



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

Re-opening of the Solid Waste Treatment Plant of Minieh
Monday 11 July 2016

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Minister of State for Administrative Reform, Nabil de Freige,
Excellencies,
Members of Parliament,
Governor of North Lebanon, Ramzi Nohra
Presidents of the municipalities, members of the Union,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be in Minieh today and I would like to thank the President of the Municipality and his team for hosting us today in this beautiful city.

I think we all were convinced in the past twelve months that the inauguration – or re-opening - of a solid waste plant is an important and joyful occasion. As we have all become aware over the last year, waste management is something we take for granted when it works, but realise the importance of when it does not. And we realised in the past year that Lebanon is clearly facing severe challenges when it

comes to managing adequate infrastructure to treat municipal waste. So if anything good came out of the crisis, it is that today in Lebanon, there seems to be a much higher awareness of the need to have well-functioning waste management systems and at the same time the need to focus much more on recycling and composting.

In Lebanon today, only 8% of municipal waste is recycled and 9% composted – and that is in spite of the fact that more than 50% of the waste is organic and could be of use in agriculture and elsewhere. Currently, most of the waste is placed in one of the hundreds of informal dumpsites around the country and subsequently burned.

Unfortunately Minieh is not an exception because this plant that we are re-opening today was not operating for a long period. And that is perhaps another lesson to bear in mind: that it is not enough to build good infrastructure, we also need to ensure sustainable operation and maintenance of these facilities. This is why we encourage municipalities and unions of municipalities to strengthen their capacities and get the resources to properly manage their solid waste. Only then can we guarantee adequate services to the population.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Minieh waste treatment plant we are re-opening today will handle more than 75 tons of waste per day.

But this is not the European Union's only solid waste project in this region. We will also support the construction of a new sorting and composting facility and a

sanitary landfill in Koura and Zgharta. Once operational, these sites will cover all the needs of the Governorate of North Lebanon.

In the rest of the country, many other sites will also receive our support, in particular in the Governorates of South Lebanon, Nabatieh and Akkar, and in Baalbek, Zahle and Jeb Janine.

To make it more concrete: 540 municipalities will be assisted in implementing effective solid waste management. This means a total treatment capacity of 2,400 tons per day that will eventually be reached. And this should cover almost half of all the solid waste generated in Lebanon.

Dear friends,

The European Union's investments in the Lebanese waste treatment sector are large, and so are the expectations that these investments will bear fruit. In total, it is over 77 million Euros that the European Union has or will invest in Lebanon in the municipal waste sector alone.

I thank all of our partners, especially OMSAR, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Environment, the Council for Development and Reconstruction, the Economic and Social Fund for Development, associations and representatives of civil society and of course, all the municipalities and unions of municipalities that are the beneficiaries and custodians of these infrastructures.

I would like to thank you again for your attention and I look forward to our future cooperation and success.