

**Address of Fr. Talal Hachem**  
**for the USEK Carlos Ghosn Initiative**  
**September 29, 2020**

**The OLM educational roots and mission:**

Good morning everyone!

Today, we are all glad at USEK, at this green, dynamic and continuously evolving university, we are all glad to be launching our *Moving Forward Initiative* with Carlos Ghosn.

Before I go through the specificities of this initiative or collaboration, I would like to share with you some historical events that marked the journey of USEK and led it to be where it is now.

We all know that throughout their history the Maronites had education at the core of their mission, always with an emphasis on humanity and community and with the aim of **creating positive change**.

**If we go back in history to the year 1584**, the Maronite's educational mission was marked by the decision of Pope Gregory XIII's who established the Maronite College in Rome. That College provided full scholarships to young promising Maronites who would return to Lebanon **to give back through educating communities and supporting society**.

The students of the Maronite College were so known in Mount Lebanon and different parts of the world for their thirst for knowledge and enthusiasm to learn, and therefore the expression "erudite like a Maronite" was coined.

**The year 1624** saw the first Maronite seminary, known as the **School of Hawqa**, and established in Mount Lebanon by returnees from Rome. In addition to liturgy and theology, it had **an extended curriculum** including six different languages: Arabic, Syriac, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Italian, in addition to logic and mathematics.

Monasteries in Lebanon at that time schooled their community whether in the meadows, under a tree or inside a church, **reinforcing the Maronite identity and values of community outreach, especially in the context of religion and social welfare**.

In 1694, 70 years after the School of Hawqa, the Lebanese Maronite Order saw the light and started to boost and strengthen the Maronite merit and community.

In the following century, and more specifically in **1789**, the **Maronite church achieved its aspiration to be more inclusive** with the founding of its Ain Warqa School, which was open to all Christians, making education more accessible to the wider Christian community. The school ran for 200 years, a mark of its success.

**The year 1950 constituted a turning point for many people and for the educational history in Lebanon, since in that same year** the OLM founded the first university to be established by a Lebanese initiative after the closure of Ain Warqa. Building on that initial 16-century momentum and on various milestones throughout its history, the Order founded the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik or simply USEK.

The essence of USEK and its educational growth is a harmonious combination of its foundational beliefs with humanistic values at its very core and continuous expansion in education through innovation, growth, and sustainability.

**Between then and now, USEK** has developed into a reputable university advocating education **for all** and delivering programs in all the major academic fields to address the needs of society and current global challenges.

This historical chain of events brought us to where we are today, continuing our mission through initiatives that serve to benefit society. It is this very dynamic spirit that leads **every person** at USEK to keep raising the question, how can I serve better my society? And it is this same question that led us to think of and plan for this *Moving Forward Initiative*.

### **The ‘Moving Forward’ collaboration between USEK and Carlos Ghosn**

Given the current context in Lebanon (and even around the world), Higher Education Institutions have a key role in responding to the present situation and to the present challenges. We believe it is our role, now more than ever before, to prepare our community, our students in the first place, our faculty and staff and all our stakeholders to face potential challenges in the future with all potential means.

This is why, what we do today and the efforts we are exerting now in the service of our community would shape the future not only of our youths but also of all the constituents of society.

What we are launching today is a tridimensional initiative allowing us to reach out to three different target groups:

- The young generation or what I so like to call the “positive change drivers”
- The working force, which is the **backbone** of our society with its different age groups
- And the executives who need to make a step further in their careers

Through this tridimensional initiative we would be adopting a comprehensive approach in order to have a **comprehensive impact**.

The idea of collaborating with Carlos Ghosn didn't come out of the blue. It was the fruit of thorough planning and the involvement of many people at USEK and from outside USEK, I would like to seize this opportunity to thank each and every one of them for their unconditional support and invaluable efforts! I must say that the idea stemmed from the need for change and given first, the Carlos Ghosn **person**, and second his career record of accomplishments, we cannot but say that Carlos Ghosn is **an agent of change**.

### Outline of the initiative

This Moving Forward Initiative is as I said tridimensional, it includes:

- An Executive Program on “Business Strategies & Performance” for senior managers in the MENA region
- An intensive Training/Upskilling for local businesses to develop the needed skills within the Lebanese economic sector
- An “Investment and Advisory Board for Start-ups” that aims at providing expert advice and cash investment to innovative start-ups addressing real life problems.

This kind of initiatives is where USEK, as an academic institution, and an **asset** like Carlos Ghosn play a crucial part in serving society, building on Lebanon's strengths, and positively impacting its future; this initiative does not just revolve around offering possibilities, but rather identifying realistic prospects and driving them forward, for a better Lebanon.