

Euro Mediterranean Intercultural Dialogue Forum
Celebrating
Lebanon, the 35th Member State of the Enlarged Partial Agreement
On the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe
April 20-23, 2022

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Advisor to the Minister of Tourism for International Relations

Excellencies, honoured guests, partners and colleagues,

I am honoured to welcome you to the Euro Mediterranean Intercultural Dialogue Forum.

As we gather here today at the Lebanese American University within the embodiment of this cultural event, I transcribe to you the statement that Charles Malek Raised in (1970) during the convention on “Beirut Cross Roads of Culture” that took place at Beirut College for woman (BCW) - LAU today:

“As we are gathered here today, we are in the Centre of the globe. With the smallest radius, I draw with you a circle to encompass the greatest civilizations in the world”.

The circle that Malek describes inscribes Istanbul, Antioch, Damascus, Baghdad, Mecca, Jerusalem, Cairo, Alexandria, Athena, with Beirut as its Centre. These ten particular cities have had a decisive impact upon history, both past and present.

With your institutional support, I am proud to have been able to extend the radius of Beirut to include the 35 Member States with the European Institute of Cultural Routes into the Council of Europe and to include 45 Cultural Routes . Congratulations to Lebanon as it sustains its centrally pivotal position in the globe by becoming the 35 Member State into the Enlarged Partial Agreement. The cultural routes of the Council of Europe.

In my capacity as a student of nation building, I find myself stretched over a tensile line between the two cultural magnitudes of east and west that define my particularly complex cultural identity: Phoenician/Arabian, Lebanese/American, and for the past 30 years serving in my capacity as a professor at the Lebanese American University, benefiting from the intercultural dialogue and programs at the United Nations and the Cultural Routes in the Council of Europe.

I have been honored to be entrusted by LAU in my capacity as the director of the LAU Louis Cardahi Foundation, carrying a valuable dual mission, encompassing safeguarding cultural heritage and sustaining cultural tourism with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism in my capacity as the honorary President of the Phoenicians' Route and Advisor to the Ministry of Tourism for international relations and representing Lebanon to the EPA at the Council of Europe.

As a result of our collaborative efforts, with the Ministry of Culture and the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) since 2009, we have established "The Centre for the Preservation and Protection of Cultural Heritage" (CPCH) within the premises of LAU- LCF in Byblos, concurrently with Lebanon becoming a full State Party in the Second Protocol on October 15, 2019.

The creation of the new center in Byblos represents a unique opportunity to develop an Urban and Site Management Plan for the City of Byblos as part of a national program where the protection of natural and cultural heritage is properly addressed. This will contribute to enabling the concerned parties in Lebanon, to set proper measures that would permit abiding with the country's commitment toward the concrete implementation of all the UNESCO Heritage related Conventions, Protocols and Guidelines.

As a result of our recent collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Tourism, started on the occasion of the Ministry's launch of the "Winter Tourism package 2021-2022" at the Grand Serail on the 4th of November 2021 have resulted for Lebanon became the 35th Member State of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe on February 18, 2022.

The Lebanese Council of Ministers in their meeting on February 10, 2022 have approved the EPA membership in accordance with the accession letter of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Lebanon dated 15 November, 2021 to the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (EPA). We are thankful to His Excellency, the President of the Republic General Michel Aoun and the Lebanese Council of Ministers, for their approval and support, given the relevance of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program for the protection and promotion of our country's cultural heritage.

Today, The Lebanese American University with the expansive and dynamic support of President Michel Mawad, in coordination with the Ministries of Tourism and Culture are honored to announce the launching of the Intercultural Dialogue Academy for Lebanon within the founding principles of the Declaration of the Academy for Human Encounters and Dialogue, by His Excellency President of the Republic General Michel Aoun at the United Nations on September 21, 2017 for Lebanon as a permanent center for dialogue among cultures, religions and races of the united nations.

Pursuant to Lebanon Accession to the EPA, On March 25, 2022, LAU have been honored to receive an invitation from the European Institute of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe to join the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies, with the aim of encouraging research and mutual exchange on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, ensuring the creation of a platform for student and research exchanges, fostering the permanent interaction between members of the network and Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe representatives.

Through its program, the Council of Europe offers a model for transnational cultural and tourism management and allows synergies between national, regional and local authorities and a wide range of associations and socio-economic sectors. Noting that the identification of European values and a common Euro Mediterranean cultural heritage may be achieved via Cultural Routes tracing the history of peoples, migrations, and the spread of the major European currents of civilization in the fields of philosophy, religion, culture, the arts, science, technology and trade.

It has been an enjoyable cultural mission driven by the institutional collaboration of the Lebanese American University, the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Culture in line with the cultural values and strategies of the European Institute of Cultural Routes.

The “Euro Mediterranean Intercultural Dialogue Forum” that we are gathered here today to discuss will focus on enhancing and sustaining our institutional joint mission to disseminate knowledge about the history of Lebanon and will seek to sustain Lebanon’s intercultural dialogue and connectivity with the confederation of the Euro-Mediterranean cities to promote Lebanon’s Cultural Tourism industry towards boosting its Economy.

The program shall include the following activities:

1. Celebration of Lebanon, the 35th Member State of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.
2. Announcement of the Intercultural Dialogue Academy for Lebanon.
3. The inauguration of the Phoenicians' Route Museum in the historical district of Jounieh.
4. To celebrate Bkassine declaration as one of the best tourist villages in the world, as part of the initiative of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

I thank all our active partners and members of the Phoenicians' route along with LAU-Louis Cardahi Foundation , to include all the Lebanese cities and towns along Smart ways Lebanon by the Phoenician route. I would like to share a special acknowledgment to our active partners for their continues support : the Lebanese Tourist Guides Syndicate, the Lebanese Federation of Tourism Union, Jabal Moussa Association and its Magnificent High Mountain Phoenician Center, that has been inaugurated last Monday on April 11.

I thank you all for your valuable participation and hope that you will enjoy our interactive forum activities for the next three consecutive days.

Last but not least, I share with you our sincere acknowledgement towards the Lebanese media, press coverage in particular, Tele Leban for their unlimited, and continues support towards promoting Lebanon's cultural heritage and cultural tourism. Together and only together, we are able to contribute towards revamping the socio cultural economy for our beloved country Lebanon.

Thank you