

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

**Launching of the EU-funded programme  
"Reinforcing Social Cohesion in Lebanon"**

*Friday, 13 June 2014*

*Beirut, Grand Serail*

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

H. E. Minister of State for Administrative Reform Nabil de Freij,  
H. E. Minister of Labour Sejaan Azzi,  
Mr. Mohamad Karaki, Director General of the National Social Security Fund,  
Dr. Maral Tutelian, Director General of the Central Administration for Statistics,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you today on the occasion of the official launching of the European Union funded programme "**Reinforcing Social Cohesion in Lebanon**". I am glad to see the various partners who contributed to the design and implementation of this intervention, and I hope that we can all witness its successful results very soon.

The principle of social cohesion is at the core of the values of the EU, and its promotion is one of the main objectives of the EU and our Member States.

We are all aware of the impact of the conflict in Syria on Lebanon. Day after day, your country suffers from the strain of the rising influx of Syrian refugees. The influx is a heavy burden on Lebanese families who are already in a vulnerable situation with limited social services and low levels of employment, as we heard again today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The cornerstone of inclusive, sustainable growth and social cohesion is the setting up of a strategy conducive to decent social security conditions. These conditions should be based on the principles of **gender equality and need to eliminate poverty**.

The current intervention responds directly to many of the major needs of the people living in Lebanon. The scale and the speed with which the Syrian crisis is unfolding necessitate quality statistical data on living conditions. **A complete, objective and regulatory updated set of statistical data** is a way of bringing the EU and our neighbours close to efficient decision-making, better governance, deeper democracy and rule of law.

I would like to commend the joint efforts of the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, the Ministry of Labour, the National Social Security Fund and the Central Administration of Statistics, that have contributed to the formulation of this intervention. I am also pleased to confirm the good collaboration and work spirit which have been established with the Delegation of the European Union during the formulation and the design of our common action.

With the active support and commitment of the Government of Lebanon, major achievements in minimising disparities, curbing marginalisation and ensuring the well-being of all people in Lebanon.

Thank you.