

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

LMAC International Support Group (ISG)

Gefinor Rotana Hotel, Beirut
Wednesday 19 September 2012

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Brigadier General Imad Odeimi, Director of the Lebanese Mine Action
Centre,

Mr Robert Watkins, UNDP Resident Representative,

Distinguished participants,

Thank you for having us brought together around this table today. During a recent visit to Arnoun I have, once again, had the opportunity to witness at first hand the utmost importance of demining for the population directly affected and for all of Lebanon.

The efforts of public institutions, donors and the NGOs active in the field cannot be underestimated. All these activities are being coordinated in a dedicated and highly effective manner by the Lebanese Mine Action Centre. **I wish to congratulate General Imad Odeimi** for him taking over as Director of the Lebanese Mine Action Centre and wish also to thank General Mohammad Fehmi for his demonstrated commitment to fight the still severe level of mine contamination in Lebanon. As part of this ongoing commitment I reiterate our support for the Lebanese Mine Action Centre's "2011-2020 National Mine Action Strategy" and encourage the national authorities to fully implement this important strategy.

Allow me also to pay tribute to the dedication and the courage of local inhabitants, especially young women, who have enrolled to carry out the delicate, stressful and dangerous mine-clearing activities – working ultimately for the sake of their families, communities and for Lebanon.

As you are aware, the European Union is a major donor in this field in Lebanon, with a contribution of 28 million Euros for the period 2006-2015. We support a comprehensive approach: mine clearance activities on the ground, capacity building projects for the Lebanese Mine Action Centre **and technical assistance on mine victim assistance** and mine risk education.

This integrated approach is a key factor for success, and I was reassured during my recent field visit that the impact of our common actions on the local population is significant. Not only in terms of safety and well being, but also in terms of local economic opportunities. As you know, after clearing contaminated areas, the released land is usually handed back to farmers for productive agricultural use.

As we are keen to ensure continuity in our engagement in the fight against landmines in Lebanon, the Delegation of the European Union will launch at the end of this month a new call for proposals for more than 8 million Euros. I hope that ambitious proposals for mine clearance will be submitted under this call.

Lastly, we re-call the urgency for Lebanon to become a State party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This could give the necessary, hopefully, final boost needed from the

Lebanese side and from donor organisations, to rid this country of one of the many remnants of its wartime history.

Thank you.