

World Trade Center – Beirut Opening Remarks

Chadi Abou Daher, General Manager

Excellencies, Distinguished guests,

On behalf of World Trade Center – Beirut I am glad to welcome you to Lebanon's annual Corporate Social Responsibility Conference in its first edition.

Your presence here today is a testimony of the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility in your business culture.

The stated objective of this conference has been to help consolidate CSR initiatives, and stimulate the growth of a socially responsible culture in organizations across Lebanon. While CSR has recently started to gain grounds in Lebanon, this is not a completely new global phenomenon.

The history of Corporate Social Responsibility may be as old as the history of business itself. Yet, it wasn't until modern time that the impact of corporations on society has become so significant. From the 19th century's industrial revolution to the technological revolution of our time, CSR has assumed entirely new dimension.

The evolution of the concept of social responsibility reflects the fact that corporations while focusing on growth and creating profit have become under increasing pressure to address the social, environmental, and economic problems it is perceived creating.

Although there are several overlapping CSR themes, there is no consensus on what constitutes CSR. While most businesses regard CSR as philanthropy or public relation or even a necessary expense to legitimize the business, there is an increasing need to redefine CSR in a way that brings business and society back together. Economic success should be measured not just by the profit a corporation is making, but also by the shared economic and social value it is creating. In other words, it is bringing society back into the center of the equation.

This conference is the byproduct of collaboration between WTC Beirut and United Management Bureau, and it would not have been realized without the valuable contribution of our steering committee, moderators, and speakers. Appreciation is also due to our sponsors and media partners.

Special admiration goes to His Excellency the President of the Republic, General Michel Suleiman, for his patronage of the conference.

The conference agenda has been carefully designed to provide insights into the conceptual thinking behind devising your CSR strategy, the challenges of implementing a successful CSR program, and numerous case studies on best practices in the field.

On behalf of the organizers I wish you have insightful and useful conference!