

**IAU 2009 International Conference
Notre Dame University – November 4-6, 2009.**

**Address by Mr Ahmad Jammal, Director-General for Higher Education, Lebanese
Government**

In ancient times, when disparate groups of humans were scattered across remote lands and deprived of all means of communication, a variety of identities, traditions, languages, and cultures evolved through time.

Throughout history, when these different groups of humans roamed and met, either a clash or fusion would ensue. The pace and impact of this fusion was dictated by several factors, including the stronger culture's capacity to dominate, its cultural wealth, and the strength of its identity.

Overall, fusions usually resulted in the renaissance of civilizations and constituted a source of information exchange, creativity, dynamism, and progress.

Nowadays, in this global age of open frontiers and multiple high-speed communication channels, providing information exchange, the topic tackled by your conference is significant on many levels: social, cultural, and economic as well as on the level of cultural diversity, identity, and personal privacy.

The particularly positive role of universities in this interactive process appears at this level. This role becomes more significant at the conflict level, which recently began to appear, nurtured by negative theories that are limited in scope and vision such as the theory of "The Clash of Civilizations."

The word "University" connotes uniting and gathering. In fact, universities unite and gather thinkers of diverging viewpoints and mindsets in a spirit of mutual cooperation, freedom, and exchange of ideas.

Universities are not only institutions preparing students for the workforce and producing professionals; rather, they are also think-tanks of cultural diversity and an expanse that enable students to practice their cultural rights and help them understand one another to co-exist by jointly discovering the other's arts, literature, values, traditions, and lifestyles.

Universities are expanses for collaboration based on acknowledging diversity, fostering cultural exchange, and spreading awareness. The university is an institution that recognizes ingenuity as a common characteristic in the human journey and cultural diversity as a creator of new life for humanity. It also expands the common heritage, which is essential to the continuity of the human race, just as biological diversity is essential to living creatures.

Today, in the global village, universities need to understand and create a framework for the globalization process, which is facilitated by state-of-the-art information and communication technologies. Hence, globalization will not imperil cultural diversity; on the contrary, it will become a means for renewed dialogue between cultures and civilizations. Such dialogue will be built upon fundamental human rights.

Universities prepare ideal environments for dialogue on the national, geographical, cultural, and international levels through student life, curricula, cultural and academic environments, and research topics and policies.

By positively utilizing the core objectives of universities, the freedom of higher education in Lebanon is among the models from which one can benefit to foster dialogue and the meeting of cultures, and understand the "other" while also being understood.

Given their various educational curriculums and the wealth of their cultural, academic, and educational resources, universities in Lebanon are large expanses of abundant and available choices aimed at providing a prosperous intellectual life, and transparent social and economic development.

And Lebanon, in the present circumstances, is in dire need of such discussion to promote kinship through dialogue among all its sects.

Finally, we would like to thank you and commend you for your efforts in organizing this conference, and we hope that your conclusions and recommendations will help our youth pave the way for conciliatory and constructive dialogue, a path toward peace and a bright future, away from conflict and aggression.

Thanking you once again; we wish your conference every success.