and finding ways to engage our community—everyone in our community, not just entities like ourselves, but every individual—is going to be important to our success moving forward."

UN Deputy Special Coordinator, RHC, UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Philippe Lazzarini then took the podium and discussed the topic of the UN 2030 SDG Agenda and its importance for Lebanon and the region, saying: "The success of Lebanon's private sector despite tremendous challenges you all encounter, and the entrepreneurial spirit of Lebanon's small and medium sized businesses, is a clear demonstration of the country's ability and potential. I'm convinced that such spirit of creativity can be applied to addressing the biggest challenges of our time both in Lebanon and around the world. To that end we need to come together like never before, leveraging our different expertise and resources. The Global Compact Network provides this opportunity for the private sector to organize itself to prioritize and collectively address challenges of shared concern."

The Forum continued its sessions with speakers representing various stakeholders. The sessions focused on topics such as climate action, working across sectors for the SDGs, gender equality and women empowerment, and best practices for the People SDGs, as well as the different roles of the public sector, civil society organizations and the private sector in relation to sustainable development goals.

During the forum's fourth session on best practices for the People SDGs, the Advisor of the Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr. Jinane Chaaban, who represented Minister Marwan Hamadeh, spoke about the fourth SDG – ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning – saying "Achieving SDG4 is a complex undertaking for Lebanon, as it is for every country, including those with the most successful and highly developed education systems. We need to ensure not only that every child goes to school, but that every single student has access to the quality of teaching and facilities required to reach his or her full potential." She added that there is no simple answer to transforming the quality of an education system, and that it requires investment in many things such as in teachers and their teaching practice; in the fabric of school buildings; in the way the curriculum is structured and student learning is assessed; and in the interaction with pupils, their parents, and communities.

Chaaban also mentioned the new program funded by the World Bank which will support in addressing these issues.

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## **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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to 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.

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