

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

**“Promoting Human Rights Policy and Practice in Lebanese Women’s
Prisons”**

Launching Event

Baabda Prison – Tuesday 3 July 2012

General Joseph Douaihy,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you all for organising today's launch of a programme which reflects core values and interests of the European Union: "Promoting Human Rights Policy and Practice in Lebanese Women's Prisons".

In three years from now we hope to see the situation of female prisoners in Lebanon improved, in particular in the female prisons of Tripoli, Baabda, Verdun, Zahle. Work will be done in close cooperation with prison authorities to uphold human rights of women detainees and prisoners. The detainees and prisoners will receive much needed legal and social support, and we hope that legislation will be changed to align the prison law with international standards.

Prisons should contribute to rehabilitate inmates, to educate and re-insert them into society and to set them on the right path to rejoin society as productive and welcome members.

In many parts of the world unfortunately this is not the case, including in prisons in Europe. Lebanon is not an exception. Overcrowding, lack of adequate social and legal support, lack of adequate medical care are a persisting problem in all Lebanese prisons.

The alarming figures of pre-trial detention ranging between 60% and 70% according to organisations working inside prisons are a serious concern. Today this prison holds 73 women and only 13 have been convicted. This is simply not acceptable. The European Union has repeatedly called on Lebanon to do more to improve prison conditions and to accelerate pending civil and criminal procedures.

Excessive pre-trial detention does not reduce crime, does not make citizens feel more secure, and does not ensure compensation for the victims of crime. In addition to its illegal, excessive, and unjust

application, excessive pre-trial detention imposes high human, social, and economic costs on society and the State. We must work together to put an end to this situation.

The European Union is engaged in the reform of the Lebanese justice system to encourage judiciary to work in a more independent and effective manner. As part of our holistic approach we also tackle the pertinent question of prison conditions.

I would like to thank the members of the security and of the judiciary, the prison staff and civil society organisations for their commitment and everyday work, even with scarce means, to improve the situation of prisoners in Lebanon.

Be assured the European Union will continue to support the efforts of all relevant stakeholders to align prison conditions in Lebanon with international standards as well as to improve the efficiency of the justice system.

I wish the success to Diakonia and its partners, Caritas, Dar Al Amal and Rassemblement Démocratique des Femmes to make a meaningful change to the conditions of women prisoners and detainees.

Thank you.