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**Speech of the Rector of Antonine University Father Michel Jalakh  
Smart Beirut Summit  
18 December 2018**

Excellencies, Honorable guests, Dear colleagues and friends,

Good morning and welcome to the Smart Beirut Summit 2018! It is a pleasure and honor to see such a professional audience interested in the event launched by the Faculty of Engineering and the Ticket Lab at the Antonine University.

Nowadays, technology is the main entrance door to numerous fields, which makes it very attractive. When reading about the Smart City concept, I could not but think why the word “smart” has been so well interconnected with technology, and some questions came to my mind: If we are fine with technology, does it mean we are smart? and if not, what does it mean? or how smart should we be to use technology? Does smart have the same meaning as we used to understand it before the spread of technology worldwide?

What do psychologists with their IQ tests and others think about a SMART city? What does it have to do with the Acronym SMART in management?

Looking up at the word smart in the Oxford dictionary, I realized that it could have several meanings: being well-dressed or being clever, bright, intelligent. So, from appearances to inner thinking.

This brought me to look at the management side where having SMART goals would mean having Specific, Measurable, Achievable goals that are to be Realistic in a Timely manner.

So far, it means that we need management and organizational skills. We need to be realistic, proactive, straightforward, and progress with creative ideas that can be implemented.

A leader in Digital Cities defined a SMART City as a city that builds up its infrastructure for a successful Future City where the economy is based on a solid education that provides the upcoming workforce with the skills needed for an “economically active in high-value industry sectors... as technology evolves”. I will add for the well-being of humankind.

Therefore, we need sustainability and equity in growth distribution so that employment opportunities as well as social and environmental outcomes become tangible. This would need Lebanon to manage efficiently its funds and its resources such as energy, transportation systems and water distribution, helping in providing a low-cost high-speed internet and an attractive, healthy environment in which to live and work. Are we talking about Plato’s ideal new city when thinking about Lebanon?

Working on a roadmap for a SMART Beirut needs a Vision at the national level, a Vision that ascertains pillars for building a knowledge and technology society. It needs a dedicated team of experts who will join efforts on a strategic plan meant to involve the future generations who will continue improving our country no matter what happens so that we move into the digital transformation that will transform lives.

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Today, it would be good to ask ourselves where we are from the “smart city that uses information and communication technologies to increase operational efficiency, share information with the public and improve both the quality of government services and citizen welfare” as it can be seen in their last stages at Antwerp and Helsinki?

What is a fact is that we need Engineers with well-developed social and environmental orientations along with the knowledge and skills needed, in order to have a SMART City that embodies a sustainable process that would survive no matter what politics and politicians do? This is our role in higher education. Dean Chady Abou Jaoude will elaborate on the state-of-the-art engineering programs that the Antonine University has developed believing we can do it together!

I leave it to you during this excellent opportunity today to share experiences in the field, and see how we can all support our youth to regenerate our nation.