

## MENACOMM 2018

Word of President Fr. Prof. Georges Hobeika  
April 18, 2018

It gives me a great pleasure to be hosting all of you here at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik – USEK to mark this distinctive event - the IEEE Middle East and North Africa Communications Conference, MENACOMM 2018. IEEE, the world’s largest professional association for the advancement of technology, serves as a platform and benchmark to our education community. The work of IEEE Fellows has touched just about every aspect of our daily lives. Their achievements can be found in cellphones, video games, the Internet, and even medical devices.

Imagine how difficult it is to live a day without the various forms of media, technology or science! In fact, we cannot but contemplate the significance and greatness of technology in our lives today and examine the remarkable developments humans have reached in terms of Artificial Intelligence, Digital Currencies, Block Chain Technologies, Robotics, Networking, Cybersecurity and many others.

As technology develops at an exponential pace and redefines the way we work, live and even think, our role as human beings exist to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. The technological innovations should be directed by the aims and values of the society it is intended to serve. Otherwise, when used differently, technology can perfect instruments of war, support the concentration and abuse of power, damage social and cultural values, and thus endanger the existence of mankind.

In 2014, Stephen Hawking, the theoretical physicist and cosmologist, reported to the BBC news that "*the development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race*".

Prof Bradley Love, from University College London (UCL), also agreed there were risks, as he noted: "*Clever Artificial Intelligence will create tremendous wealth for society, but will leave many people without jobs*".

The World Economic Forum predicted that 5 million jobs, some of which are drivers, farmers, manufacturers, cashiers, fishermen, broadcasters, and others, could disappear over the next five years because of advances in technology. Therefore, equipping people with the right skills to stay ahead of technological change will be vital for economies that want to succeed in the rapidly changing world.

Channeling scientific, religious and human values one towards the other is a major challenge. Once perfected, scientific and technological advances cannot but raise the spiritual, intellectual, and material life of the human race.

My wish to you, dear technologists, scientists and innovators, to freely enhance technology in reference to human values and dignity, as Pope Francis advised during his address from the Vatican to the 2017 TED Conference: "*If an artist cannot be stopped from using his or her creativity, neither should those who possess particular gifts for the advancement of science and technology be prevented from using their God-given talents for the service of others.*"

He believes that the Web is a "Gift of God". But, he clearly warned that the abundance of data and digital stimulation consumed each day can amount to a kind of "mental pollution" that shall harm human relationships and can stop people from learning how to live wisely, think deeply and love generously.

Many thanks go to His Excellency, Mr. Saad Hariri, for his patronage and constant support to the advancement of all sectors to serve the Lebanese community.

Thanks to the MENACOMM co-chairs, Ms. Sarah Abou Chakra and Mr. Jacques Demerjian, IEEE ComSoc steering and organizing committees, along with all sponsors and partners for entrusting USEK in hosting the IEEE conference.

Many thanks to USEK community and especially the team who coordinated and developed this significant event under the supervision of USEK's Provost, Dr. Georges Yahchouchi.

At the end, I would like to extend my thanks to each and every one present with us today. It's gratifying to look around and see so many familiar faces. That is a pleasing welcome to what I know is going to be a great conference. I wish you all productive discussions and a pleasant time in our premises.

Thanks a lot for your listening.