

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

**Europe Day – 9 May**

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Member of Parliament Michel Moussa, representative of the President of the Republic Michel Sleiman, the Speaker of the House Nabih Berri, caretaker Prime Minister Najib Miqati, Representatives of political, security and religious authorities,  
Dear Excellencies, friends and colleagues,

Thank you for joining this 63<sup>rd</sup> celebration of Europe Day, today here in Yarzeh.

On 9 May 1950 the then French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presented his proposal for the creation of an organised Europe to help maintain peaceful relations between European countries. This proposal, known as the '*Schuman declaration*', is considered as *the act* which created what is now the European Union.

We just listened to Beethoven's musical setting for the *Ode to Joy, L'Ode à la joie*. The poem was written in 1785 by the German poet Friedrich Schiller, expressing a vision of the human race becoming brothers – and sisters...

Since 1972, this setting has been the Anthem of Europe. Without words, in the universal language of music, this Anthem expresses the European ideals of *freedom, peace and solidarity*.

To date, twenty-seven Member States have signed up to the Treaty of Lisbon. Soon Croatia will join. Eight more countries are in line for full membership once all conditions are fulfilled: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey.

The European Union today is an ever growing entity of more than 500 million inhabitants, using officially 23 languages but speaking more than 230. We are the world's largest economy, the leading trade partner and the first provider of development assistance and humanitarian aid.

Our role in global security is expanding. We are the largest contributor to peacekeeping and peacemaking operations. EU Member States are core contributors to UNIFIL with over 30% of the troops. So far we have conducted 28 of our own EU civilian and military operations. Our first ever naval mission - EU NAVFOR Atlanta to prevent piracy off the Somali Republic's coast - was launched in 2008.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our ancestors established *peace* in a continent marked by centuries of war and strife. Mr. Schuman's proposal to establish the European Coal and Steel Community was to prevent further war by '*making war not only unthinkable, but materially impossible*'.

Last year, in December, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The European *approach* is ‘overcoming division through dialogue’. We *choose* dialogue as our secret weapon. Through dialogue we created *unity, peace* and *reconciliation* among former enemies, by focusing on what *unites* us, not on what us *divides*.

Definitely there is still some way to go before the European Union becomes that political force, many inhabitants in Europe, citizens of the world, also in Lebanon, would like us to be. The speed and intensity with which the European Union can be a positive force for bringing a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, ending the war in Syria, reaching an agreement with Iran and forging a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in this region, lie in our own ability to bring about common vision and actions and also in the hands of our Member States.

In every partner country where the European Union is represented, it is the level of ambition, understanding and cooperation between the EU Delegation and colleagues from the different Member States Embassies which eventually and collectively gives prominence to the partnership of the European Union. Here in Lebanon we have 23 – soon 24 – accredited Ambassadors: 6 women and 18 men.

On this beautiful evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of May I want to pay special tribute to my colleagues from the EU Member States, for thinking positively and acting decisively, for Europe and for Lebanon. For defining common goals of helping to respond to pressing needs, preserve stability, security and lessening hardship for all. For always looking for more opportunities, possibilities for better results and even greater resilience. For no complacency and not thinking: *This is Lebanon, nothing will ever change...* For continuing to stand up for our common values, fighting impunity, condemning discrimination and promoting equality.

Some colleagues will unfortunately be leaving us this year. I particularly thank the Ambassadors of Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands and Poland for their friendship and solidarity.

To our Lebanese friends I say: The significant presence of European Member States Embassies in Lebanon shows the importance of your country to the European countries bilaterally. The fact that we work so well together shows the importance of Lebanon to the European Union collectively. *And I can assure all of you: There has not been one single day I have not felt how strong your ties are with Europe, for each of you in a different way. And I can assure you that my colleagues and I feel exactly that very same sense of shared values and interests. Because we all have the same hope and desire for long lasting freedom, peace and solidarity.*

We wish this for the people in Lebanon and for *all people* living in the region, in particular those who have suffered and still suffer most from violence and injustice, and those who had to seek refuge from their homeland.

Dear Friends,

European Council President Herman van Rompuy asked all world leaders to exert positive politics, make people’s happiness and well-being *the* political priority.

We give more hope to others as we experience it ourselves.

*L'Ode à la joie*, long live Europe, long live Lebanon.