

## **CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Inauguration of Package 1 and three schools at Nahr el Bared

September 28th, 2011

Speech of the Head of Delegation

of the European Union, Ambassador Angelina EICHHORST

His Excellency Minister Wael Abou Faour,

UNRWA Commissioner General, Mr. Filippo Grandi,

Representatives of the inhabitants of Nahr al Bared

Excellencies, Representatives of the Government, non governmental organisations, Members of the Corps Diplomatique, Ambassadors of the European Union,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be among the friends of Nahr el Bared.

Our joint presence here today shows our full commitment to improve the circumstances of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

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The inauguration of Package 1 with the three schools, and all the other achievements mentioned by Mr. Grandi, are a positive development and marks a significant step in the process of reconstruction of Nahr el Bared. Nevertheless, the circumstances of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and in the region as a whole, remain extremely challenging and need to be addressed further.

Today, four years after the end of the conflict, approximately 25 000 out of 27 000 refugees are still living outside the camp, without adequate shelter or basic services. Much remains to be done also to, through the implementation of a proper legislative framework, enhance the rights and freedoms of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. I join the call from Mr. Grandi on the Government of Lebanon to facilitate access to the camps, not just today but on a permanent basis.

The Palestinian people have the right to have their own State. The European Union fully supports the "two state solution", with a Palestinian State based on 1967 borders with mutually agreed swaps.

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We believe it is imperative that the Israeli and Palestinians sides return to constructive talks to achieve a negotiated peace-settlement that will be acceptable to all parties. The Quartet suggested a clear timeline and it is our sincere hope that the parties reach a long lasting solution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union and its 27 Member States remain the biggest financial supporters of UNRWA. . In total, they provided in 2010 only over 250 million euros to UNRWA or more than half of the organisation's general fund.

More than 42 million euros have been mobilised by the European Commission after the Nahr el Bared crisis to respond to the humanitarian needs and the reconstruction of the camp. I will take this opportunity to encourage other donors and all members of the international community, to support the work for Nahr el Bared. I am

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pleased that tomorrow, (UNRWA Commissioner General) Mr. Filippo Grandi, and I will sign a further contribution of 12 million euros to pay for rental subsidies for the Nahr el Bared refugees and to rehabilitate infrastructure and shelters in other Palestinian refugee camps.

If the events in the region in recent months have taught us anything, it is that we must not subordinate the dignity, freedom and rights of individuals to any other aim.

We need to bring a sense of urgency in our work together to give people hope again.

Thank you.