

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

**Launching of the "Support to Reform and Environmental Governance (StREG)  
Programme"**

Grand Serail – Friday 16 May 2014

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***CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY***

H.E. Minister Mohammad Mashnouk,  
Secretary General of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Dr Suhail Bauji,  
President of the Council for Development and Reconstruction, Mr. Nabil el Jisr,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Environment... I often hear that Lebanon has more pressing issues to deal with than those related to environment. However, over the last two decades, environmental degradation has emerged as one of the key challenges facing Lebanon's economic and social development. Air and water pollution, illegal landfills and release of untreated wastewater in the sea are just some of the aspects of the challenges affecting the economy, and livelihoods. These challenges are also affecting public health, food safety, tourism, and others. Urgent attention, political will and serious commitment will be needed to address these pressing concerns.

According to a World Bank report, the cost of environmental degradation exceeds an estimated 800 million Euros/year for Lebanon. One should also consider the substantial cost of squandering natural resources and of missed economic opportunities.

In Lebanon there are now signs of moving towards a 'polluter pays principle'. I congratulate Minister Mohammad Machnouk on the recently passed law on the creation of regional environmental public prosecutors and of an environmental police.

These are important steps we can build our support on as we are expressing today through the launch of the activities of the programme.

With our 8 million Euros, the goal of the StREG programme is to give further impetus to improving environmental governance. This intervention goes beyond technical assistance to a Ministry; it aims at supporting Lebanon to reform the sector as a whole.

Expectations are high of the consortium led by GFA (Germany) in partnership with Umweltbundesamt (Austria), Euroconsult Mott MacDonald (NL) and Mott MacDonald Ltd (UK) for having been awarded this contract.

The proposed intervention will contribute towards enforcing the environmental laws passed over the recent years. An environmental monitoring system will be put in place to allow decision makers to use reliable data. It is hoped that a combination of sound environmental data, a modern environmental legal framework and an effective enforcement of environmental laws will enable a genuine and efficient protection of Lebanon's natural resources.

It is hoped that the air quality monitoring network that will be rolled out, coupled with incentives and a proper legal framework will improve the quality of the air in urban centres across the country.

This programme is therefore part of a broader environmental package of the European Union for Lebanon, which includes waste management and coastal zone protection, one of the priorities of this Government. The EU has recently discussed an additional 40 million Euros for two programmes in these sectors: 21 million Euros for the programme aiming at improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of solid waste management, and 19 million Euros for the programme contributing to the protection and the sustainable use of maritime resources in Lebanon.

I thank the Government of Lebanon and in particular Minister Mohammad Mashnouk for their commitment to seriously address environmental degradation.

Thank you.