

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

Mother's Day organised by the Syrian League

Friday 22 March 2013

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

President of the Syrian League,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to this gathering to celebrate Mother's Day.

Allow me to start with an extract from the declaration of High Representative of the European Union Catherine Ashton, issued on 8 March on the occasion of the Women's International Day:

"Women around the world are striving to shape the future of their countries, societies and families and to fight for civil, political, economic, and social and cultural rights free from fear and violence. Wherever I travel, I meet courageous women who are fighting for an equal role in the democratic future of their countries. They are an inspiration to me Now it is the time to accelerate progress towards the achievement of gender equality, by joining forces to build the future for all men and women in peace and prosperity."

Dear friends,

On the occasion of Mother's Day, let us pay tribute to those who were Role Model Mothers, those who nurtured and inspired both successful men and

women; those mothers who, not only provide care and support to their children but who must also provide enough income for the family to live on. This is a big responsibility for anybody to take on. If you look at the lives of some of the greatest men who ever lived, you will find that they owe a large part of their greatness to the care and support of their mothers, especially in their decisive years. The same goes for many successful women.

Today, while celebrating one of the most important roles of women - being a mother - we must not forget those, and they are many, who suffer daily violence; those that justice does not protect so far in Lebanon where the violence law against women is being debated since more than five years. We also need to increasingly reach out to men. We need to call on men in their roles as responsible fathers, husbands and brothers to respect women in their moral, emotional and physical integrity: not only outside the house, but equally inside their own house.

All over the world, including Europe, there is still a long way to go to end discrimination against women. However, one important, maybe the most important factor to seriously address women's rights is still lacking in many of the countries, including Lebanon: a clear demonstration of political commitment by the Government and Parliament, backed by concrete actions by civil society organisations and the people themselves. In Lebanon, the private sector, businesses and civil society are very engaged – and as such also actively supported by the European Union and other international partners – the Executive and the Legislative have some way to go.

For instance, to this day the Lebanese Government is persistent about reservations it had since ratifying CEDAW in 1996: Lebanese women, who are equal in rights against the Lebanese Constitution, are still unable to

transmit their nationality to their children. Lebanese women still lack equal marriage rights, equal rights in matters relating to their children, and equal rights and responsibilities in matters relating to guardianship, and other family affairs. Since we believe that women are extremely well placed to deal with fundamental values and issues of life, just as men are, we think that legislations must be adapted, social and economic practices changed, and cultural habits and clichés of masculinity overcome.

Even women – and men as well – who belong to a minority should be equally protected and enjoy the same rights as any other citizen.

Finally, I am sure that we all do call for a preservation of the mother's position in the family; she is the only one who can switch the "House" into a warm caring "Home", an ideal living environment for her children to grow in.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!