

**Speech by Ambassador Angelina EICHHORST,  
Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon**

*EU-funded Clearance operations (2010-2012)*  
**Press point at RMAC Headquarters**

Friday, 25 February 2011 – Nabatieh

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General Fehmi,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Thank you for having me with you today, in order to see the essential work of clearance from mines, cluster bombs and unexploded ordnance.
- The European Union is actively involved on all continents in supporting demining programmes, research and development of technology and assistance to mine victims. These weapons must not be used anymore: they have obvious humanitarian consequences, and they also pose tremendous socio-economic challenges to development.
- Action on mines and unexploded ordnance does not only consist of clearing mined areas. I want to praise Lebanon's commitments towards international treaties, as illustrated by the ratification in 2010 of the Oslo Convention which bans cluster munitions. The European Union also supports the universal signature and ratification of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines.
- A lasting guarantee against mines can only be brought by a comprehensive peace. For the Middle East, we need to do everything possible for the urgent resumption of negotiations between all parties. The European Union regrets that it has so far not been possible to reach a long lasting peace, based on a two-state solution.
- When a country is hit by a conflict and faces the risk of mines, cluster bombs and unexploded ordnance, it is necessary to act without delay. The European Union is determined and has the tools to intervene, firstly through immediate humanitarian assistance in order to save lives and restore security and decent living conditions, and subsequently by accompanying the populations in order to help them restart their economic activity.

- In Lebanon, the European Union has been active in the demining effort as early as 2000, but we have increased our activity after the conflict of July 2006 – since 2006 we have donated €18 million for clearance operations.
- Lives have been saved and the number of injured people has decreased. Many people have also been able to return to their homes or their land, which is fundamental for local life and the economy to return to normal.
- Despite these positive results, there is still a considerable amount of unexploded ordnance. Too many children are still prevented from playing in the field, too many men and women are still risking to be injured for life. Therefore, the European Union has launched a new demining programme of €7 million since mid-2010 that aims at reducing the risk represented by the cluster munitions in Southern Lebanon and the mines in the Central and Northern areas of the country.
- Five specialised NGOs are currently conducting clearance activities under the responsibility and coordination of the Lebanese Mine Action Centre (LMAC), the Lebanese Authority in charge of clearance operations throughout the Lebanese territory.
- Our programme also aims at increasing the capacity of the LMAC, and its regional centre in the South, the Regional Mine Action Centre, to manage this level of clearance activity.
- I thank the colleagues from the LMAC, specifically General Fehmi, the Lebanese army and the various NGOs for organising this visit, and I express my gratitude to the people who are risking their lives every day to protect their community.
- Thank you.