

## **International Conference on Cross-Cultural Education**

**June 2, 2011**

*Fr. Walid Moussa, President*

Mr. President of the Republic of Lebanon, Gen. Michel Suleiman, represented by His Excellency Minister Salim Wardeh,

Distinguished guests,

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you at Notre Dame University, Louaize in Lebanon. Indeed, NDU is honored to host and co-organize with Adyan Foundation this International Conference on Cross-Cultural Education. As a matter of fact, this subject has always been of concern to our university and has been treated on different occasions and events.

It was last summer, when Fr. Fadi Daou together with Dr. Nayla Tabbara approached me and presented to me their cross-cultural project, the *Euro-Med Adyan Understanding Program*, expressing their wish to launch this Program in partnership with NDU. To be honest, I want to share with you today that though I was completely convinced of its importance and relevance, yet I was a little skeptical about its implementation and success. Nevertheless, I opened the way and asked Dr. Carol Kfoury, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, to coordinate the Program with Adyan. And surprisingly, it didn't take them long to impress me with the serious endeavors and successful achievements during the first semester of this academic year, and today with this valuable conference gathering prominent organizations and figures.

Dear Friends,

Modern technology and contemporary scientific breakthroughs have offered us a "gift", which some dubbed "globalization", where situations and events interact to transcend national and geographical boundaries. As such, the entire world seems as one global village.

In the face of this “globalization” movement, which some have characterized as savage and oppressive, extremism emerged. This new emergence represents a return to the roots and an abstention from adopting some civilized and modern views for fear of being lost or erased.

In this century, conflict is taking up different forms stemming from the clash between globalization and extremism. This clash is embodied sometimes in the clash of civilizations or terrorist bombings or wars, which we know how they begin but have no idea how they will end. This conflict between globalization and extremism is today taking up tragic forms: terrorism, occupation, hegemony, hunger, etc.

Today, we are witnessing and living this conflict in the entire world; and some of its manifestations appear in the region and in Lebanon. What is our role as universities? What is our role as educators? What is our role at NDU, in particular? I am deeply confident that our conference is going to tackle these issues and others, and will provide us guidelines to bring about our mission in this world. It is an occasion to reflect on strategies leading our educational institution in the midst of a diverse and multicultural world.

Indeed, NDU promotes diversity, respect for human dignity and rights, and concern for the common good. Its profound aspiration is to prepare its students to be future leaders who can exercise reason upon knowledge and shape a world of truth, justice, love and freedom.

NDU encourages students to understand and appreciate the diversity of cultures which exist locally, nationally, and internationally. It also seeks to promote appreciation of diversity through an understanding of the impact of human beings on their environment.

At NDU, we strongly believe in spiritual motivation and education as a vehicle for a better and more just society.

However, the question remains: How far at NDU have we been successfully achieving those objectives?

I am sure the two-day presentations and discussions will help us in answering the question.

Your Excellency, Minister Salim Wardeh, thank you for your presence with us, and please refer to our President Michel Suleiman our gratitude and appreciation for his significant patronage of this event.

Honorable guests, thank you all for being here at NDU for this conference enriching us with your contributions.

Dear organizers, thank you for a well-prepared conference.

My best wishes for a successful and beneficial conference.