

**Transcript of ASL Press Conference at the Grand Serail
Beirut, Lebanon
October 31, 2008**

The Académie des Sciences du Liban (ASL) is an independent institution founded by a decree from the Lebanese Government in August of 2007.

The members of the ASL will consist only of the most accomplished, distinguished and world-recognized Lebanese scientists working inside and outside of Lebanon, as well as a smaller number of prominent foreign scientists, including some who are of Lebanese origin, or who can contribute to the growth of the sciences in Lebanon.

All ASL Academicians provide their services pro bono, i.e. voluntarily and without payment, as a public service.

The ASL aims to play a central role in Lebanon's scientific life, similar to that played by national academies of sciences in many countries. The ultimate goals of the ASL are to contribute directly to the growth, invigoration, and dissemination of the sciences in Lebanon, and to help in growing a world-class scientific culture that is both universal in its aspirations and responsive to the particular needs of the nation.

Much like the venerable French Academy of Sciences, which has solicitously shepherded the new academy from its conception to its inception, the ASL, as is declared in its charter, seeks to achieve the above-stated general goals by

- * Providing independent advice and guidance to governmental and private institutions on matters of scientific research and education.

- * Encouraging, initiating and aiding research and educational programs in the sciences.

- * Helping the dissemination and promulgation of the results of scientific research.

- * Facilitating the exchange of ideas and results with similar institutions around the world.

- * Bestowing awards and honors on distinguished scientists.

- * Exhorting young Lebanese men and women to consider careers in the sciences.

- * Strengthening the links between the sciences and society by addressing the needs of the population, public health, the economy and the environment.

Over the past three days, we, the members of the ASL's Executive Committee, met in Beirut for the first time, and had a series of meetings with a number of leaders in the Lebanese academic and scientific establishments including a number of presidents of leading universities. In these meetings we introduced the academy, its mission and character and sought input from these various leaders on how the academy could best serve the nation.

The dialogs we initiated are intended to lead to a symposium to be organized by the ASL and held in Lebanon in the first half of 2009. The symposium will give the opportunity for Lebanese scientists, teachers, leaders, and policy makers to define the scientific themes that are more pressing for the Lebanese society, describe the challenges that are needed to be met and formulate an extensive program of activities and initiatives to meet these challenges.

The resulting program will form the basis and inspiration for a 3-year plan that the academy will adopt in 2009.