

Project "Strengthening Civil Peace and Reconciliation in Lebanon"

**Speech by Diego Escalona Paturel,
Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon**

**Documentary and Video Contest Award Ceremony
"Shoot your Identity"**

Metro Al Madina
Wednesday 5 December 2012

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Luca Renda, UNDP Country Director,
Mrs. Emily Jacquard, friends and colleagues from *Search for Common Ground*
and other partner organisations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure for me to be here with you today and to see for myself the tangible and creative product of our joint efforts to support young Lebanese in their quest for identity.

The EU dedicates a lot of effort to strengthening peace and reconciliation processes throughout the world. The "Strengthening Civil Peace" project and this initiative by *Search for Common Ground* are part of this effort. They are the result of a fruitful partnership between the European Union and UNDP which tries to tackle different dimensions that we believe are necessary ingredients for peace-building, such as: using alternative media as a tool to promote debates with the younger generations on sensitive issues, promoting collective memory, integrating peace-building into formal and non-formal educational channels,

supporting a civil society platform on issues related to civil peace, and supporting local level conflict-mitigation initiatives.

This ceremony tonight is of particular importance for us. It comes a few weeks after the EU was awarded the 2012 Nobel Prize for Peace and, most importantly, in a period in which recent events in Lebanon have brought back memories of a past that the Lebanese society would prefer to leave behind.

The current situation confirms once more the importance of supporting activities aimed at strengthening peaceful coexistence in Lebanon. Certainly, we do not believe in magic solutions to long-standing issues. But we do believe that activities such as the event we are launching today, help create important “safe spaces” for discussion and enhance mutual understanding of “the other”. We hope to contribute to constructive dynamics within the Lebanese society which can reinforce Lebanon's stability through engaging with the youth.

Indeed, the youth, play an important role in promoting change and shaping a common future. We understand that you, and many other Lebanese young people, find yourselves at a cross road between a dramatic past and an uncertain future. Communicating your needs and problems through peaceful dialogue will enable you to constructively participate in the life of your country and actively contribute to its positive development. As future leaders and decision-makers, you have an important role to play in building a peaceful environment for generations to come.

The European Union's success story of advancing peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe and abroad, was the result of a vision but also of the efforts of all the peoples of Europe who helped carry this dream. The Youths of Europe played an important part in this process, for instance through

exchange programmes, and getting to know one another across the frontiers of Europe.

For this reason, I would like to end by thanking all the people and especially the youth who participated in this video contest, and reiterate the European Union's support to helping them build a peaceful and stable Lebanon.

Thank you