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## NEWS

### Workshop to strengthen role of women in elections

**Beirut, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013**

Candidates, activists and the international community joined today with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities to discuss how different electoral systems can impact on the participation of women in elections.

Under the patronage of H.E. Minister of Interior and Municipalities General Marwan Charbel, the workshop 'Electoral Systems and Women's Participation' was held today at the Phoenicia hotel. It was organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Lebanese Elections Assistance Programme (LEAP) and funded by the European Union and the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Many of the participants in the event were women who had registered as candidates for parliamentary elections scheduled for earlier this year but which were postponed upon the decision of Parliament to extend its mandate. The Lebanese Parliament is expected soon to review options for a new electoral system for polls in 2014.

Opening the event, Mr. Luca Renda, the UNDP Country Director, indicated that this workshop provided a timely and relevant opportunity to review what kind of special measures could be considered by the Lebanese Parliament to improve the representation of women as elected officials.

Mr Renda added: "The workshop aims to identify the options available and to highlight effective and practical examples that could work within the Lebanese context".

In her address to the participants, H.E. Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, the head of the European Union Delegation to Lebanon, called on all stakeholders to develop an electoral system that "Gives Lebanese women the place they deserve in political participation and representation". She also highlighted that "Women's political representation is a matter of justice and democracy, and democracy is not only about the right to vote, it is also about the right to be elected, in and out".

Representing Minister Marwan Charbel, General Elias El Khoury, the general director of the political affairs at the ministry wished "if the elections took place on time so that women are already members in the parliament". Then he delivered the minister's speech who admired the increase in the number of women candidates this year saying

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that “This is an indicator on the increase of the awareness among women to be independent from men who dominate their decisions and the society. It is also a sign that women want to offer what is best for the country and society”.

Through two interactive sessions, the workshop sought to shed light on a series of temporary special measures that have been proven to work to increase the number of women elected to office. This includes options for quotas under different kinds of electoral systems, as well as other tools, such as reduced candidacy fees, higher spending ceilings, and other means of providing incentives and support for women to run as candidates.

### **Background information**

Lebanon is currently ranked 135 in the world concerning women participation in political life, with the current Parliament including only 4 women out of 128 Deputies (3.1%). In 2013, the percentage of women standing as candidates was 6.2%, a significant increase from the 1.7% of candidates in 2009 who were women in 2009, but still a comparatively low figure. The average proportion of women as parliamentarians in the Arab region is 14.7% and globally is 20.5%. (Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org))

The UNDP LEAP aims to support the conduct of transparent and inclusive elections in Lebanon through strengthening capacity in (1) election management (2) campaign supervision (3) voter education (4) electoral dispute resolution, and (5) promoting women’s participation in elections.

***For more information, please contact us at: 01-962529 or 03-971703 and [info@lebanon-elections.org](mailto:info@lebanon-elections.org) : further information is also available on [www.lebanon-elections.org](http://www.lebanon-elections.org)***

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