

**Speech by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union,
Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, at the reception in honour
of EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva**

EU Residence – 14 December 2012

Commissioner Georgieva,

High Commissioner Guterres,

Ministers, Excellencies, representatives of the Palace, Parliament and Government, Member States, members from the diplomatic corps, our friends from the humanitarian community

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For much of the year, the journey from Brussels to Beirut is a journey from the cold and rain, into the sun and warmth – sadly for our Commissioner, this is not the case this time. Winter is truly upon us – with its risks and hardship for all those families living in vulnerable conditions. I have in mind the people fleeing from Syria to Lebanon, but also the Lebanese communities who have generously made space for them. And so I ask you to have a thought this evening to what all those families will be going through tonight, and in the coming months.

The enormous and often humbling commitment of the Lebanese people and government has not escaped our attention. While putting political sensitivities to one side, Lebanon has welcomed by now at least 155,000 refugees from Syria into their homes, their country. In this context, Commissioners Georgieva and Guterres' visit is extremely timely to offer thanks to the Lebanese people, and support for the Government's efforts to address the humanitarian needs.

As EU, we are strongly involved in helping alleviate the suffering of the refugees – be they Syrian, Palestinian or from other parts of the world – and providing support to the Lebanese host communities. To this end, we work in close partnership with our Member States, as well as with the national authorities, with UN agencies, and with civil society and all our humanitarian partners - whom I would like to acknowledge tonight.

To date, for the Syrian crisis, we have put together over 200 million EURO, and nearly as much from EU Member States, to address immediate needs as well as medium/long-term initiatives for a total of 400 million EURO. The National Response Plan announced by Prime Minister Miqati earlier this month is a positive step towards bringing together, under the umbrella of the Lebanese Government, all the actors providing humanitarian relief. The EU stands ready to support this process. Of course, more is still needed, and we will continue to assist as much as we can.

Let me pass the floor to Commissioner Georgieva.