

PRESS RELEASE

**Visit of Members of the European Parliament to Lebanon:
"Strengthen the support to Syrian displaced and refugees and to their
Lebanese hosts"**

Veronique de Keyser, Member of the European Parliament and Vice President for Foreign Affairs of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S & D) is visiting Lebanon, accompanied by Ana Gomes, Member of the European Parliament and the Foreign Affairs Coordinator of the S & D Group.

The parliamentary delegation met with President of the Republic Michel Sleiman, Prime Minister Nagib Miqati, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Adnan Mansour, members of the Lebanese-European friendship group at the Lebanese Parliament, and also with representatives of Lebanese civil society.

Meetings are foreseen with the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, Walid Joublatt, the head of the Hezbollah parliamentary bloc Mohammad Raad, the head of the Future parliamentary bloc and former Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, as well as with officials and parliamentarians from different political parties.

The parliamentary delegation sought to inform themselves about the political situation in Lebanon, and to better understand the impact of the crisis in Syria on the country. To this end, the parliamentary delegation visited several localities in the region of Wadi Khaled to better understand the situation on the ground in this border region, including about the humanitarian assistance provided by the Lebanese authorities to Syrian refugees and displaced, in partnership with international organisations and Lebanese non governmental organisations.

On her return to Beirut, MEP De Keyser remarked: "I was impressed by the solidarity expressed by the Lebanese people, despite the particularly challenging conditions. I salute the efforts undertaken by the Lebanese authorities, their partners, the NGOs and the local population to provide assistance to these Syrian refugees and displaced, notwithstanding the fact that the inhabitants of this region themselves live in very difficult economic conditions, as a result of endemic poverty worsened by the events in Syria and the influx of Syrian displaced and refugees. Needs are great and could rise further with the arrival of new refugees and displaced persons. All possible means must be mobilised to help these people to the greatest extent possible. I would also like to call upon the EU to treat this issue as a priority and to intensify its humanitarian efforts". In this context, the parliamentary delegation wishes to encourage the Lebanese authorities to further increase the humanitarian assistance provided to the refugees and displaced as well as to the population living at the Lebanese border areas, to further strengthen the role of public authorities to this end (e.g. by extending the mandate of the High Relief Committee to other regions of the country) and to facilitate the circulation of Syrian refugees and displaced throughout Lebanon.

The parliamentary delegation reiterated the commitment of the European Union to Lebanon in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, including the implementation of its agenda of political, economic and social reform. In this regard, the parliamentary delegation believes that further efforts need to be made, including with respect to human rights in general and the rights of women in particular. This observation is made in the context of recent discussions concerning domestic violence. The parliamentary delegation supports the efforts of civil society in this field.

