

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

Press Conference

***"10KM WOMEN'S CHALLENGE"
Beirut Marathon Association***

Beirut, 8 April 2013

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to support this meaningful and intense example of unity, solidarity and cooperation.

Sports make us stronger, healthier but it also brings us together, helps us to communicate and instills peace. Racing teaches us to challenge ourselves. It teaches us to push beyond where we thought we could go.

Beirut Marathon gives us again the possibility of showing renewed team spirit, of joining forces, this time to ask for more empowered women, for more rights for women. It gives us the chance to take to the streets of Beirut and ask for greater representation of women in public life, more protection against violence and equal civil rights.

When marathons were just for men, 45 years ago, Kathrine Switzer broke barriers and became the first woman to officially run a marathon... Many reacted angrily and tried to remove her from the race, but her dedication and her courage led her to the finishing line. The Beirut Marathon Association is also born out of a woman's dream, the unwavering will and dedication of May El Khalil to bringing the running culture to the streets of Beirut. I am convinced that our shared efforts will bear rewards in a crucial race, the race for equal rights.

The European Union already run for human rights in the last edition of the Beirut Marathon, we ran with human rights defenders, with representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups, with those that strive to defend their rights. This time, the EU will be again at the starting line running with women and for womenBecause women's rights are human rights....

It will represent for the European Union another chance to renew our commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Lebanon, as we do across the world.

Let us run for women's rights on 26th May, and campaign for equal rights everyday!