

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

Sagesse High School 2014 Graduation Ceremony

Sagesse High School, Ain Saadeh – Friday 30 May 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Excellency Monsignor Boulos Matar

Dear Director of the School, Father Gabriel Tabet

Distinguished Parents,

Dear students,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today to celebrate the graduation of the students who have finalised their studies at the Sagesse High School this year.

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the students, for the truly remarkable efforts, dedication and ambition. I would like to commend the perseverance and determination to excel. I would also like to congratulate the parents, families, teachers and others who have supported you in your endeavours.

Sagesse High School represents our motto: "United in Diversity". The European Union, with 28 Member States, more than 500 million citizens and 24 official languages, reflects true diversity, and I highlighted this during our festivities on Europe Day on 9 May. Diversity is in our DNA as is the case for so many people living in Mediterranean countries, and perhaps mostly so in Lebanon.

Maja Angelou, a Black American author, poet and civil rights activist, deceased two days ago, said that "it is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength". I fully agree. Diversity is a source of richness. Our work is to preserve the diversity of cultures and be open

to and respect the contributions that each individual can make to society at large. Our unity is our strength, and our diversity is our wealth.

In 2012, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Prize for over six decades of work for the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe. We also achieved an unprecedented era of prosperity during that period. Now, we would like to share our prosperity with our neighbours. And in my view, key to advancing on a real peace project is "education".

It is through high schools like Sagesse that we can work on our common goals. Through your rich curriculum, promoting tolerance and compassion, and your principles, the basic values of citizenship and responsibility are ensured. It is through you that the unique, open, united and diverse Lebanon that the EU believes in is preserved.

In all of this, while keeping up the good work, be inquisitive, meet different people, and enjoy different academic, professional and cultural experiences wherever you are.

And wisdom, *la Sagesse*, will grow with you.

Congratulations once again.

Thank you.