



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER NAMES LEBANON'S ANTOINE CHEDID AS “AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR”

*Prime Minister of Lebanon, H.E. Tammam Salam, Cites
Chedid's “Major Contribution” to Lebanon – U.S. Relations*

*U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry Commends Chedid for
His “Meaningful Impact” on Key Issues*

Washington, DC – The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) this week named H.E. Antoine Chedid, Ambassador of the Republic of Lebanon, as the 2015 “Ambassador of the Year.” More than 100 business and government leaders participated in the luncheon and awards ceremony at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Georgetown. NUSACC began its “Ambassador of the Year” recognition ceremonies eleven years ago, and Ambassador Chedid is the first Lebanese to receive this esteemed award.



H.E. Antoine Chedid, Ambassador of the Republic of Lebanon: “Like the legendary Phoenix, Lebanon has always emerged from the ashes and has steadily regained its former vitality.”

“Let me thank NUSACC for hosting this event and for honoring me with the prestigious Ambassador of the Year Award, which I will cherish dearly; it will occupy an important place in my heart and in our home,” said Ambassador Chedid. “On behalf of my country, Lebanon, I humbly accept this honor. It has been a privilege to serve for the last eight-and-a-half years as Ambassador in the greatest international capital, Washington.”

In bestowing the award, David Hamod, NUSACC’s President & CEO, noted, “Lebanon has faced more than its fair share of challenges over the years, but Tony has met these challenges with grace, dignity, and aplomb. And for those of us missing the ‘old country’, Tony’s gracious hospitality – and that of his wife, Nicole – helped to bring a ‘little bit of Lebanon’ to Americans of all walks of life.”

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VIP Well-Wishers

The room was filled with dignitaries, including numerous current and former ambassadors. Many who could not attend sent their best wishes.

A letter from H.E. Tammam Salam, Lebanon's Prime Minister, stated, "You have had a major contribution to the building, consolidation, and expansion of the trusted partnership we enjoy with the United States through your work with the U.S. State Department, Congress, and officials of many other key institutions. The credibility you enjoy has been instrumental in this accomplishment."



H.E. Tammam Salam, Prime Minister of Lebanon: "You have had a major contribution to the building, consolidation, and expansion of the trusted partnership we enjoy with the United States."

The Lebanese Prime Minister went on to congratulate NUSACC and its members for the "thoughtful initiative they had in organizing this gathering to honor Ambassador Antoine Chedid on the eve of his retirement and to present him with the well-deserved Ambassador of the Year Award."

The Honorable John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State, also sent a letter of congratulations to Ambassador Chedid. "Your personal advocacy on key issues has had a meaningful impact, from securing greater assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces to your efforts in the coalition to fight extremism to supporting the communities in Lebanon hosting Syrian refugees," he wrote. "This richly deserved award recognizes your outstanding efforts over the past eight years in advancing U.S. – Lebanese relations at a crucial time in the region."



Hon. John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State: "This richly deserved award recognizes your outstanding efforts over the past eight years in advancing U.S. – Lebanese relations at a crucial time in the region."

Secretary Kerry concluded, "You and your family should be proud of all that you have accomplished during your exemplary service in Washington, and in the course of a broader career in the Foreign Ministry, dedicated to fostering strong relations with the United States."

Kerry's letter was read aloud by Ambassador Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Feierstein added some appreciative words of his own: "Thanks to Ambassador Chedid's dedication and work, the relationship between Lebanon and the United States has never been stronger. And I am sure that the strong foundations he has laid here in the

United States will allow our two countries to make further strides together, particularly as Lebanon faces enormous external and internal challenges.”

The Honorable Ray LaHood, former U.S. Secretary of Transportation, noted, “Many thanks for your extraordinary service to our beloved Lebanon as Ambassador, diplomat, and advocate for the government and people of Lebanon. Tony, you are by far the strongest, best Ambassador to serve Lebanon in Washington. You always made yourself available to the U.S. Administration, Members of Congress, and communities all over America . . . including my hometown of Peoria, Illinois.”

And Salim Zeenni, President of the American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce (AmCham Lebanon), sent these accolades from Beirut: “You have worked so hard for Lebanon and the United States, and dedicated valuable time to strengthening the bond and relationship between both countries . . . Thank you for your perseverance and support and, above all, for your confidence and faith and for always being there at the right moment, especially during this very crucial period for Lebanon and the United States.”



H.E. Antoine Chedid (front center), flanked by (from left to right): Robert Fadel, Member of the Lebanese Parliament; Nicole Chedid, wife of the Ambassador; Heather Pedersen, Boeing; David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO; H.E. Fayçal Gouia, Tunisian Ambassador; Gen. (ret.) George Joulwan, Emergent Biosolutions; H.E. Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Lawrence Silverman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs; Hon. Ken Hyatt, Deputy Under Secretary for International Trade; Marie Royce, Alcatel-Lucent; and Amin Salam, NUSACC Vice President of Business Development.

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Highlights of Ambassador Chedid's Remarks

In his acceptance speech, Ambassador Chedid highlighted the longstanding, historical relationship between Lebanon and the United States: "The first American to go to Lebanon arrived there 180 years ago, and the first Lebanese to come to the United States landed on these shores a quarter century later."

The two peoples share many values, he suggested: "Americans and Lebanese admire freedom and tolerance, democracy, the right of free expression, and the support of civil rights. The partnership between Lebanon and the U.S. dates back many years and continues to grow Our meeting today is yet another manifestation of the strong partnership and shared values and aspirations between the U.S. and Lebanon."

The Lebanese people are known for their innovation and business savvy, Ambassador Chedid suggested: "The Lebanese are farmers and fishermen, bakers and builders, professors and processors, actors and attorneys, poets and especially politicians. But if you scratch a Lebanese, you will find our real identity as bankers, and especially merchants. It is as such that our international role can be understood, a role for which Lebanon has received world renown . . . Our commercial and entrepreneurship roles are still our trademark."



Lebanon has its challenges, Ambassador Chedid admitted, but he made the case for that country's bright future, including: a well-educated, capable and innovative population; a strong banking sector that has outperformed all other sectors of the economy; an economy primarily based on services; a free-market economic environment; a resilient private sector, including expatriate Lebanese communities.

"Like the legendary Phoenix," Ambassador Chedid concluded, "Lebanon has always emerged from the ashes and has steadily regained its former vitality."

Hon. Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs: "Thanks to Ambassador Chedid's dedication and work, the relationship between Lebanon and the United States has never been stronger."

The Last Word Goes to Kahlil Gibran

This is the eleventh year of NUSACC's "Ambassador of the Year Award," which began in 2004. Previous recipients have come from Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. The



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award, the only one of its kind, recognizes Arab ambassadors for their outstanding service in support of U.S.-Arab commercial relations.

Final tributes highlighted the durable, yet very animate, bridge that connects Lebanon to the United States. Amin Salam, Vice President of NUSACC, accentuated Lebanon’s distinctiveness: “Lebanon is neither measured nor defined by size or population; Lebanon is measured and defined by the resounding success of its people across the world – in every continent and in every trade.”

He continued, “Ambassador Chedid, you are one of those people who reflect the Lebanon of which we are all proud. You served Lebanon in some of its most difficult times with absolute

dedication, commitment, and a strong command of some very challenging issues.”

In closing the award ceremony, NUSACC President & CEO David Hamod drew upon Kahlil Gibran, Lebanon’s most famous native son. Gibran sought answers to this question: “What is it to be a good citizen?”

According to Gibran, “It is to stand before the towers of New York and Washington, Chicago and San Francisco, saying in your hearts, ‘I am the descendent of the people that built Damascus and Byblos, and Tyre and Sidon, and then Antioch, and I am here to build with you, and with a will.’ It is to be proud of being an American, but it is also to be proud that your



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fathers and mothers came from a land upon which God laid His gracious hand and raised His messengers.”

Hamod congratulated Ambassador Chedid and his wife, Nicole, for their success as “messengers for Lebanon.” He concluded, “As messengers, as you prepare to travel back to Lebanon to begin a new chapter in your already rich lives, please promise to carry us in your hearts as you begin the long journey home.”



The Grand Serail, headquarters of the Prime Minister of Lebanon.



Lebanon's national emblem, the cedar tree.

The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, widely regarded as the voice of American business in the Arab world, is in touch with business communities across the United States and serves as the U.S. point of contact for the national chambers of commerce in the 22 Arab nations. On a daily basis, NUSACC works closely with leaders throughout the Arab world, as well as high-level decision makers in the U.S. business community, public policy research centers, multilateral institutions, nongovernmental organizations, media, and the U.S. Government.

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