



It gives me great pleasure to extend to you all, a very warm welcome at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, and at the USEK School of Law & Political Sciences, and to be inaugurating this colloquium on Maritime and Marine Governance in Lebanon.

In fact, as USEK President, it is the first colloquium I am inaugurating, and it happens to be a colloquium organized by the School of Law where I have secured my first position inside the institution as a Dean and a Professor.

Since joining USEK, providing the educational opportunities that students need to succeed, has been our mission. As Dean at first, and later as VP for Community life, I have made it a priority. As a matter of fact, our obligation as educators is not just to enroll students but to graduate them and equip them with all the soft and hard skills, they need to face the future.

I am confident through our mission, our vision and our strategic plans, we will meet this challenge!

If we were to make a list of USEK strengths, it would be a long one, but number one would be its outstanding faculty, with more than 90% holding the highest degree

attainable in their field. They are dynamic, committed and, most importantly, dedicated to their students; and trust me I have been here long enough to know.

And working both behind the scenes and on the front lines is a remarkable group of committed administrators and staff who make everything we do possible.

As I mentioned, our aim is to help our students to graduate, but to graduate as engaged citizens, capable of identifying local and national problems and creating good, workable solutions.

Therefore, building our research component comes as a top priority as well.

Our research agenda ought to reflect who we are and where we stand as a higher education institution.

To the degree possible, our research priorities should cater to our community needs. And the maritime subject remains of utmost importance for us and for the country in general. We cannot but think, that today, Lebanese communities along the coast, experience some of the highest rates of environmental pollution and health hazards ever recorded, which requires immediate action and finding, through research, appropriate solutions. It is in the light of this fact, that USEK is organizing this colloquium addressing the merits and woes of the Lebanese nation as a country bordering the sea. And Like many of you in the audience, I am eager to hear our prominent speakers on that subject matter.

Before I conclude, I cannot but thank all the people who have worked hard to organize this event, namely Dr. Ghada Karam, Associate Dean of the School of Law and Dr. Aref Fakhri, a dear friend of USEK.

May this colloquium contribute to the elaboration of a clear, fruitful and beneficial roadmap for the maritime governance in Lebanon.