H.E. Minister of Economy and Trade Dr Alain Hakim,
Director of QUALEB Dr. Ali Berro,
Head of the External Policy Team at British Standards Institution Mr David Bell,
Excellencies,
Quality experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for having me today at this closing ceremony of the Twinning action in the framework of the 'Support to the Quality Unit of the Ministry of Economy and Trade' programme (QUALEB).

As we can see, the teams of the European Union and QUALEB have worked very hard over the last years in order to improve the Lebanese Quality Infrastructure
which relates to technical fields such as metrology, standardisation, certification and accreditation. As you all know, this quality infrastructure is a pre-condition to comply with international standards and to better engage in trade relations.

For the last decade already, we have been cooperating closely to boost the competitiveness of the private sector, for which an adequate Quality Infrastructure is a must.

The various QUALEB components have provided capacity building support to the key institutions, particularly in the fields of standards, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment, market surveillance and consumer protection.

Let us not forget how essential this all is: it is the technical and quality infrastructure that ultimately enables manufacturers and suppliers to demonstrate that their products comply with relevant legislation and that they meet quality requirements. This opens the door for international market acceptance and prevents the duplication of product testing: first for the national market and for the destination markets.

This Twinning programme that we are closing today was implemented over a period of almost two years, starting in January 2013, with the help of the United Kingdom through the British Standards Institution and the National Measurement Office, and with the help of the Czech Republic through the Czech Office for Standards and Metrology and Testing. The European Union funded the action for a total amount of €1.4 million as part of the QUALEB programme. This is a rather small sum if you think how much has been achieved!
As we have seen from the presentations, the final results are impressive, and I am pleased the programme has led to a significant improvement of the Lebanese Quality Infrastructure, for the benefit of all people in Lebanon.

Let us re-cap the achievements:

Three laboratories have been accredited; a National Metrology Council has been set up and nine metrology decrees have been drafted to support the Metrology Law; LIBNOR - the Lebanese standards body - has made significant modernisation leaps; the Trade Information Centre has a new information system to help Lebanese exporters, and the consumer protection directorate has received extensive training on legal metrology and on how to handle consumer complaints and enforce the consumer law.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Comprehensive programmes like this can be very challenging because they require the continuous strong commitment of a wide range of beneficiaries and a great deal of coordination. The success really is the fruit of the deep commitment shown by our Lebanese partners and the EU experts.

But work doesn't stop here. The Lebanese Quality Infrastructure has to be further improved and significant challenges remain to be addressed. In particular, a functioning accreditation body will have to be put in place and a better culture of quality has to be developed.
The European Union is the main partner of Lebanon in the area of quality and excellence, which are essential for economic growth and ultimately job creation in Lebanon. With QUALEB, we have made a significant step forward in this respect.

Let me thank the Minister of Economy and Trade Dr Alain Hakim for his continued efforts to strengthen the cooperation between the EU and Lebanon; as well as Dr Ali Berro, the EU experts and the QUALEB team for their engagement and hard work over the past two years.

A good job is well done!

Thank you.