

17 January 2014

Press statement

Press statement from the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon following the EU Ambassadors meeting with H.E. Prime Minister Nagib Miqati

Following the EU Ambassadors meeting with H.E. Caretaker Prime Minister Nagib Miqati, the EU Delegation issued the following statement:

"The European Union Ambassadors to Lebanon thanked H.E. Prime Minister Miqati for meeting with them today. The meeting took place in an open and amicable atmosphere, during which they discussed ways of further enhancing EU-Lebanon relations in 2014.

Lebanon lived through a range of challenging situations last year - a deteriorating security environment, the massive influx of Syrian refugees, the increasing economic and social challenges. The Ambassadors commended Prime Minister Miqati on his efforts to preserve peace and stability and his commitment to the policy of disassociation from the conflict in Syria. They welcomed Lebanon's commitment to fulfil its international obligations, including upholding UN Security Council Resolutions and cooperating with UNIFIL. Cooperation with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon enabled the fight against impunity to continue, and even to take on new momentum in 2014 with the opening of the trial yesterday. The Prime Minister's personal leadership in securing continued funding for the Tribunal should be underlined.

Throughout 2013, the EU stood by Lebanon in line with our consistent and solid partnership. We remain committed to the stability of Lebanon and will continue to call for the implementation of the Baabda Declaration as well as for dialogue and constructive engagement between the various political forces, for the prompt formation of a functioning Government, the timely holding of Presidential and Parliamentary elections and the effective functioning of the State Institutions. We will continue to support the country in addressing the three pressing challenges of security and stability -including through enhanced support to the security agencies and in particular the Lebanese Armed Forces-, economic and social development and addressing the humanitarian crisis. Respect for Human Rights will also remain high on our agenda.

In 2013, the EU and the Member States mobilised yet more resources for Lebanon and we currently have an ongoing portfolio of programmes for over 1.5 billion € in loans and grants to help alleviate the hardships of the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon, to boost economic activity and help support public services whether in education, health or solid waste. We will further enhance our cooperation in the framework of the Neighbourhood Policy and in line with the priorities identified in the Action Plan.

And while the EU repeatedly commends Lebanon for the open border policy and the protection and assistance that the refugees from Syria can seek in this country, we also recognise the heavy burden that the unprecedented influx of people represents for Lebanon. Following the Pledging Conference for Syria in Kuwait on 15 January, the total committed and newly pledged assistance from the EU and its Member States across the region now stands at over €2.4 billion since the onset of the Syrian crisis. For Lebanon, the additional resources mobilised to respond to the impact of the Syrian crisis have led to more than tripling our regular allocation to Lebanon.

As EU, we remain strongly engaged with Lebanon to help work with full force through challenging times, maximise the current opportunities and advance on a peaceful and prosperous future'.