



**Embassy of Italy
Beirut**

**Issam Fares Institute
for Public Policy
and International Affairs**



American University of Beirut



**Italian Cooperation
for Development**

Embassy of Italy and the American University of Beirut organize workshop on adopting an integrated approach to environmental problems

BEIRUT, 14 July 2008. A workshop seeking to integrate and coordinate efforts in environmental protection and management opened today at 9.30am at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

Promoted by the Embassy of Italy in collaboration with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) and the Interfaculty Graduate Environmental Sciences Program (IGESP)—both at AUB—the workshop aims to coordinate and harmonize activities across sectors and actors and promote synergies among donors, Lebanese institutions, NGOs, and international organizations.

Local and regional actors involved in environmental issues in Lebanon, including representatives of ministries, municipalities, universities, NGOs, UN agencies and the European Commission, all participated in the workshop to discuss topics related to the theme: “Common Ground: Coordination and Exchange of Knowledge for an Integrated Approach to Environment.”

The opening session of the workshop saw the participation of a representative of the Italian Ambassador Gabriele Checchia; representatives of Lebanon’s Ministry of Environment; Dr. Rami Zurayk, chairman of IFI’s Faculty Advisory Board and director of IGESP; and representatives from the government’s Council for Development & Reconstruction.

“Our overall objective through these workshops is to identify the needs and priorities together with the government authorities, while providing increased harmonization and coordination of activities among international and Lebanese donors, institutions and NGOs, particularly in those sectors in which Italy is most actively operating,” said the speech of Ambassador Checchia. “With respect to environmental issues, our cooperation activities are constantly increasing, since we believe that environmental degradation, does not only have a cultural cost, but it also has a direct economic cost that is borne at both the central and local levels. In fact, effective environmental management can be a source of economic opportunity.”

Leading the initiative at AUB, Dr. Rami Zurayk said: “This workshop embodies IFI’s mission to bridge the activities of academia and policymaking to promote better policies. AUB is particularly well-placed to host such a meeting, as it has been consistently active in promoting environmentally-conscious policies, on its campus and beyond.”

He added: “The workshop is an important step in identifying the work that has been done across the board to address the environmental issues that face this region, and to see how it can be more effectively brought together for a greater impact on public policy.”

The workshop kicked off with a main plenary session, in which participants discussed key environmental protection and management issues in Lebanon, while focusing on the financial cost of environmental degradation. In the afternoon session, participants split up into small working groups to address more specific issues, including land planning, resources management, and renewable energy.

This is the third in a series of workshops on development-related topics supported by the Italian Embassy - Development Cooperation Office in the past six months. It follows two others, one on gender issues, held in November 2007, and another one on local development, which took place in June 2008.

This workshop is also organized under the umbrella of IFI's environmental program—the Research and Policy Forum on Climate Change and Environment in the Arab World, one of several programs launched by the institute this year that act as discussion forums in which policymakers, international organizations, and actors across the public and private sectors can gain access to and benefit from the policy-related research of AUB's internationally-respected faculty, and that of other scholars.

The Government of Italy has been consistently contributing to the post-war reconstruction of Lebanon. At the Stockholm Donor's Conference of August 2006, Italy contributed 30 million Euros which were later coupled with another 120 million Euros pledged at the Paris III Conference. Through NGOs, UN Agencies and the Lebanese Government, Italy is financing and implementing projects in the sectors of local development, agriculture, water and wastewater infrastructure, social and educational services, healthcare, environment, women's and children's rights. Along with ordinary development assistance and soft loans, Italy's overall developmental assistance to Lebanon tops 215 million euros (approx. 335 million USD) in multi-year programs.

Contacts

Press Office – Embassy of Italy Beirut

Tel: +961 (05) 954955

Fax: +961 (05) 959616

Press.Beirut@esteri.it

American University of Beirut – Office of Information and Public Relations

Ibrahim Khoury, Director, ifkhoury@aub.edu.lb,

Maha Al-Azar, Media Relations Officer, ma110@aub.edu.lb

Tel: +961-(0)1 353 228

Fax: +961-(0)1 363 234

Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs

Tel: +961(0)1 350000 Ext: 4151

Fax: +961(0)1 737627

Email: ifi@aub.edu.lb