

Address by Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst  
Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon

**Participation to the International Support Group in Mine Action**

Tamar Rotana Hotel – Wednesday 9 October 2013

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***CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY***

Estimated Brigadier General Odeimi, Head of the Lebanon Mine Action Centre,

Dear Mr Watkins, UN Resident Representative,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

"Crisis" is the word that currently dominates the discussions around Lebanon. This is why it is particularly important to be amongst you tonight: To acknowledge the tremendous efforts undertaken by Lebanon, the Lebanese authorities and the people living in Lebanon who are determined to make their country a safer place through concrete targeted action, through mine clearance, awareness raising and assistance to victims.,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The activities of the Lebanese Mine Action Centre have led to very positive results and success stories in terms of Mine Action and clearance operations. Improvement of physical and

livelihood security has been achieved in several villages and municipalities; land has been cleared for productive use and children have safer areas to grow up in safety now.

I take this opportunity to thank General Odeimi, for the dedication you show in coordinating Mine Action throughout the Lebanese territory and to thank your staff for their extraordinary level of commitment and professionalism they constantly show in the accomplishment of their duties.

The marks of past conflicts are still very present in Lebanon and an important part of its territory has been contaminated by mines and unexploded war remnants, preventing local communities to fully enjoy the basic elements of a decent life. Digging to build the house you have dreamt of, ploughing your plot of land to ensure minimum livelihoods, sending your children to school or even taking a hike can turn into a dreadful, even deadly experience.

The European Union strongly supports Lebanon in its' thrive and efforts to become free of mines and unexploded ordnances and to help the authorities achieve their commitments deriving from the international treaties they have taken the responsibility to adhere to. This is a long term endeavour which very much

depends on external factors beyond their control – such as the weather, the terrain and on technical development.

Therefore we should constantly and consistently continue to provide the necessary support to ensure that Lebanon has the capacities required to be free of mines and any unexploded ordnances by 2020.

The European Union has been involved in Mine Action for many years. We are the major donor in this field with a contribution of EUR 28 million for the period 2006-2015. We recently finalised most of our 2013-2015 contribution by allocating EUR 1.9 million to UNDP for Institutional Support and over EUR 7.3 millions for Mine Clearance activities to 4 NGOs. Moreover, we have reaffirmed our comprehensive approach in Mine Action by a specific contribution for Mine Risk Education and Mine Victims Assistance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Mine Action programme 2013-2015 is the largest mine action programme ever implemented by the EU in Lebanon and we wish for it to bring at least the same level and quality of results as the previous one did, thanks to the dedication of all the stakeholders involved, from local communities to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre, from NGOs to advocacy groups.

Let's jointly agree and work that Lebanon will be mine free in the very near future.

Thank you.