



**Speech of Ambassador Christina Lassen,  
Chargé d'Affaires, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon  
Equipment Handover Ceremony at Rashaya El Wadi Governmental Hospital**

27 November 2015

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

H.E. Minister of Public Health Wael Abou Faour,  
Ms. Mireille Girard, UNHCR Representative in Lebanon,  
Dr. Gabriele Riedner, WHO Acting Representative in Lebanon,  
Distinguished guests,  
Dear friends,

I am very pleased to be in the beautiful setting of Rashaya today to witness the hand-over of equipment to the Rashaya El Wadi Governmental Hospital.

This equipment and the accompanying activities such as trainings will directly improve the health of mothers and children. This is good news and a reason to celebrate.

Dear friends,

I have come here with two messages.

First of all, I would like to address my heartfelt thanks to Minister Abou Faour personally, to the Ministry of Public Health, to all staff of the Rashaya El Wadi hospital, and to our UN partners for making this programme possible. Their dedication and professionalism have brought us together today.

This programme, funded by the European Union, is aimed at reducing conflict in Lebanon by improving health care services for the vulnerable population. The programme receives a total of €20 million from the European Union's citizens.

This is the first time that we in the European Union are carrying out with the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon.

Our cooperation is effective - and visible - all over Lebanon. Some of you may have seen the recent poster campaign on the main roads in the country. Some of you may have visited one of the 197 Primary Health Care Centres that we have supported with equipment, medicines, vaccine. And some of you may have even benefitted from a training, as a doctor, a pharmacist, a nurse, a health worker.

We are confident that this EU-funded programme will improve the Lebanese public health system, and that is thanks to the committed involvement of all health professionals at central and local levels alike. I do hope as well that this programme will leave a positive imprint on Lebanon's Public Health Strategy in the long run.

This programme, and this is my second message, also comes as a necessary and urgent response to the tremendous burden on Lebanon, which has welcomed the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. The sheer number of people seeking refuge in Lebanon has over-stretched the country's already fragile infrastructures and social services.

This is why the European Union and its Member States have stepped in quickly and are today the biggest donors in response to the repercussions of the Syrian conflict, in Lebanon and regionally.

The European Union and its Member States together have already provided more than 4 billion euros to the Syrian response since the beginning of the crisis. The European Commission alone has provided 2 billion euros, half of the total EU assistance. Of this, since 2012, more than 500 million euros have been allocated and contracted in Lebanon just for Syria crisis response.

While parts of our financial support goes to humanitarian assistance for refugees, the large majority is used to support Lebanese institutions to provide services to vulnerable Lebanese communities who need assistance

on education, on primary health care, local infrastructure, water, sanitation and solid waste. This project we celebrate today is one example of this approach.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union is a main partner for Lebanon when it comes to handling the challenges of security and the very tangible consequences of the Syrian crisis. We stand by the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese people in their efforts to welcome, accommodate, assist and protect the refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria. We will equally support you to uphold Lebanon's freedom and diversity as a model of moderation in the entire region.

Thank you.

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