



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

'The 4th CSRLEBANON FORUM'

Phoenicia Hotel, Beirut
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HE Excellency Minister of Economy and Trade Dr Alain Hakim,
HE Excellency Minister of Environment Mohammad Machnouk,
Governor of the Central Bank Riad Salameh,
President of Corporate Social Responsibility Lebanon, Khaled Kassar,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to this very important event. It is good to see so many entrepreneurs, risk-takers, innovators and job creators present here today and ready to work in the true spirit of “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR).

I say ‘true’ because I assume you all deeply care about profits, people and the planet. ‘True’ also means you all want to operate in the spirit of the law, actively comply with ethical standards and international norms. Some of you may go

further and really dive deep into ‘actions for the social good, way beyond the immediate interests of your business and what is required by law’. You put people, the community and the environment at the centre of your operations, or at least more close to the centre. It is called citizenship – a concept the European Union believes in strongly. You know the European Union is built on citizenship, on the vision that citizens should live in civil states run by government institutions they can trust and which guarantee security and the provision of basic services.

I will not go into detail on how the European Union and the Member States have played a pioneering role in the development of public policy to promote CSR. There is a number of policy documents, the first one published in 2001 (*Green Paper*) – it seems a long time ago - I was at that time working in the division responsible for the international dimension of the policy paper and the *European Multi-stakeholder Forum on CSR*. In 2006 the European Commission published a new policy document centred on strong support for a business-lead initiative called the *European Alliance for CSR*. This initiative has led to a real step ahead in the world of CSR. There has also been a marked increase in the number of European enterprises that have signed up to the CSR principles of the *United Nations Global Compact*, as well as transnational company agreements with global and European workers’ organisations. In another more recent communication entitled “*A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries*”, we are encouraging European companies to adhere to internationally recognised guidelines and principles of CSR, including the UN Global Compact, the ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

Of course the regulatory framework is vast, complex and diverse. And naturally there is a lot of criticism and many question marks. Many would argue one needs more government regulation and enforcement. There are the misunderstandings, there is the 'greenwashing', there is sometimes duality in purpose, double motives, all of this is out there.

The 'believers and practitioners' want public authorities to provide support through a mix of voluntary policy measures and, where necessary, complementary regulation. Work should go hand in hand with trade unions, civil society organisations, all economic or social actors who detect weaknesses, voice challenges, mobilise support, exercise pressure and contribute to finding solutions.

For years the European Union has been advancing in Lebanon on the practise of a 'social contract', also very well known to the Ministers present here today and to Governor Salame and we did some early work with the *Economic and Social Council in Lebanon*. This is an avenue that needs far more investment and efforts.

I think it is fair to say that a lot has been achieved and that our full support to CRS Lebanon, led by Mr. Kassar, is very justified. Some ask me if in Lebanon the glass is half full or half empty when it comes to CSR and I answer: it is not about full or empty: half the glass has water and the other half has oxygen and we need both if we want to move ahead in building a better future.

I wish you all fruitful discussions and rewarding action.

Thank you.