

**Remarks by Fr. Talal Hachem
USEK President
Commencement Ceremony
School of Medicine
July 9, 2021**

I would like first to greet our USEK members, USEK friends, and the parents of our graduates who are watching us now live.

Dear Class of 2021,

It is a great pleasure for me today to be standing here with you, to be celebrating with you the achievement of an important milestone in your life.

Today...you fulfilled a journey!

Driven by an exemplary perseverance, a solid will to move forward and a strong resilience, you fulfilled a journey!

Your graduation today reflects *a glimmer of hope*, renewed hope, for our beloved Lebanon amid a difficult and challenging situation. I will not describe the current situation in Lebanon; we all know that every day, we encounter new economic, social, political, health obstacles, every day we

have new hurdles and hardships; but we also know deep inside that we prove every moment that we are up to these challenges.

You, as the young spirit of the country, the DNA of its structure, you have proved that you navigate in spite of all disruptions, you proved that you can leverage the crisis to your own advantage, in other terms you proved to be resilient!

But... your mission doesn't stop here. Being resilient helps us get through, but we have a duty of being responsible too. It is our responsibility not to be torn by our fears and concerns, but rather to look our country in the eye and say we are responsible for spreading a soothing message, each one of us has a role to play and a mission to fulfill. Our role is not to criticize and judge and be manipulated by our own thoughts and our own words, our role is to be constructive and seek to serve our country and our surrounding in the best possible way, each according to his or her own potential.

Your graduation comes at a time when you are needed the most in every part of the world, and especially in our beloved Lebanon... this, geographically speaking, tiny country, but big and great with its people.

Well, let me tell you... your journey has just started. In fact, the whole world counts on you. Not only you as the doctors of the future and of a society that is being hit hard by a pandemic we know when it started, but we still don't know how its real end would be. The world needs young, dynamic and passionate people like you to leave your mark wherever you are and to build a better society.

During your years of study, I know you studied hard, you worked hard, and you achieved in the most difficult circumstances... at all levels... but I know also that you've learned great lessons, bore the unbearable, and proved to be worthy of your own efforts!

When I was thinking of the message that I want to relay to you on this big day of your life, many ideas were crossing my mind but there was a statement always echoing in my head... great achievers...

I believe... all the people who supported you every step of the way, who provided you with the needed learning and equipped you with the needed skills to reach this day... they believe... and you have also to believe that you are great achievers!

As great achievers, embrace the world...with the same perseverance, the same resilience, and the same zeal you've been illustrating, and always

try to make it a better place... A better place for those who need you and for those who do not need you as well.

Let your care for the other be your main tool in every endeavor you undertake, and let solidarity, that has been our moto throughout the current crisis, let it be your means and your end at the same time. As a matter of fact, it is only by caring and standing for each other that we uphold human dignity, and we build a better society.

This year, in his message for the celebration of the World Day for Peace, the Holy Father considered that (and I quote) “*Solidarity concretely expresses our love for others, not as a vague sentiment but as a ‘firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all*” (end of quote).

Be the responsible agents of change, be the active and resilient members of the society, and never give up your quest for a better world.

Dear graduates,

Now comes the big moment! You have been waiting for it for quite a long time and now you can enjoy it and be proud, as we and your parents are proud, of every step you made towards this moment.

Dear graduates, I announce you the **Class of Resilience 2021!**

Mabrouk!