

## **INTERNATIONAL BAT NIGHT OPENING CEREMONY**

**Statement by Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst  
Head of Delegation of the European Union in Lebanon**

**Mr Abi-Said,  
Dr. Georges Tohme,  
representative of the Mayor of Aley Municipality**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends**

When "Animal Encounter" asked me to be the patron of this year's Bat Night I did not hesitate for a second. I had visited this Center before and was struck by the engagement and commitment of its management, in particular Mounir and Diana. They are giving a true example of caring for animals, caring for nature, caring for youth, caring for their future.

I can only underline the importance of the work Animal Encounter is conducting in Lebanon:

- Raising awareness of the need to protect the environment
- Informing and educating citizens of all age groups and backgrounds
- providing the opportunity to get back in touch with nature in an informative, yet entertaining manner

The relentless efforts of Animal Encounter to promote biodiversity in all its dimensions are fully in line with the work the citizens of the 27 Member States of the European Union do to preserve nature and its various ecosystems.

The European Union is THE global advocate for the preservation of biodiversity.

Just recently, the European Union adopted the Biodiversity Strategy 2020, which aims at halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services.

This is a joint responsibility: We ALL depend on quality food, fresh water, clear air pollination, protection against floods and forest fire. There are too many examples.

The preservation of our environment and nature should be a basic pillar of our education and upbringing. It is therefore so important to work with the young generation and to help them avoid making the mistakes of current and previous generations in not giving enough attention.

I am therefore particularly pleased to see so many young colleagues amongst us today with their parents.

You will learn a lot about Bats today, and we will learn with you through your experience.

By studying and caring for this magnificent and very social animal we will take together a further important step in respecting nature.

Thank you, Animal Encounter, the Municipality of Aley, the National Council for Scientific Research for organising this event. You can count on our full support. Enjoy!