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The Environment and Sustainable Development Unit at AUB announces winners of Small Green Innovative Projects Competition in Lebanon

The Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) at the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) held a ceremony to announce the winners of the Small Green Innovative Projects Competition in Lebanon. Funded by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the competition aims to support and develop innovative projects which contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of Dr. Nawaf Salam, prime minister; represented by Dr. Paul Morkos, minister of information; and was attended by Dr. Zaher Dawy, AUB provost; Dr. Ammar Olabi, FAFS dean; as well as diplomats and heads of local, regional, and international organizations.

The ceremony began with a welcoming speech Dr. Pascale Lahoud, assistant professor and television host, who emphasized the significance of ESDU's event as it marks its Silver Jubilee celebration and commemoration of 25 years of service to rural communities, sustainability, and green economy in Lebanon and the region. Lahoud stated that it was not by mere chance that the competition coincides with ESDU's 25th anniversary, but in recognition of the role of local innovation and small community initiatives in driving genuine sustainable change. She also expressed gratitude to all partners and supporters, noting that this was not just a day to announce winners but to celebrate a shared vision of building a green and equitable future in Lebanon.

AUB Provost Dawy delivered the first keynote speech. "It is an honor to stand with you today as a citizen with a firm belief that Lebanon is capable of rising and will rise again, a citizen who believes that our response to the ongoing crises and conflicts around us not only depends on braving today's storms but also consolidating the foundations of a better tomorrow – including our environment, shared resources, and the delicate balance that supports all forms of life at AUB," he said.

In the second keynote speech, Dr. Ammar Olabi, FAFS dean, thanked AFESD "for funding this pioneering initiative," as well as all the national and regional partners "who collaborated on achieving this noble goal." He noted, "What we are celebrating today is not just an announcement of winning projects, but a dedication to the spirit of cooperation and innovation we need to face critical environmental and developmental challenges in Lebanon. This

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competition was organized by ESDU at our faculty to serve not just as a funding opportunity, but as a starting point for practical and sustainable solutions.”

Dr. Shady Hamadeh, ESDU executive director, touched upon Lebanon’s environmental reality and the major challenges we face as the country is still far from the green transformation happening globally. Hamadeh emphasized on the competition’s significance as a vital first step on this path, underscoring the need for environmental justice as a critical component of sustainable and inclusive development.

Concluding the speeches, Dr. Paul Morkos, minister of information, who attended the event on behalf of Dr. Nawaf Salam, prime minister, said, “How can anyone who has a green hand and a positive contribution to development programs that serve everyone, not win?”

He added, “The good that the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit at the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences has sown was the good they have reaped. If the environment is healthy, then the entire society is healthy, and if development is sustainable, then the nation and the citizen are well. It is a golden trinity that we need take care of, so that it may yield great benefit: the environment, development, and green projects.”

Morkos explained, “The first is our home, school, university, workplace, road, water, and air. We purify it, refine it, and arrange its elements of quality, to secure a better life for us, our children, and the generations that follow. As for the second, and through sustaining it, we preserve our surroundings, protect our survival, and ensure our permanence in our beautiful, green Lebanon. And the third, green projects, is the birth of life, hope, and rejuvenation. In Lebanon, no branch would grow a single leaf without the support of a green project and the farmers’ strong, sun-tanned arms.”

ESDU Executive Officer Christelle Bou Harb offered a glimpse into the competition. A short documentary introducing the winners was then played. The event also included a panel discussion on the objectives of sustainability, green recovery, and greenwashing. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Pascale Lahoud and joined by Executive Director for the United Nations Global Compact Network in Lebanon Deenah Fakhoury; Program Director of the Environmental Politics program at the Arab Reform Initiative Sarine Karajerjian; Rouba Ziade, associate researcher at Lebanon’s National Council for Scientific Research; and Ziad Moussa, monitoring and evaluation specialist and an expert in urban governance and city resilience. The panelists then responded to the attendees’ questions.

One of the event’s highlights was the announcement of the launch of ESDU’s “KariaNet” initiative, made by Dr. Salwa Tawk, professor of agricultural systems and sustainable development. This initiative seeks to improve the efficiency of development projects and programs and to share reliable scientific information and resources for the service of all.

Sixty-two projects with various themes—spanning renewable energy, , agricultural technology, waste management and sorting, and joint transportation—applied to the Small Green Innovative Projects Competition. The projects were divided into four main categories, in alignment with the competition’s terms: sustainable food systems, green energy, water management, and waste reduction. Participants included NGOs, universities, municipalities, municipal unions, and private companies. Of the 36 projects shortlisted, 12 won a total grant of US\$170,500. These projects will be implemented within four to twelve months.

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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 790 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 9000 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 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 365-bed hospital.

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