

For Immediate Release



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AUB Hosted the Digital Transformation Middle East 2017 Conference

Organized by Knowledge Practices International (KPI), and hosted and supported by the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Digital Transformation Middle East 2017 conference was held over two days. The event was attended by official figures as well as local and international experts, including the Minister of State for Administrative Reform Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine and former Minister Nicolas Sehnaoui, Chief Information Officer at AUB Dr. Yousif Asfour, Chairman and Director General at Ogero Emad Kreidie, and Director of FinTech at KPI Dr. Kaissar Jabr.

The event included keynote speeches, presentations and panels that highlighted the importance of preparing for the digital future in Lebanon and the Middle East, and discussed the topics of educational technology and the digital economy in the region, as well as factors and forces influencing various industries and sectors, digitization strategies, future technologies, and digital entrepreneurship. Supporting and contributing companies participated in an exhibition that was organized as part of the conference.

At the opening ceremony, which began with the Lebanese national anthem and then a welcome note by the Digital Architect at KPI Dr. Anas Tawile, the audience observed five minutes of silence in mourning for the martyrs of the Lebanese Army. Dr. Asfour spoke at this session saying, "AUB's mission is really to teach, to advance knowledge, and to provide service to Lebanon and the region, and this is the core of what we do at AUB and because of that, today... the vigorous digital transformation is essential to that mission. Why? Because the mission itself is all about teaching and knowledge and what digital transformation allows us to do. It allow us to extend beyond our walls to the global environment, it allows us to contribute to the free flow of thought and knowledge, and it also allows us to engage with the new generation."

Sehnaoui then gave a presentation aimed at encouraging the audience and preparing them for what is coming in the next decades, pointing to the rapid pace of transformation and lack of readiness for it. He said: "Change is happening very fast and we need to prepare, we need to

believe also. As much as you believe and foresee the change, as much as you can position yourself; and this is valid for the youth and for the academic institutions, for the entrepreneurs, for the parents, for everyone, all society. And because it is exponential, it is shortening the time span between point A and point B, so we'll see a huge change in a few tens of years so between now and thirty, forty, fifty years we'll have a complete science fiction environment".

After Kreidie's speech, the expert in change management and culture transformation and Partner in Change Up Consulting Bradie Speller, gave a presentation entitled "Change is Our Friend: Embracing Digital Disruption", stressing the importance of culture in companies and organizations. "If you cannot inspire the culture of an organization to transform and to change in these days and times that we're in, then that organization will fall behind, they will get crushed by the change that is taking place and is coming very fast. So they need to make sure that there are people in the organization that understand how culture operates and then how to get people to create a culture of change and to embrace it so that change becomes their friend." Speller commented.

The opening session was followed by a presentation by Saudi Telecom Company (STC) presented by Customer Experience Program Design and Performance Director Raafat Mounla. Minister Ezzeddine then took the podium to talk about "Digital Transformation in the Lebanese Government". She also spoke about the success stories of the various Arab countries that started their journeys to digitize their governments, saying: "A lot of AUB graduates in this field, and experts, are working to make this happen in these countries. We thank AUB for giving this expertise to the area", she then expressed her hope of them joining the project that will be implemented in Lebanon, through employment opportunities.

And on the occasion of the national mourning day for the martyrs of the Lebanese Army, Ezzeddine addressed the phenomenon of terrorism and technology. She said: "One of the biggest challenges that we are facing today in this journey is to establish some kind of synchrony between technology and the fight against terrorism and its spread in the digital platforms and social media in general". She added: "We need to use this valuable tool to promote human understanding, tolerance, mutual acceptance, love, respect". The minister called on all concerned political, academic, social, cultural and religious parties to study the root causes of terrorism in order to deal with them properly. In the ending of her speech, Ezzeddine said: "Hopefully our efforts will come together, and we will join efforts to achieve this, to work towards this model cause for the sake of humanity."

The activities of the two-day conference continued with the second day focused on educational techniques. The event concluded on Saturday afternoon.

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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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