

Speech Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the EU Delegation to Lebanon

Launching event for two Quality programmes

(Qualeb III and Quality Twinning)

Grand Serail, 25 April 2013

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*Check against delivery*

Caretaker Minister of Economy and Trade Nahas,

Excellencies,

Dr. Berro, Director of the Quality Programme,

Quality experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased we meet again to launch two EU funded programmes to strengthen the quality management and quality infrastructure in Lebanon and to help increase the competitiveness of the Lebanese economy. QUALEB III consists of technical assistance and provisions for equipment for the Lebanese bodies dealing with quality. The "Twinning" programme brings together civil servants dealing with quality from the Lebanese Ministry of Economy and Trade with counterparts in the UK. As you know, Twinning programmes allow for peers in similar administrations to exchange knowledge, know-how and good practices and to build up networks that last longer than the programme itself. We therefore strongly promote Twinning operations in Lebanon.

Our joint interventions ultimately aim at making Lebanese products more competitive, increase exports and create more jobs. Growth and jobs are more needed than ever these days in Lebanon and in Europe.

During the Quality Day held at the Economic and Social Council last Thursday we learned about the importance to address quality management within the public sector, for even the best performing private company needs service-oriented and efficient public institutions to excel.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today's event comes at a time when Lebanon faces major challenges as the consequences of the Syrian conflict for Lebanon continue to grow, most noticeably in the number of refugees entering Lebanon to escape the violence across the border. The European Union and our Member States appreciate the extraordinary circumstances Lebanon is facing and have already committed significant amounts of assistance – the EU institutions alone have committed more than €93 million to Lebanon, the EU MS contribute more than €50 million. We fully acknowledge there is a dire need for more assistance and we are looking into ways of finding additional funds. We hope other partners in the region will join us in a substantial solidarity effort, as will the private sector, national campaigns, and non governmental organisations.

In light of the situation in the country, we know we cannot continue with our cooperation activities as if nothing had changed since the past two years. It is not business as usual. The situation on the ground, starting just a few kilometres outside the capital and across the whole country, has changed dramatically and we need to respond. Today I say to you, we can ensure you that our support benefits the Lebanese communities which are most in need of the support of the Lebanese authorities and of the international community in order to continue to be able to assist those fleeing violence.

When we assess the response of Lebanon and of the Lebanese people to the challenges that accompany the influx of refugees, we never forget that the borders have remained open for all, there has been only few cases of *refoulement* and that thousands and thousands of refugees are still hosted in the

private homes of Lebanese. This is a strong demonstration of the generosity and solidarity of Lebanese society, which in any other country would have easily reached at this moment a point of saturation.

Therefore, whilst focussing on getting better and safer products on the markets and increasing exports, we do not forget the immediate and urgent needs at hand. Let me end by thanking the Caretaker PM Mikati, Minister Nahas and Ali Berro for their continued efforts and commitments to join hands with the European Union. Over the past two years we tend to forget what we have achieved. When participating in the EU-Lebanon sub-committees these past three days, it was obvious that despite the many challenges, a number of achievements at the level of Council of Ministers have been reached. We look forward to work with the new Lebanese government in making, in a joint effort to preserve the security and unity of your country.

Thank you.