

**City Street Conference: *‘Street-Forming, Reforming, Transforming
the 21st Century City Streets’***

Speech of Fr. Walid Moussa, President

November 9, 2016

Honorable Guests,

It is my great pleasure to once again welcome all of you to Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) and thank you for participating in the second international conference titled, *‘City Street: Street-Forming, Reforming, Transforming the 21st Century City Streets,’* which addresses the important topic of streets and cities. I appreciate your presence here today, and I highly value your contribution to the success of this event. I would like to point out that this conference coincides with the celebration of our University’s thirtieth anniversary, and as we mark this milestone, we renew our commitment to serving our society. Indeed, NDU conceives itself as an authentic academic community, and has since its founding continued to promote diversity, respect for human dignity and rights, and concern for the common good.

The presence of notable scholars participating in this conference — who represent various and well-respected universities in Lebanon, the Middle East, and other countries of the world — has a threefold meaning: first, it underpins the current relevance of this topic to the academic community; second, it expresses a richness of knowledge and expertise with diverse cultural and social backgrounds; and third, it provides collective efforts for the well-being of our societies.

At the beginning of this conference, I would like to ask a series of preliminary and basic questions: What are streets for? What is their purpose? Why do streets exist? Do they have a role to play? To what extent do their form and characteristics serve their purpose? And what is the impact of streets on identities of cities? Are cities built around streets or are streets made for cities? For me, as a layman in architecture and engineering, answers to such questions would lead me to understand the central theme of the conference, i.e., the “form,” whether *forming*, *re-forming*, or *transforming*.

When speaking about the *Theory of Origin of the State*, Aristotle accentuates the good life of the human being. In the most simplistic interpretation possible, a single human being cannot alone meet the basic needs, so a man and a woman must come together to form the family. The family, thus, becomes the starting point of human civilization. Then, when several families are united, a village is formed. Moreover, when several villages are united to form a single complete community, large enough to be self-sufficient, the state comes into existence for the sake of a good life. The city-state thus formed provides a safe and sound environment to enable its people to better harness their capabilities and potentials for the common good and for the welfare of humanity. In other words, without interrelations it is impossible to achieve human progress and cultured status.

Would today’s streets constitute a means of connecting people and communities for the good life and welfare of societies? How can streets play a developmental role in the life of the human being? I leave in your capable hands the grueling task of answering some of these questions during this distinguished conference.

In closing, I wish to thank all of you again for being here and for dedicating yourselves to the well-being of humanity. I trust that this conference will be fruitful and that your stay with us will be comfortable.

Thank you.