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AUB Holds Panel Discussion on Bridging Media, Academia, and Business for Greater Impact on Women's Lives

The Center for Women in Business at the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) organized a panel discussion titled "Bridging Media, Academia, and Business for Greater Impact on Women's Lives."

The event launched with a welcome note by Dr. Nada Khaddage-Soboh, director of the Center for Women in Business at OSB, who highlighted the center's vision in advancing women's success in the business and leadership roles through cutting-edge research, education, training, and actively advocating for their organizational and societal development. Khaddage-Soboh emphasized the need to showcase the collaborative efforts across the three different sectors, media, academia, and business, aimed at driving change.

Dr. Fadlo Khuri, American University of Beirut president, shared compelling insights from recent studies, shedding light on the pronounced gender disparity in our workforce and emphasizing the urgent need for intervention. Khuri underscored the crucial role of universities in Lebanon and emphasized the power of joint research initiatives to effect substantial change within our region. He added, "Progress can be made if the message is clear and consistent, and this is where the role of media and academia is clear to shine."

Khuri continued, "At AUB we've increased the high touch leadership positions for women fivefold just by changing the culture, not only by saying this is for women, this is for men. The university has long stood for these values of protecting and empowering and supporting those most vulnerable; those with the least opportunity. We've come a long way, but the road is long and hard, and it's time to accelerate it to make a bigger impact."

Dr. Yusuf Sidani, dean of the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business underscored the pivotal role of the Center of Women in Business emphasizing its influence on women's status in the region. Reflecting on its inception, Sidani highlighted the collaborative efforts of both men and women in shaping its mission and vision, aimed at effecting tangible change. He also emphasized the power of such platforms in shaping minds and driving meaningful progress.

The dynamic panel featured influential speakers from different sectors including Actress Maguy Abou Ghosn, Screenwriter Nadine Jaber, Managing Director of L'Oréal in Lebanon Emilie Wahab Harb; and Dr. Nada Khaddage-Soboh, director of the Center for Women in Business at OSB. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Imad Bou-Hamad, associate professor of statistics and data analytics at OSB and host of *The Researcher* (قصة كبيرة).

In a conversation highlighting the importance of collaboration in the aim of fostering a united front to advance advocacy and awareness on women's basic rights in education and promote women's empowerment, Maguy Abou Ghosn related the experiences of the characters in the TV series *A'a Amal* (ع أمل) to real stories of women in our society. She stressed the need for women to speak up against oppression, eliminate gender-based violence, and the importance of creating healthy environments for children and young adults, boys and girls alike, that foster a culture of mutual respect and empowerment.

Nadine Jaber noted that the stories in the series stemmed from common real-life stories. She reminded the audience of the need to address gender-based violence which is very common in Lebanon today and called for action and awareness around the issue.

Looking into the status of women in business in Lebanon, Emilie Wahab Harb shed light on the efforts of L'Oréal towards supporting women by transforming internal company policies and procedures to empower employees to unleash their full potential regardless of their gender. L'Oreal aims at supporting women worldwide through various funds and donations.

Likewise, Dr. Khaddage-Soboh further stressed the role of the Center for Women in Business at OSB at the American University of Beirut that is centered on cutting edge research, education and training, development, and advocacy campaigns towards empowering women in business and leadership. She warmly welcomed the opportunity to join hands with local, regional, and international stakeholders, activists, key players, and organizations from the private, public, and non-governmental sectors to work collaboratively towards empowering women and supporting their full participation for organizational and societal development. Dr. Khaddage-Soboh invited everyone to embark on a journey of collaboration to elevate the position of women within our region and unite as catalysts for positive change, fostering a community that embraces inclusivity and empowers every individual.

The panel came to an end with a performance by the Comedian Amal Taleb, presenting women's issues in a constructive comic way; followed by a provoking debate with the audience regarding the way forward. The conversation also included AUB students who gained a new perspective due to the insightful discussion that unfolded throughout the panel, especially on the importance of their role in shaping future mindsets and cultures that foster healthier and empowering environments for women in all fields.

ENDS

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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 120 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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