



**Speech of Ambassador Christina Lassen, Head of the Delegation of the
European Union to Lebanon**

Together for Health in Lebanon

**Ministry of Public Health
20 April 2016**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Dear Minister Wael Abou Faour,

Dear colleagues and friends,

I am very happy to be here today to celebrate the successful closure of the first phase of our cooperation in the health sector and to launch the next phase. I think it is fair to say that our cooperation in this sector and with the Ministry of Public Health was spurred by a crisis but ended up being a positive story benefitting a large part of the Lebanese health system. Over the last two years, together, we have achieved great results - and I will give you a few examples in a minute - but most importantly, we believe that we have contributed to improving the patients' satisfaction with their access to health care and proven that we can build trust between the public sector and the citizens in need of good public services.

And I am glad to state that our support is visible all over Lebanon. Those who benefit from EU's support may have visited one of the 197 Primary Health Care Centres and 8 hospitals to benefit from new equipment, free medicines and vaccines for children. Others may have received training, such as doctors, pharmacists, nurses, and health workers.

Let me recall few figures related to concrete and important results:

- 264 medical equipment items provided to 8 hospitals to reinforce emergency obstetrics and neonatal intensive care units;
- medications for acute diseases provided to 214 Primary Health Care Centres for around 800,000 consultations;
- 3,732,600 vaccine doses provided for immunising around 600,000 children;
- around 4,000 health staff trained;
- And most importantly, as I mentioned earlier, the satisfaction of patients about provided public health services seems to have been growing.

Considering the growing needs, the limited resources and short time span of our cooperation, it is impressive what we have already achieved together. I also hope that our cooperation will affect positively Lebanon's Public Health Strategy in the long run. Indeed, equal access and quality of health service are the ultimate goals of all of us here today.

As I mentioned, the European Union's support comes as a necessary and urgent response to the tremendous task Lebanon has taken upon itself by

welcoming the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. The number of people seeking refuge in Lebanon has by far over-stretched the country's already fragile infrastructures and social services, including in the health sector.

This is why the European Union and its Member States have stepped in quickly and we are today the biggest donors when it comes to assisting Lebanon in handling the consequences of the Syrian war. So far, we have provided more than 1.5 billion Euros to the country, and our commitments for this year are higher than ever before.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are fully aware of the extraordinary challenges that Lebanon is currently facing with regards to the stability and security. We will continue to stand by the Lebanese people and assist tackling the challenge of the refugees until they are able to go back and also continue working with Lebanon after that day to help improve public services for the citizens of this country.

My sincerest thanks go to Minister Abou Faour and all staff at the Ministry of Public Health, the UN agencies and International Alert for their dedication and professionalism in responding to the needs of the health system and to peoples' demands. We look forward to continuing this great teamwork in the future.

Thank you