



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

Delegation of the European Union to  
the Republic of Lebanon

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

## **The European Union facilitates school debate on Inter religious dialogue**

On 5 February, the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon organised a debate at UNESCO Palace with 100 school children from 10 schools and representatives of different religious communities entitled "Interreligious Dialogue in Lebanon – State of Play and Future Challenges."

The debate took place on the occasion of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, which is celebrated on the first week of February of each year. The week aims to provide space for reflection on interreligious harmony and promote coexistence, dialogue and mutual understanding among peoples of different religions. It included a panel discussion composed of Sayyed Jaafar Fadlallah, Dr Mohammed Sammak, Father Fadi Daou and Father Georges Massouh.

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, underlined that today's young generation will carry the values of tolerance and respect forward to the future. She added that the debate had been initiated to offer school children from different religious backgrounds the opportunity to acquire more profound knowledge about the other and to "grow together."

Dr Mohamed Sammak emphasised that "human dignity is never linked to religion or faith" but it is inherent to every human being. Father Georges Massouh highlighted the importance of strengthening the citizen-state relation in Lebanon in order to overcome the constraints of confessionalism by creating equal rights for every Lebanese. Sayyed Jaafar Fadlallah stressed the need to overcome preconceived ideas about "the other" in order to engage in true dialogue. Father Fadi Daoud called on the young Lebanese to "contribute to building a better Lebanon" rather than looking for a better future abroad. The panel discussion was complemented by the presentations of two school students (from Mabarrat and Jamhour) about their experiences with interreligious exchange.

In the ensuing open debate, students highlighted that exchange across all religious communities is taking place among the younger generation. Particular activities, such as sports, would also bring them together and allow overcoming the limits of confessionalism. Further comments revolved around the need – or not – for a civil personal status law in Lebanon. It was underlined that politics needed to protect religion, including from itself. Students expressed the wish to continue the dialogue that was initiated by the event.