

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

**Scholarship Award Ceremony
Haifa School, Beirut**

15 December 2011

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Distinguished guests,
UNRWA friends,
Dear students,

First, let me congratulate you on your receipt of the European Union Scholarship. We are here today to award your hard work and achievements at school by inviting you to join the grantees of the UNRWA-EU Scholarship Fund.

What a great honour and what a grand responsibility.

In reflecting on what I might share with you today, I thought of my own experience as a student and scholarship grantee. I still remember my first day at University in 1983. While I didn't realise it then, it was one of those days that changed my life. I was intimidated by the grandness of the institution and the knowledge and experience of the people around me. At the same time, I was eager and expectant. When I was, during my studies, granted a scholarship to study in Egypt in 1987 I was so full of joy. And on the day of my final graduation I was a different person altogether. More self confident and with much broader horizons. Certainly, the knowledge I gained during those years at University was very important to me. But even more so, it was the

people I met during my university years and the choices that presented themselves in the academic environment that allowed me to grow and develop. I learned to believe in my abilities and to see the array of opportunities that life offers.

I am therefore delighted to represent an entity, the European Union, which offers this same life-changing experience to you.

The European Union has been sponsoring the UNRWA-EU Scholarship Fund for seven years and has already invested 8.3 million Euro into this programme. The 75 of you, the new grantees, are thus joining today a group of more than 300 Palestinian students who have received this award. And your academic journey does not have to end here. I challenge you to continue to strive towards loftier goals in the pursuit of your education. The opportunities are out there and I would be happy to see you again in a few years, handing to you the European Erasmus Mundus scholarship which every year gives students – including Palestinians living in Lebanon – the chance to study at graduate and doctoral levels in universities all across the European Union.

But what really is the meaning of scholarship? It is not just a donation of money to a student to pursue education, and which does not have to be repaid. It really means a full 'commitment to learning'. It is the belief in the lasting benefits of education, combined with responsibility and dedication. In other words, a 'scholar' spends hours in reading and studying in order to be able to use the information and the wisdom available to her or him for improving the society. You have been given a gift of scholarship... after this you will have a gift to give to others. Not to the European

Union, not to UNRWA, but to your own community, to your own future Palestinian state, to the Palestinian people.

The opportunity is yours now, take it with all it entails: with both pride and the sense of responsibility. I wish you great learning, immense personal growth and many meaningful opportunities. And of course, I wish you the best of luck in your exams.

Thank you.