



**Address by Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst  
Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon  
Participation to the International Support Group in Mine Action**

Phoenicia Hotel

Tuesday 16 September 2014

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Estimated Brigadier General Imad Odeimi, Head of the  
Lebanon Mine Action Centre,  
Dear Mr Ross Mountain, UN Resident Coordinator,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

We are all aware that Lebanon is going through a very tense and difficult period and that the Armed Forces, of which the Lebanese Mine Action Centre is an integral part, are confronted with multiple challenges. This is why it is particularly important to be amongst you tonight: To acknowledge the tremendous efforts undertaken by Lebanon, the Lebanese authorities and the people living in Lebanon, all determined to make their

country a safer place through concrete targeted action, mine clearance, awareness raising and assistance to victims.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The various activities of the Lebanese Mine Action Centre have led to positive results in the field. An improvement of physical and livelihood security has been achieved in several villages and municipalities; land has been cleared for productive use and many children have safer areas to grow up in safety.

I take this opportunity to thank you, General Odeimi, for the dedication you show in coordinating Mine Action throughout the Lebanese territory and to thank your staff for their extraordinary level of commitment and professionalism they constantly show in the accomplishment of their duties.

The marks of past conflicts are still very present in Lebanon and an important part of its territory has been contaminated by mines and unexploded war remnants, preventing local communities to fully enjoy the basic elements of a decent life. Digging to build the house you have dreamt of, ploughing your plot of land to ensure minimum livelihoods, sending your children to school or even taking a hike can turn into a dreadful experience.

The European Union strongly supports Lebanon in its goal to be free of mines and unexploded ordnances, and we are here to help the authorities to achieve their commitments deriving from the international treaties they have taken the responsibility to adhere to. This is a long term endeavour which also depends on external factors beyond their control – such as the weather, the terrain and technical development.

The EU will constantly and consistently continue to provide the necessary support to ensure that Lebanon has the capacities required to be free of mines and unexploded ordnances by 2020. LMAC has recently reviewed the Mine Action strategy 2011-2020 and it showed clearly that the means currently available do not allow the country to reach this objective. However, the positive lesson of this exercise is that - with the support of you all - freeing Lebanon of mines and unexploded ordnances remains an objective within reach at medium term.

The EU has been involved in Mine Action for many years. We are the largest donor in this field with a contribution of EUR 28 million to Lebanon for the period 2006-2015.

Our current programme of EUR 10 million, covering the period 2013-2015, funds 10 clearance teams through 4 NGOs which

cleared over 300,000 square meters in 12 communities since the beginning of the year. Moreover, we have reaffirmed our comprehensive approach in Mine Action by a specific contribution for Mine Risk Education and Mine Victims Assistance of EUR 730,000. Our implementing partner has now started the first trainings on income generation for mine victims which aim at providing skills and socio-economic opportunities for those victims too often left aside. Finally, we have maintained the necessary support to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre with EUR 1.9 million to help it fulfil its responsibilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Mine Action programme 2013-2015 is the largest mine action programme ever implemented by the EU in Lebanon and it is on the right track to bring at least the same level and quality of results as the previous one did. And that is thanks to the dedication of all the stakeholders involved, from local communities to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre, from NGOs to advocacy groups.

And the good news is, the EU is currently planning equivalent support to ensure continuity for the period 2016-2019.

Thank you.