

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN DUBAI

THIRTEENTH COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

May 12, 2010

KEYNOTE – MR. LOU DOBBS

Al Salamou Aleykom Your Highness Sheik Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, Your Highnesses, Excellencies, Executive Vice President Elias Bou Saab, President Lance de Masi, Members of the Governing Board, distinguished guests, Parents, Faculty Staff and Graduates. It is my honor to be with you on this special day. My heartfelt congratulations to each of you, and if I may, a few thoughts for you to consider.

We are at the threshold of a new century, a time of unprecedented promise ... and considerable peril. A time of technological advancement and economic turmoil, a time of global engagement and in some instances, conflict.

You will note those same words would have applied at any of the twelve commencements that preceded yours and those same words will likely be true for the AUD commencements that will follow in perpetuity. Promise and peril, peace and the unpredictable are elements of the nature of life itself. Not only does the history of mankind urge us to embrace life and not shirk from its challenges, but for those who would truly be leaders, to fulfill promises and to achieve great things, and do great good. You are fortunate to have not only your wonderful education here at AUD, but to have the inspiring panorama of Dubai and the wonders that have been wrought here by leaders who did not merely dream, but planned Dubai's future with purpose and accomplished the great works that make Dubai a singular, exemplary beacon of imagination in the Middle East.

Like other speakers your university might have honored with the invitation to join you here today, I also come exhorting you to embrace life, and to achieve great things. American University in Dubai has provided you with the opportunity for a world class education, the technical skills and critical thinking that are fundamental to accomplishment and success. And beyond a doubt, your generation is the most technologically advanced in history. You are superbly prepared to embrace and engage the world. I know you are eager for the challenges that await you, and all of us who have preceded you are cheering you on, and offer whatever counsel we can to help you along the way.

No commencement speaker, certainly not yours, can begin to offer in minutes any profundity that your university, your schools, family and faith have not provided you over many years. So I will urge upon you a perspective, a perspective that recognizes the privilege that is yours to be educated in this place and this time. My commencement message is simple and straightforward: Please maintain the independence of thought and critical judgment you've been taught here in Dubai. In this university, in this emirate. Both stand as monuments of imagination, of faith in the future, and the courage and capacity to resist orthodoxy. Be independent but understand what you owe others. Seek your own path, make up your own mind, and you will learn, if you have not already, that you must learn to follow before you lead. Like many of you, I attended university on a scholarship. And like you, education made all the difference in the life I have led. Like you, I wanted to make a difference, no matter how small. Take seriously your responsibilities as educated men and women, take far less seriously yourselves. Men and women are not unlike nations, no matter how powerful or influential; their strength is amplified by humility. I know, I know. You are young lions, and rightfully proud and hardly interested in constraint. ...but I would urge upon you also some measure of humility. That's right, humility. Even hidden from others, humility will steel you for life's disappointments, and in success, humility will hold you back from overreaching. A small entreaty from me to you, one I hope you might consider.

As graduates of American University in Dubai, you've learned the power of knowledge and diversity, the importance of understanding that men and women of different cultures and different faiths and different generations build strength in society as we combine our talents and skills in a common purpose. Here in Dubai, you've experienced first hand the difference a leader of vision and character can make in the lives of many. Take that lesson with you throughout your lives.

The emirate of Dubai has inspired not only the middle east, but the world as a city where people are guaranteed fair treatment regardless of their race, nationality, religious beliefs or status, all the while diversifying its society and economy: built on oil exploration, Dubai is a vision come true of tourism, leisure and hospitality, financial services and real estate...and yes, education. American University in Dubai has become one of the premier institutions of higher education in the Middle East, and I know you are proud that today you become part of this institution for the rest of your lives. I salute you; celebrate your commencement, and humbly thank you for the honor of sharing this glorious day with you.

Atamanah Alley Koum Hazan Saeedan.

Thank you.