

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

Round Table in support of Palestine refugees' right to work in Lebanon

*Holiday Inn, Dunes – Verdun, Beirut
Wednesday, 25 June 2014*

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

H.E. President of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee Hassan Mneimneh,

H.E. Chairman of the Committee for Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon
Ambassador Samir El Khoury,

Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Lebanon Ann Dismorr,

International Labour Organisation Regional Director Nada Al Nashif,

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased we all have come today to assess together the concrete results of our support to “Improving Access to Employment and Social Protection for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon”. The 'Resource-Centre for Employment Promotion' is from today onwards a real resource centre for employment promotion.

We now have new data about a reality many people in Lebanon should be made aware of, and more tools for different options to change the current policy environment.

Unfortunately, after more than 60 years of forced displacement, most Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are still excluded from the formal labour market.

Despite the amendments of the labour and social security laws approved by the Lebanese Parliament in 2010, many Palestinian refugees face precarious working conditions and economic hardship as a result of discriminatory norms and attitudes. As a consequence, 66% (around 185,000 persons) live below the poverty line.

Moreover, despite contributing to the National Social Security Fund, too many people from Palestine living in Lebanon are denied the right to health coverage.

The European Union thoroughly upholds the right of Palestine refugees to live in dignity. In the meantime, access to the Lebanese labour market is of proven benefit to Lebanese and Palestinian people at all levels, and the hope and efforts to make the peoples of two states living side by side a reality should continue.

We count on the full support and commitment of the Government of Lebanon and of all the partners. Let me also commend the efforts of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, the Committee for Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and the International Labour Organisation.

Thank you