

Helmut Maucher Interview with the Daily Star 22-2-2012

BEIRUT: Former Nestlé chairman Helmut Maucher shared the secret of his success to attendees at a conference in Beirut Wednesday Maucher, who is now the honorary chairman of the multinational company, did not hesitate to share his wide experience in the food industry during a gathering held to mark Fransabank's 90th anniversary.

During his lecture he offered the attendees tips on how to become a successful business leader.

Maucher's recipe for success in the business world is simple but not simplistic. "You have to remain close to your product, remain close to your people and remain close to your customers," he said.

For him personality and character are as important as professional skills.

"More often, you have to trust your intuitions and look straight into someone's eyes. You know what I am talking about," he told his audience.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Maucher explained that despite the world's growing economic and financial woes, the global food industry remains stable and is poised for significant growth, both on the medium and long terms.

"The developing world will offer the biggest potential to growth for the global food industry. Both the population and wealth in these regions are growing simultaneously," he said.

"Each time the GDP per capita grows, the food industry will surely grow as well," he added.

In the developed world, however, the market for the food industry is different but will still see growth as people continue to demand more advanced, innovative and premium food products.

Nevertheless, Maucher said the industry as well as governments should contribute more toward stabilizing food prices and alleviating global shortages in agricultural goods.

He also believed the world was already facing serious shortages on three extremely important levels. "We are facing three great scarcities now; Water, energy and agriculture," he pointed out.

While demand for food is growing exponentially, supply is being constrained by resource shortages.

"In other words, no one wants to eat rice all the time anymore. People around the world demand better food and are able to afford it," he added.

The discrepancy between global demand and supply, according to Maucher, highlights the need for more effective agriculture methods.

"Currently, agriculture consumes 70 percent of the planet's water resources. This figure could be much lower if efficient methods are adopted," he said, calling on governments and corporate sectors to work toward introducing modern agriculture systems in developing nations.

He argued that raising food prices was not necessarily good for the industry as it hinders development across developing nations, eventually wreaking havoc on its most vital markets.



“People in the developing world are still spending 50 percent of their income on food. While in developed countries the percentage is 11 percent. Such high percentage [in developing nations] sharply slows down social and economic development,” Maucher added.

When asked whether he expected direct foreign investment in the MENA region to return to pre-Arab Spring levels, he said it would depend largely on the region’s security situation.

“The Middle East remains attractive for foreign investment,” he added.