

**Remarks of Ms Ruth Bajada
Representative of the Delegation of the European Union**

Press Conference

**Opening of the new Lebanese Advocacy and Legal Advice Center
of the Lebanese Transparency Association-No Corruption
(EU funded project)**

Nabatiyeh

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

H.E. Mr. Abdel Latif el Zein,
Mrs Nada Abdel Sater, Chair of the Lebanese Transparency Association,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today to launch this initiative which aims at empowering victims and witnesses of corruption. Unfortunately, corruption exists everywhere and no country is immune.

Corruption distorts competitive markets and leads to a misallocation of resources. Corruption undermines the rule of law and public trust in politicians, public servants and business. Corruption at local level gradually increases the economic burdens on the people, dampens public finances and lowers the quality of public works and services. Corruption undermines not only the credibility of local and regional elected representatives but democracy in general and thus erodes the very foundations of the rule of law.

There is only one solution to fight corruption, and that is: not accepting it; not in our own behaviour and not in others. Each and every citizen can fight corruption in his or her own environment.

We also believe that civil society organisations have a key role to play in fighting corruption, ranging from promoting accountability and good governance, to denouncing bribery and raising awareness on the need for transparency and truthfulness in economic and political public activities.

The European Union is glad to fund initiatives like the one we are launching in Nabatiyeh, for that such initiatives *invite* all relevant actors to join the fight against corruption, *give a voice* to those who witness and suffer from corruption to stand up for their rights, and *open* a public discussion and dialogue on how to address corruption most effectively and sustainably.

The European Union is also ready to support Lebanon in developing the necessary legal instruments and institutions responsible for the prevention, prosecution and the fight against corruption.

I would like to thank all the efforts of Lebanese Transparency and Transparency International to empower citizens in the fight against corruption.

Thank you.