



**Speech of Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the Delegation of the
European Union to Lebanon**

**'Peaceful And Comprehensive Education in Seven Districts of Lebanon'
First graduation ceremony**

Order of Engineers, Cola roundabout
16 February 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

H.E. Minister of Agriculture, Akram Shehayeb,

Excellencies,

Dear graduates,

Director of the Fondazione Minoprio School, Dr. Anna Zottola,

Directors of the Ministry of Agriculture vocational schools,

Colleagues of AVSI Foundation,

Representatives of Biladi NGO,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we celebrate the energy of motivation, connection within a community, a sense of belonging, responsibility and accomplishments. This graduation is a testimony to the determination to succeed and move forward.

The European Union has a longstanding partnership with the government of Lebanon and the Ministry of Agriculture. When the opportunity presented itself, we did not hesitate to support

seven of the Ministry of Agriculture's vocational schools to run special training programmes, together with AVSI Foundation and in cooperation with Fondazione Minoprio and Biladi NGO.

The short video that we just watched was a good illustration of the many benefits for the participating schools, teachers and students. The equipment of the seven agricultural schools in Akkar, Batroun, the Metn, Shouf, Baalbek, Marjayoun and Nabatieh will be supported and improved. Direct transfer of expertise will take place through visits to and from Fondazione Minoprio - this is an added value that the peer approach brings with the personal and institutional relations that are developed. AVSI Foundation's understanding of the Lebanese agricultural sector and labour market is meeting the aspirations of young Lebanese and Syrian men and women, as explained by some graduates in the video. School directors and teachers also benefit from training in Lebanon and Italy, and youths of different ages, gender, nationality and backgrounds gain expertise and certifications.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This action is part of the European Union's response to the consequences of the Syrian war in Lebanon. Since 2012, the European Union alone has granted almost €450 million in support to Lebanon, and the member states provided a similar amount. While a portion of our support was allocated for humanitarian assistance to refugees, the majority of it has been used to support Lebanese institutions to provide services to both vulnerable Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees. Our focus has been on education – both primary and vocational, primary health care and local infrastructure (water, sanitation, solid waste).

I would like to thank H.E. Minister of Agriculture, Akram Shehayeb, his team at the Ministry, AVSI Foundation, Fondazione Minoprio and the Lebanese NGO Biladi. The European Union will continue to stand by the people of Lebanon in these challenging times.

To our graduates, I wish the very best for the future. Work hard to make your dreams come true.

Thank you