

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

"Presentation the Strategic Development Plan for Akkar"

HALBA - AKKAR

Saturday 12 April 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies the parliamentarians,
Mrs Roula El-Bayeh, Caimacan of Akkar,
Representative of the Council for Development and Reconstruction,
Ladies and gentlemen the elected officials,
Ladies and gentlemen representatives of the civil society,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

North Lebanon holds a special place for the European Union. Indeed, a few years ago, we started in partnership with the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) and the Economic and Social Fund for Development (ESFD), a local development programme for Upper Dinnieh, Upper Hermel and Upper Akkar.

This programme, ADELNORD, totalling 18 million Euros, is designed to support sustainable development projects for the benefit of all. It helped already rehabilitate over 130 kilometres of

agricultural roads, over 40 kilometres of irrigation canals, and implement, with municipal federations and municipalities, ten community development projects.

Along with these specific achievements, the European Union supported a reflection on planned territorial development for Akkar, with the involvement of all ministries (Interior and Municipalities, Water and Energy, Transport, Environment, Agriculture), elected officials, civil society, users, cooperatives, projects and communities. A regional development plan has been prepared and is presented to us today.

This plan is a continuation of the national development scheme of the Lebanese territory, SDATL, which was produced and distributed with the support of the European Union. It remains, to this day, the only tool for planning and territorial governance at the national level, approved by the Government.

The strategic development plan for Akkar shares the same ambitions as the SDATL, but on the level of the Caza.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Akkar is the first region to launch this reflection. Other regions and the whole country will be looking at you. It is a challenge, but also an opportunity.

This document must now be discussed, negotiated, amended and approved by the greatest number of people. It must allow a concerted approach and reflect the sensitivities of all.

This strategic plan cannot remain just an experts' job. It must become a living document, full of hope for your territory, for the people of Akkar.

As you know, the impact of human activity can permanently mark a territory, for better or for worse. Be ambitious and demanding. "Your Akkar" has a unique potential in Lebanon and in the region. Unspoilt and truly authentic, it still offers its residents the choice of dealing with sustainable development respectful of its natural beauty.

A planned and consensual project and good territorial governance are key to attract funding and donors. Development is sustainable only if it is planned, anticipated, oriented, and not imposed. In this dynamics, everyone has a role and everyone is an actor.

Experts and consultants offer alternatives, elected officials and citizens guide and decide. I invite you to actively participate in this endeavour, in this reflection; I should even say in this dream ... "which Akkar do we want for the future? Which Akkar will you leave to your children?"

Thank you.