



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

**'Peaceful And Comprehensive Education in Seven Districts of Lebanon'
Signature of agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and AVSI Foundation**

Ministry of Agriculture – 27 August 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

H.E. Minister of Agriculture, Akram Shehayeb,
Colleagues of the Ministry of Agriculture,
Directors of the Ministry of Agriculture vocational schools,
Colleagues of AVSI Foundation,
Representatives of Fondazione Minoprio and Biladi,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today to lead the cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and the European NGO AVSI Foundation for the implementation of this European Union funded action 'Peaceful And comprehensive Education in Seven Districts of Lebanon'. The purpose is to strengthen the seven agricultural vocational schools of the Ministry throughout Lebanon, in Akkar, Batroun, the Metn, Shouf, Baalbek, Marjayoun and Nabatieh.

Why do we believe that this action will bring lasting results?

First of all, it is because it includes a strong educational component. Through direct involvement of officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and of teachers, in addition to the partnership with Fondazione Minoprio, a regional Italian institution in charge of agricultural training, the Ministry will be assisted to develop its curricula and provide the school teachers with an opportunity to further develop their skills. The schools in question will benefit from rehabilitation support, and their Lebanese, as well as Syrian refugee pupils, will have access to an agricultural vocational training that will pave the way for increased livelihood and job opportunities.

In addition to the aforementioned educational component, this action will yield a positive environmental and health impact. Through the training received at the Ministry's agricultural schools, certificated agricultural technicians will have the opportunity to make their technical expertise readily available when needed in the fields, therefore influencing the day-to-day agricultural practices to the benefit of farmers and consumers alike, while helping to improve food quality and environmental protection.

This EU funded action is also about building lasting **partnerships** between European and Lebanese partners. Thanks to the mutual study visits between Lebanon and Italy, this intervention is opening the way for a lasting partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture and Fondazione Minoprio. AVSI Foundation has partnered with the local Lebanese NGO Biladi that specialises in promoting cultural and natural heritage to the youth, ensuring exchange of know-how and experiences between the European and Lebanese civil society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The crisis in Syria is weighing heavily on the country and its institutions. The European Union has increased the funding and works through international organisations, the United Nations, through NGOs, and with the concerned ministries directly to provide the much needed support. About half of our support has focused on humanitarian needs, while the other half has been developing the education and primary healthcare services, as well as the local infrastructure (water, sanitation, solid waste).

This intervention links support for development to the response to emergency needs. The challenge to expand the capacity of Lebanon's agricultural schools existed for many years. It is the support provided by the EU in light of the current crisis that made the funding possible.

This crisis has also emphasised the need for livelihood opportunities for youth in Lebanon –whether Lebanese or Syrians. By increasing the number of students and by harmonising the education programme with the needs of the labour market, this action offers increased opportunities for young men and women who are interested in working in the agriculture sector.

I want to thank the Minister and the Ministry of Agriculture, AVSI Foundation and all who are present here today. We believe this will bring substantial benefits and we look forward to continuing our constructive cooperation with Lebanon in the future.

Thank you.