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**AUB's Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory and USJ's
Observatory on Public Service and Good Governance Partner to Foster
Governance and Citizenship in Lebanon**

The American University of Beirut (AUB)'s Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory (GGCO) at the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ)'s Observatory on Public Service and Good Governance (OPF) on January 20, 2025. This significant event marks the formation of a collaborative framework that aims to achieve substantial progress in governance practices, elevate the quality of public service, empower the youth, and promote active citizenship.

The MoU signing ceremony was held at AUB and was attended by Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president; Dr. Zaher Dawy, AUB provost; Dr. Simon Kachar, founding director of GGCO and lecturer in political science at AUB; GGCO steering committee members; as well as AUB vice-presidents, Deans, and senior academics. Representing USJ were University Rector Professor Salim Daccache, SJ, and OPF Director and Lecturer in Political Science at USJ Professor Pascal Monin, USJ Vice-Rectors, Secretary-General Professor Nadine Riachi Haddad, and SPCOM Director Christine Omeira. The ceremony was also attended by senior administrators and academics from both universities.

Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president, welcomed the attendees and said, "I have always felt that these two universities have an outsized responsibility for the well-being of this country. And for almost a decade, since I first visited Father Salim, I have believed that we have to accept that responsibility." He continued, "But in this unique moment, our responsibility is greater... and it extends to all aspects of citizenship. So, I hope that this permanent partnership will be able to do great good for the people of Lebanon and the region, but specifically for the nation of Lebanon as opposed to the individual people."

In his speech, Professor Salim Daccache, USJ Rector, discussed the joint call for action that the two universities worked on a few years ago, which emphasized citizenship and collaborative action, and that both universities are committed to actively working towards the revitalization and reform of Lebanon. "It is clear that what we have reached today is the result of our efforts. While there have been security and political changes in the region and the country, it is thanks to the intellectual environment we have cultivated together, which has had a tangible impact on the youth in our academic and university communities, that we have arrived at this point."

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He added, "Today, we must start anew in order to reach a better Lebanon, better societies, prosperity, and peace; and to rescue our institutions, as well as to rescue the excellence of the academic and university sector in the country, ensuring that these institutions contribute their best for Lebanon and the region, and even beyond."

Valid for three years, the MoU establishes a partnership aimed at enhancing transparent governance practices, improving structures, upholding and promoting ethical standards, and fostering public participation by engaging the broader community and encouraging active involvement in discussions and policy development. It will also seek to bolster civil society engagement by providing platforms for diverse stakeholders to develop innovative solutions.

These efforts will focus on developing future leaders by advocating for youth participation, building their capabilities, and equipping them with the necessary tools for effective policy advocacy. Furthermore, these initiatives aim to contribute to both academic literature and practical applications, ensuring a comprehensive approach.

Dr. Simon Kachar, director of GGCO at AUB, remarked, "Today marks a pivotal moment for Lebanon, where the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding between GGCO at AUB and OFP at USJ signals the beginning of a collaborative effort that is crucial to our nation's future. In these challenging times, as Lebanon stands at a crossroads, the importance of good governance, active citizenship, and public reform cannot be overstated."

He added, "This is not just an opportunity, but a responsibility, to harness the momentum of change and to build strong, transparent public institutions that will serve every citizen with integrity and accountability. Together, we must seize this golden opportunity to lay the foundation for a true, sustainable nation; one rooted in justice, opportunity, and a commitment to the common good of Lebanon."

Professor Pascal Monin, Director of OFP at USJ, said, "This partnership with the Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory of the American University of Beirut represents a strategic alliance built on shared values and complementary strengths. Together, we bring decades of combined experience, extensive networks, and deep expertise in governance reform. Our collaboration comes at a crucial moment when Lebanon needs strong institutions and restored public trust more than ever."

He added, "By joining forces, we aim to accelerate state rebuilding initiatives through coordinated action and shared resources, advocate for contextualized and evidence-based policy reforms that address Lebanon's unique challenges, create sustainable governance frameworks that will withstand future pressures, and empower future generations with the tools for effective citizenship and civic engagement."

This alliance will serve as a focal point for promoting sustainable societal development. The partnership will encompass a wide range of activities, such as educational programs, workshops, podcasts, community events, policy roundtables, forums, seminars, research, policy analysis, publications, capacity-building initiatives, collaborative platforms, and public engagement efforts. Additionally, funding initiatives will be pursued to ensure the continued growth and impact of these collaborative projects.

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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 750 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 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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