

Speech of Father Hady Mahfouz
In the opening ceremony of the 22nd Scientific International Conference
The Social Avenues of Research
April 14, 2016

Advancement is a keyword in our gathering today. The Lebanese Association for the Advancement of Sciences (LAAS) in collaboration with the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS-L) chose to hold its 22nd Scientific Conference in the premises of our University (USEK).

This Association is dedicated to the advancement of Sciences. And I believe that knowledge and sciences help on one hand delve into the past to search out what the past really and truly entails. It tries on the other hand to elaborate the different data of the present, in all fields, philosophical, human or scientific. At the same time, it aims reaching new discoveries for the sake of the advancement in the future.

This meets the interest of the CNRS of Lebanon and the cause of every University, namely, USEK. In a University, knowledge is spread to achieve advancement through teaching, learning, searching, discovering and through forming every human being and every stakeholder.

These actions within the realm of a University certainly have their impact on the Society as a whole, be it local or global and meet the title of our today's conference: "The Social Avenues of Research", a topic that will be tackled in all panels and especially in the opening talk. Yet, I would like to point out an advancement in its approach.

Dealing with the Social Avenues of the Sciences and of Research is by itself an advancement within the Sciences. It outstands the traditional borders of the concept of Science. It is quite instructive in this regard to hear the words of the Holy Father Pope Francis in His Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*: "A science which would offer solutions to the great issues would necessarily have to take into account the data generated by other fields of knowledge, including philosophy and social ethics; but this is a difficult habit to acquire today" (*Laudato si'*, n. 110).

Furthermore, I would like with you to advance even more while reflecting on Science. A reasonable approach of Science makes it discover its inability to give meaning and to resolve all mysteries of Life. So an appeal to a higher level of thinking is a must in advancing Sciences, which leads spontaneously to the Creator and to the meaning of values beyond the tangible world. I am talking here about spiritual values without which science can hamper real advancement.

It has been proved that spirituality and ethics help science and human beings to develop in a harmonious way. We are all aware that many deviations caused a serious and drastic harm to many human beings due to the lack of spirituality and ethics in Science. Here I would like to refer again to Pope Francis addressing the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences: “God gives the human being another autonomy, an autonomy different from that of nature, which is freedom. And he tells man to give a name to all things and to go forth through history. He makes him the steward of Creation, even that he rule over Creation, that he develop it until the end of time. Therefore the scientist, and especially the approach of the Christian Scientist is that of investigating the future of humanity and the earth, and, as a free and responsible being, to contribute to preparing it, to preserve it, and to eliminate any risks to the environment, both natural and manmade. But, at the same time, the scientist must be moved by the conviction that nature, in its evolutionary mechanisms, hides its potential which it leaves for intelligence and freedom to discover and actualize, in order to reach the development that is in the Creator’s design.” (27 October 2014).

Finally, I would like to thank all those who made this Conference possible. First of all let me extend a word of thanks to Prof Naim Ouainy, President of LAAS and Deputy President for Public Administration in our University, Prof. Mouin Hamze, Secretary General of the CNRS – Lebanon, and Prof Nicole Chalhoub, Deputy President for Academic Affairs at USEK. My deep thanks go also to all participants and speakers, and in a very special way, to the main speaker in this opening ceremony, Prof. Jean Luc Nahel.

May we have a successful conference and may we work altogether, hand in hand, for a real and fruitful advancement.