

**Speech by Mr. Maciej Madalinski, Head of Sustainable Development
Section – Delegation of the European Union**

**Seminar on "Regional Cooperation. Good Practices in the Region.
Working in social dialogue and cooperation"**

**In the framework of the EU programme TRESMED to enhance the role of the
Economic and Social Councils in the Med. region**

Economic and Social Council Headquarters

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to attend this seminar which brings together State actors and civil society organisations, including the national institutions facilitating social dialogue. I hope this dialogue will help in exchanging opinions, ideas and experiences for a better understanding of social and economic issues of interest to the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

The involvement of civil society organisations in the European Union's external cooperation and development policy has a long history and has evolved substantially over time. The ongoing deep and constructive dialogue of the European Union with many civil society organisations on a variety of issues is continuously helping us to provide the needed support to those who are calling for democracy and social justice.

Since the demonstrations that started in Tunisia at the end of 2010, and in recognition of the important role the civil society played in the uprisings in the Southern Mediterranean region, the European Union has quickly adopted a new approach to relations with its Southern neighbours: namely, in providing space for more structured and strategic cooperation with civil society. The *Structured Dialogue process*, launched in 2010, is one of the windows of opportunity that have been opened for shaping – and potentially improving - the relationship between government and civil society organisations (with its broad variety of development actors).

The Economic and Social Councils throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region are the most appropriate platforms that would allow all parties to sit at the same table and reflect together on the socio-economic needs of the citizens following the established tripartite structure (employers, trade unions and Government, including civil society).

In Lebanon there is a general consensus on the necessity to enhance the social dialogue. In this respect, the European Union has started its support for promoting the social dialogue in the country by funding a related 2 million Euros programme. This programme will assist in building the capacity of the Lebanese Government and social partners to better engage into social dialogue.

However, a general conception prevails among all civil society organisations and also the European Union: that the Lebanese Government must show more commitment to re-activate the role of the Economic and Social Council.

I am confident that the dialogue facilitated today through the EU programme TRESMED IV will help in promoting social dialogue in the country among members of an "inclusive society", a society that would allow each and everyone to find its place and bring its full contribution to the development of the country.

I wish all the success in this workshop and fruitful debates.

Thank you.