

**Speech of Alexis Loeber  
Head of the Cooperation Section of the  
Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon**

**Launching ceremony of the project “*Strengthening the learning support sector for Palestinian refugees in South Lebanon*”**

*Wednesday, 04 June 2014*  
**Palestinian Cultural Centre, El Buss Camp, Tyre**

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*Check against delivery*

Representatives of national and local authorities,

Representatives of the popular committees,

Dear teachers,

Dear students,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today to launch, in the name of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon, the project “*Strengthening the learning support sector for Palestinian refugees in South Lebanon*” implemented by War Child Holland and TADAMON association.

I arrived in Lebanon earlier this week and I am now attending my first formal event in the country. I am therefore delighted to share this special moment with you.

The EU is aware that education is key to fighting poverty, to development and to providing citizens with the necessary freedom that enables them to bring much-needed change. Education gives hope to refugee communities.

Investing in education is the best choice one can make. That is why the EU dedicates a substantial part of its cooperation efforts to this sector, from basic, to higher education, to

vocational education and training. The EU is the first donor to UNRWA education activities in Lebanon and the region.

Learning nowadays means life-long learning and this process is a journey without end. Technological and social developments make this even more critical. Many of the children in refugee camps in Lebanon, especially in this area of the South, have not been able to enrol in a regular education system and some are at risk of dropping out of school. This can condemn many young ones to exclusion and lack of social and economic prospects.

In view of tackling this problem, the EU launched a call for proposals in 2013 to support organisations working in non-formal education for Palestinians. By the end of last year, a total of 4 projects for an amount of almost 2 million Euros were selected. One of them was the intervention proposed by War Child Holland and Tadamon Association that we are launching today.

This project provides not only direct learning and psychosocial support to children at risk of dropping out, but also aims at reinforcing the action of the local NGOs that are working with the communities in this area and at articulating their action with the UNRWA education system.

We believe in this reinforced and needed coordination and salute the dedication and great work that is being done by War Child and Tadamon Association, as well as the British Council and the local NGOs.

Let us not forget the parents. They also play an important role, maybe the most important one, in supporting their children and encouraging them to persevere with education. This initiative and similar ones should help the parents and their communities to provide Palestinian children and with tools and skills to be able to keep learning and moving forward.

Our sincere thanks to all of them.

I would like to end my intervention, reiterating the EU's support for the Palestinian people and Palestine.

Thank you for your attention.