

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

Lebanese Excellence Award

Presidential Palace, 11 March 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

H.E. President of the Republic General Michel Sleiman,
H.E. Minister of Economy and Trade Dr Alain Hakim,
Excellencies,
Director of QUALEB, Dr. Ali Berro,
Members of the Jury Panel and Quality experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you today to take part in the Lebanese Excellence Award ceremony held under the patronage of H.E. President Michel Sleiman.

The European Union is proud to be the main partner of Lebanon in the area of quality and excellence, which are essential for economic growth and ultimately job creation in Lebanon. The

Excellence Award is of particular importance for a number of reasons: it is an inclusive, participatory process from which everyone can benefit. It is open to big and small companies, as well as to NGOs and public institutions; and last but not least, it is modelled on a well-tested and established European quality award system that could be of great benefit for Lebanon.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Traditionally, we tend to focus mainly on the importance of quality management in companies to guarantee the excellence of products and services. This remains a key priority for the ongoing efforts to consolidate the competitiveness of Lebanese products, and, consequently, foster Lebanese exports leading to economic growth and increased employment opportunities.

However, what we often focus less on is the importance of quality management in our daily life.

I am particularly pleased to see that the Excellence Award pays tribute to the importance of NGOs and private sector organisations, mostly small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as to the public sector. I have been travelling around the country to meet with Lebanese communities affected by economic hardship and by the impact of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who had fled the violence and chaos in Syria. In every new location I visited, the outstanding importance of municipalities, of the involvement of private enterprise, and of NGOs was apparent.

In Lebanon, you are fortunate enough to have a large and strong NGO community, involved in direct cooperation and partnership with public institutions, in health care, education and a myriad of other fields.

Through the QUALEB Programme, the European Union is supporting 30 small and medium-sized enterprises in applying Quality Management System and Traceability and obtaining ISO 22000 and ISO 22005 certification. Furthermore, applying the Lebanese Quality Management Model based on the

European EFOM Model and leading to the Lebanese Excellence Award, will enable the applying companies, institutions and NGOs to manage their operations more efficiently and to reduce waste and minimise costs.

The Excellence Award is about looking critically at our business model. This award is about identifying where one can improve, about setting ambitious goals for oneself and – as the name suggests – about striving for excellence.

The Excellence Award is not a monetary award; it is the continuous reward of doing things better. The satisfaction that results from doing things better cannot only be expressed through monetary values. This is a lesson we, as businesses, as institutions and even as individuals, can take with us and apply to our daily lives.

On that note, let me end by thanking H.E. President of the Republic General Michel Sleiman for his commitment and continued efforts to strengthen the cooperation between the European Union and Lebanon. The European Union stands by

Lebanon and the people residing in Lebanon to offer assistance and support in this difficult period for the country and for the region. The response of the Lebanese to this extraordinary situation must be highly praised - because it is an exceptional gesture of solidarity and compassion – a testimony of the precious qualities of the Lebanese nation. We look forward to developing and deepening our relationship even further.

Thank you very much.