

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 25-6-2020

AUB and USJ launch a joint research unit to address the solid waste management crisis in Lebanon

As the consequences of the Lebanese solid waste crisis continue to impact the country, the American University of Beirut (AUB), through its Nature Conservation Center (NCC), and the Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ), through its Faculty of Sciences (FS), announced today the launch of the AUB-USJ Solid Waste Management Unit for Regenerative Technologies (SMART).

This research unit is a collaboration between two leading universities in Lebanon, with an aim to educate, train, and pursue innovative methods to support state-of-the-art solid waste management solutions.

“The care of our common home led our two prestigious universities to initiate this innovative approach towards dealing with a crisis that weighs heavily on the environment as well as on our fellow citizens’ health since several years,” said SMART Director Richard Maroun, dean of USJ-FS, and one of the unit’s founding members.

“Our joint research unit ‘SMART’ will take advantage of the unique expertise developed at AUB-NCC and USJ-FS by our international leading researchers to support governmental and non-governmental organizations in implementing an integrated and sustainable solid waste management in Lebanon,” Maroun added.

Based on generated data, SMART relies on its transdisciplinary approach, cooperation with startups and local businesses, technological development in the field of waste treatment, and an inclusive approach to exchange best practices and policy recommendations with citizens, stakeholders, and public officials to advance solutions in the field of integrated solid waste treatment.

“SMART is an open platform for collaboration among experts from all fields of solid waste management in order to advance this sector at the technological innovations, management, policy, and information levels,” said AUB-NCC Director Najat A. Saliba, professor at the AUB Chemistry Department, and one of the founding members of SMART.

One of the SMART projects currently being implemented is mentoring a Lebanese rural community on how to handle their solid waste management. This will be a prototype that will be extended to other villages in Lebanon. This will aid in experimenting with a decentralized approach to solid waste management.

The SMART team consists of researchers from the Faculty of Sciences at USJ and the Nature Conservation Center at AUB, who are able to take a leading role in addressing the solid waste management long-term crisis by adopting a systematic and technologically progressive approach. In addition to Dr. Saliba and Dean Maroun, SMART founding members include USJ-FS Associate Professor Dominique Salameh and Lead Environmental Engineer at AUB-NCC Anwar Al Shami.

More on the solid waste management problem in Lebanon

According to the UNICEF Annual Report, the Inter-Agency WaSH Working Group, and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, there are currently over 940 open dumps across Lebanon which have caused disconcerting environmental degradation and health risks of an unknown severity. Uncontrolled incineration of piles of mixed trash, also known as open burning, is a widespread toxic practice which severely compromises air quality and is associated with numerous health ailments including cancer. Municipalities are often held responsible for the collection of solid waste and are also usually tasked with collection of solid waste from settlements, collective shelters, and other locations within their jurisdiction. However, most municipalities do not have the capacity or resources to adequately manage solid waste.

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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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 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 420-bed hospital.

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