

For Immediate Release



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AUB hosts the annual meeting of the Arab Foundations Forum

The American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted the 2017 annual meeting and general assembly of the Arab Foundations Forum (AFF) whose membership includes AUB. This forum is a non-profit group and its membership includes social philanthropy foundations in the Arab region. The AFF acts as a platform that allows these foundations to communicate, exchange knowledge and develop capacities. The AFF seeks to promote social philanthropy and its effectiveness in the Arab world.

The meeting opened with a welcome speech by Dr. Imad Baalbaki, Vice President for Advancement at AUB and Secretary of the AFF Board, who spoke about the joint commitment of AUB and AFF to the Arab community, saying: “The AFF was established as the premier organization of this nature, bringing together workers that dedicated their time, and effort, and money too, in order to uplift and bring development to our communities in the Arabic world, and particularly our youth - our most precious assets. And this is exactly why the American University of Beirut was established a hundred and fifty years ago”. Dr. Baalbaki spoke next about "Boldly AUB" the recently launched campaign by the university to secure resources for development, education and healthcare in the Arab region.

Next to speak was the Chair of the AFF Board and CEO of Emirates Foundation Clare Woodcraft, who said: “I think in the past few years, up until now, we really have been focused on trying to continue to build a community, to increase the number of members that we have, to really make sure that anybody working in the philanthropic sector in the Middle East is connected, connected to others who can support their work, and who can share ideas and share lessons learned. So our strategy today has been to focus on building our community, and indeed both, building it geographically and building in-country activities, so making sure we’re not just meeting once or twice a year but that throughout the course of the year we can really come together and work collaboratively”.

Naila Farouky, CEO of Arab Foundations Forum, spoke next and she listed the topics on the agenda of the meeting, that will be discussed in the next two days. She said: “We designed the structure of the next two days to focus specifically on two key initiatives that AFF launched over the last year, specifically the data coalition and the youth coalition. And we really see the building of these two coalitions as a response to what the sector feels it needs, what our members have told us they need, and what we think is going to be impactful and meaningful in terms of contribution that the coalition and a network like AFF can contribute meaningfully to”.

Farouky added: “We know that we have a gap in the Arab region around data, we feel very strongly that addressing this particular gap by convening a coalition of Arab foundations to collaborate on the production of meaningful data - locally owned, sourced, analyzed, published Arab data - is going to help our sector be more effective and more impactful in the long term”. She continued: “The data coalition also helps us inform our second key initiative around youth. The youth coalition is a collaboration between likeminded foundations and organizations, all working within the youth space. The AFF youth coalition specifically aims to address the youth employment gap and the issue of youth employment in the Arab region, and that in turn actually also helps address sustainable development goal number eight which is around employment opportunities”.

The opening session was followed by a speech and a presentation by CEO of Cedar Environmental Ziad Abi Shaker. The event continued for two days with sessions on various topics such as “NGO governance & global best practices: case study”, “data coalition - data and impact for philanthropy in the Arab region”, “youth coalition – employment and youth in the Arab region”. The meeting concluded with the 2017 General Assembly of the AFF. The General Assembly session was open for AFF members to participate and vote, and for guests and interested individuals to attend as observers. The General Assembly voted to choose the only vacant seat this year, where the current Emirates Foundation term ended with the selection of the Oman LNG Development Foundation. The current elected Council held its first closed meeting, setting the current positions of the members. The Board will be chaired by Noura Selim, representative of the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (Egypt), and the John D. Gerhart Center at the American University in Cairo will be acting as Treasurer. As for the rest of the members, they will be remaining with their current roles as follows: The American University of Beirut (Secretary), Arab Human Rights Fund (Vice-Chair of the Board), King Hussein Foundation, The Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation, Makhzoumi Foundation, Abdel Mohsin Al-Qattan Foundation, as well as the Oman LNG Development Foundation, the elected member of this year.

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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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