



**Address by Rev. Fr. Hady Mahfouz, President of the Holy Spirit University of  
Kaslik (USEK)**

**Closing Ceremony of the University Cooperation for Peace and Development**

**February 21, 2014**

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**Honorable representatives of ambassadors and university presidents and military authorities,**

**Dear USEK friends and members, dear parents and dear graduates,**

It gives me a great pleasure to see you all here today celebrating with us the graduation of the third generation of students in the Master of University Cooperation for Peace and Development.

It is quite overwhelming to see such a number of students who are willing to advocate for peace and to work towards its fulfillment especially in times of national and regional turmoil. I will not go through what is going on in the country for the time being, I will rather highlight a key factor we all uphold especially in times of agitation: that of positivity. Amidst all the events that are taking place nowadays, it is up to us to cling to our positive spirit and to work towards the enforcement of human values in order to overcome the various types of setbacks we face on various levels.

The cooperation between La Sapienza, the Lebanese University and the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik is a tangible proof of such an attachment to the values of positivity. We do believe that we need to cooperate and work together in order to make a change and to promote the growth and the development of our youth. Through this Master that lasted for six

years, three universities have undertaken the mission of building the capacities of young people in consolidating peace in every action of life. Through this Master, we have proven that we believe in the power of peace and in the power of positivity beyond time and beyond space. Here I cannot but quote His Holiness Pope Francis while he was appealing for peace on September 1, 2013 in Saint Peter's square "peace is a good which overcomes every barrier, because it belongs all of humanity!... it is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace."(Pope Francis, Angelus September 1, 2013).

I would like to extend a word of thanks to all the persons who contributed to the implementation of this joint program, the Italian embassy and namely the Development Cooperation Office, UNIFIL officers, the professors from La Sapienza and from the Lebanese University for their outstanding efforts and their dedication. I must say also I feel proud of an Italy that witnesses to human values and spares no effort to promote them.

Dear graduates, what we did here is that we laid the foundation of a long journey you will undertake. Today you step out of the university with a tool that will enable you to be active members in the society... active members in promoting peace. We just paved the way for you and now it is up to you to prove your success. It is up to you to work hard and to fulfill your part in meeting the challenges of our time, and then I am positive each and every one of you will contribute in his or her own way to the never ending mission of perfecting our society and upholding human dignity.

Pope Francis said "humanity needs to see gestures of peace and to hear words of peace". Your Master is a gesture of peace and now it is up to each and every one of you, dear graduates, to be a word of peace.

Congratulations peace and development class 2014!