

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

Launching of nine grant contracts with municipalities

Delegation of the European Union – 29 January 2013

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies, Dear Mayors

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends

Welcome to the premises of the European Union. We are here today to officially launch the best nine community projects amongst a series of proposals we have received from across the country and I wish you all the success in implementing them, to the benefits of the communities and citizens of your municipalities.

As you are aware, the European Union's "Non State Actors – Local Authorities" programme seeks to strengthen capacities of municipalities and unions of municipalities.. The European Union recognises the crucial role of municipalities and unions in sustainable development and inclusive growth. In attracting investment, creating jobs, providing basic services. The peoples of your municipality are the ones who can address individually and locally adapted development objectives that central governments could not. Your own proximity to the citizens and your inside knowledge about local needs will surely bring about more locally and therefore more efficiently

adapted plans and policies with visible results. The European Union is convinced that the support provided to local authorities will contribute towards the much needed decentralisation reform that seeks to place Lebanon on the path to balanced and sustainable growth and development.

Today, we are launching projects that address a wide range of socio-economic issues in the fields of environment, housing and eco-tourism, urban planning, culture as well as civic education and citizenship. Tackling such a large spectrum of needed and relevant activities under the same programme is only possible because of your direct involvement, active participation and mobilisation.

This breadth of activities and partners at all levels mirrors the overall EU-Lebanon partnership, which spans many sectors of activity and reaches out to central institutions, local authorities, civil society organisations, and ultimately to the people in this beautiful country, Lebanon.

Thank you.