The Speech of the Representative of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Emile Lahoud, H.E. Minister of Public Works and Transport
Mr. Najib Mikati


Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased, in the name of the President General Emile Lahoud, whom I am honored to represent this morning, to announce the opening of the 10th Annual Convention of the American Lebanese Engineering Society in Beirut. His Excellency has asked me to pass to the conferees his best regards and his wishes towards the success of this convention to achieve the objectives for which it is being held.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You are gathered today on the ground of Lebanon and in its Capital Beirut, coming from all over the United States, thus in this step we see many significant aspects, allow me to dwell on some:

* First significance, your trust in your country that was never shaken despite all difficulties and ordeals undergone by this country.

* Second significance, your faith that Lebanon has a role to play in its milieu and region, and in its interaction with the world States. This role that has been concealed for a while, has once again regained its radiance.

* Third significance, your desire to closely examine Lebanon's present situation, in particular after the liberation of its land in the South and the West Bekaa from the Israeli occupation, and after Lebanon has regained its sovereignty over a region, that was and always will be, the land of resistance, dignity and power.

Your presence in Beirut shall give you the opportunity to share with
your families in the liberated South and West Bekaa, the joy of this victory that is realized only by the solidarity and concurrence of the Lebanese people in the land recuperation procession led by the State, the national resistance, the army and the people that have suffered, endured and withstood. The support that Lebanon got from the close Arab countries and the friendly foreign states, for its firm attitude has the biggest effect in reflecting a new image of the mighty Lebanon, different from the former one that has been deeply impressed in the minds and that has almost become its synonym, except for the change carried out by the Country in all domains.

Lebanon shall always endeavor in collaboration with the International Community to recuperate every occupied inch of its land so that the Lebanese territories become free up to the internationally recognized borders since 1923.

The international society has appreciated Lebanon's attachment to its right, and admired the resistance, the sacrifices and struggle of the Lebanese people in order to liberate their territories. Thus the contribution in the UN forces existing in the South is certainly the symbol of the solidarity of the peace-loving world States, with the Lebanese adherence to bring the south region back to order and security, after Israel has made it for twenty two years a ruin field and anxiety source, and has turned some of its villages into burnt land.

The effort made by Lebanon to realize the Conference of the Granting States to be held on its territory within the next few days, has perhaps obtained the echo that it deserves, so that the reoccurrence of peace and tranquility to the Lebanese South coincides with the start of its development and reconstruction works to compensate the deprivation of years of occupation. These works must be provided with all necessary material capacities to finance the project that the Lebanese Government has established, and has determined its costs and priorities. This project has acquired an Arab and international favorable reaction, we hope that it shall be translated into action in the near future, by holding the first stage of the conference in Beirut in order to lay out the work methodology specifying the role of the granter States and the contribution of each of them in reviving the South.

Dear Conferees,

Since the inception of the American Lebanese Engineering Society, in 1991, the establishment of which was initiated by a group of engineers in
Orlando -Florida, their aim was - and still is - to make the Society a cadre of information and resource interchange, and an enfolder of developmental exploits. You have invited to participate in this work, experts, specialists and professionals well known with their competence and knowledge. Choosing "the Engineering Technique in the New Century", as your Conference subject, is only to stress on your wish to deliberate and exchange views about a significant subject constituting a direct challenge that the States, Organizations and specialized Institutions endeavor to face and interact with, because it represents the most important characteristics of this era, which are progress, development and modernity.

The participation of this special elite of engineers in this Convention, and your adherence to make it an open forum for the specialists, professionals, administrators and researchers, render this reunion a real opportunity to exchange practical ideas, to evaluate the available and modern experience and information, and to try to find a new vision to take action in the future in order to ensure the human being’s welfare, comfort and safety.

Dear Conferees,

Lebanon in particular and the Middle East Countries in general, are considered among the regions that witness the most and increased constructional activity and rehabilitation in all fields, as well as the placement of advanced and up-to-date computer systems. Your participation in this Conference in Beirut shall allow you to have a close look into the progress made in Lebanon in this sphere, which has basically contributed in the development of its economy that goes along and interacts with the technologic and scientific progress.

Lebanon is aware that harmony between the knowledge based upon the works of the mind and intellect, and the mental output is essential at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Therefore, we emphasis, in both the private and public sectors, upon the importance of taking advantage from the great technical changes witnessed by the World. For this purpose, many seminars, conferences and assemblies were held in Beirut and the Lebanese regions, aiming at interchanging ideas and expertise, which produced recommendations, which the Lebanese official administrations endeavor to translate progressively into action through laws and legislation, so that they shall be able to convoy and adapt themselves to the progress occurring in many spheres, without causing any negative effect upon the particularity of our position and culture.
Our free economic system in Lebanon has main characteristics that enable it to play an active and special role while facing the challenges of the new century. Hence, individual initiative, property protection, free capital flow, transfers, stability legislation and tax regulations, as well as bank secrecy, have all contributed in making the economic openness one of Lebanon's characteristics. Insofar as the economic policies are clear, the horizons of economy, growth and investments are expanded in Lebanon.

We are trying, dear conferees, to make Lebanon the heart of the construction activity and the center of the transport services in the Middle East, since it has the advantage of its geographical position and its proximity to different Arab regions and Capitals.

We want Beirut to be the core of the world transit activity, connecting between north and south, east and west. And to achieve this purpose, we have endeavored to find a developed substructure for transport linking Lebanon to the Gulf area through advanced ports and a modern transport system.

Lebanon is called to play the role of economical and service stirrer in the region in this new phase. Therefore, we are aware that this role requires from us additional effort to release the culture of production, the culture of quality in production and the culture of concurrence. Production consists of creation, organization and accuracy; Quality is the adherence to the best and to the capacity of competition; and Concurrence generalizes interaction and cooperation, and develops the production volume.

Dear conferees,

Your conference schedule is full of comprehensive and satisfactory subjects and lectures relating to the diversity of your specialization, and covering practically all points pivoting around the title you have chosen for the Conference. The experiences that some participants shall talk about may be appropriate for evaluation in order to benefit from them to generalize what is proper according to the objective circumstances for each case.

I have great expectations that this Conference shall render recommendations responding to what you wish to accomplish in this assembly that gathers the elite of our engineers in the United States
and Lebanon, who follow the Chinese proverb: "Knowledge that does not develop every day, dwindles day after day", and who have the objective of what Plato said: "The object of knowledge is the good", may God help you achieve your aims and may peace be with you.