



**Brussels, 3 February 2015
(OR. en)**

**5700/1/15
REV 1**

LIMITE

**MED 1
PESC 88
RL 1**

"I" ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee Part 2
Subject: Relations with Lebanon
-Adoption of the European Union's position for the Association Council's seventh meeting
(Brussels, 9 February 2015)

1. On 30 January 2015, the "Mashraq/Maghreb" Working Party has finalised the European Union's position as follows:
 - Annex I: draft EU statement;
 - Annex II: draft agenda.
2. The Committee of Permanent Representatives is therefore requested:
 - to confirm the agreement on the EU's position for the Association Council with Lebanon (Draft EU Statement and Draft Agenda), as set out in Annexes I and II of this document;
 - given the urgency of the matter, to approve the use of the written procedure for the adoption of the EU position, as set out in annexes I and II hereto.

**SEVENTH MEETING OF THE
EU-LEBANON ASSOCIATION COUNCIL**

(Brussels, 9 February 2015)

Statement by the European Union

1. The European Union welcomes this seventh Meeting of the EU-Lebanon Association Council, taking place at a time when Lebanon is facing extraordinary political, security, humanitarian, economic and social challenges. The holding of this Association Council provides a timely opportunity to discuss **responses to these challenges**, as well as to take stock of the **overall development of the bilateral relations** and the implementation of the EU-Lebanon Association Agreement. The EU values Lebanon as a key partner in the region and is committed to a strong engagement, intensive cooperation and support to Lebanon in these extraordinary circumstances.
2. The European Union welcomes Lebanon's commitment and strong engagement to the partnership and cooperation with the EU. Since the last session of the Association Council, the **intensity of EU-Lebanon relations** was reconfirmed by a series of high-level visits and the continuation of the regular dialogue. Besides two meetings of the Association Committee, numerous meetings of sub-committees took place, a new ENP Action Plan was adopted and a dialogue on migration and mobility was launched.
3. Lebanon and the European Union started implementing, in practice, the second European Neighbourhood Policy (**ENP) Action Plan** from the beginning of 2013, before its formal adoption in June 2014. The EU continues to attach high importance to its partnership and cooperation with Lebanon under the ENP, encourages Lebanon to keep on pursuing its reform agenda to the full extent currently possible, and underlines the need to move ahead towards implementing the jointly agreed objectives.

4. The European Union welcomes the launch of the **EU-Lebanon Dialogue on Migration, Mobility and Security** in December 2014, responding to Lebanon's request to intensify our cooperation in this field. The EU is ready to engage in the upcoming months in comprehensive discussions with Lebanon on the interlinked subjects of migration, mobility and security as identified during the launching meeting. The EU invites Lebanon to sustain its commitment throughout the whole Dialogue process and to take an active part in shaping the Dialogue to ensure it responds to its needs.
5. The EU understands that Lebanon is going through a period of extraordinary **political, security, humanitarian, economic and social challenges** not least due to the spill-over from the war in Syria. The EU, also in its capacity as member of the International Support Group for Lebanon, expresses its full support to the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese people in coping with these challenges.
6. The European Union recalls the essential importance of ensuring an **effective functioning of Lebanon's institutions** in line with its constitutional framework. In this regard, the EU recalls the importance for Lebanon to advance the election of the President as soon as possible.
7. The European Union took note of the postponement of the parliamentary elections in November 2014 and regretted the fact that the Lebanese citizens would not be able to exercise their right to vote. The EU calls on Lebanon to make the best use of the extension of the Parliament's term, to speedily advance on **electoral reform** and to bring the electoral framework in line with international standards and recommendations of the previous EU electoral observation missions.
8. The European Union is deeply concerned by the violence and repeated **security incidents**, including terrorism, increasingly affecting the country. The EU condemns the repeated attacks on the security forces, killing of civilians, hostage taking and the brutal execution of hostages. Terrorism, and any use of violence against civilians are completely unacceptable and the perpetrators should be brought to justice.

9. The EU commends the determination of the **Lebanese security forces** to protect the stability and security of Lebanon and to respond to these security threats with joint forces. The EU reiterates its commitment to continued support to Lebanon's security sector including further assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces, as the key institution maintaining domestic security and stability. The EU, including Member States, is working to combine resources and instruments to better meet the needs expressed by the Lebanese authorities. The EU stresses the importance of fighting impunity and bringing to justice those responsible for crimes while acting in full respect of the legal framework.
10. Recognising that the threat of **terrorism** is a global and common threat for both the EU and its partners, the EU stresses its determination, now more than ever, to reinforce its cooperation with Arab and Mediterranean countries on countering terrorism and to redouble efforts on open conflicts and crises. The EU expresses its readiness to further explore possibilities for closer cooperation to support Lebanon in its fight against terrorism and in its efforts to counter radicalisation.
11. The European Union underlines the importance of defusing tension in Lebanon and promoting national unity. The EU calls on all political forces in Lebanon to **engage in dialogue** in order to get out of the current political impasse and move towards a broader agreement on the future of the country. The EU **welcomes new dialogue** initiatives undertaken by some political parties as an important step forward.
12. The EU stresses the need to respect the principles agreed in the Baabda Declaration, including the **policy of disassociation** from the events in the region. The EU strongly calls on all parties to act responsibly, to maintain the spirit of civil peace, dialogue and unity, and to refrain from any acts that could undermine the stability of Lebanon.

13. The European Union stresses the importance of Lebanon's continued commitment to the **full implementation of its international obligations**, including UNSC Resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701, 1757. While expressing concerns for the recent escalation of violence on the ground, the EU calls on all parties to fully respect the UNSC Resolution 1701, to refrain from any provocative action that could lead to escalation along the Blue Line, to fully respect the cessation of hostilities and to avoid territorial and airspace violations. The EU reiterates its support to **UNIFIL** in fulfilling its mandate including by supporting peace and stability in South Lebanon, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The EU expresses its condolences for the death of the Spanish UNIFIL peacekeeper in the recent exchange of fire. The EU further reaffirms its support for making progress on the issues of Shebaa Farms and Ghajar.
14. The European Union appreciates Lebanon's hosting of an extraordinarily large number of **people fleeing the violence in Syria**. Taking note of Lebanon's reinforced border management measures, the EU stresses the importance of **continued adherence to international humanitarian principles, international humanitarian law and international law**, including the universal principle of non-refoulement of refugees. The EU welcomes the commitment to this principle expressed by the Lebanese government in the “Berlin Declaration of Solidarity with Refugees and their Hosts”. The EU recalls the importance of continued provision of protection, assistance and access for humanitarian cases.
15. Since the start of the conflict in Syria, the European Union has been committed to **assisting Lebanon in coping with the burden of refugee inflows**. The European Commission has allocated to Lebanon €449.4 million to address the crisis, in addition to the ongoing bilateral assistance and contributions from the EU Member States. In addition to addressing the needs of refugees, the EU assists the Lebanese communities by enhancing basic infrastructure and supporting economic recovery in Lebanon's most vulnerable areas. Such assistance will bring benefits to Lebanon in the medium and long term. The EU reconfirms its commitment **to an integrated, efficient response to the needs of refugees and host communities** and will remain engaged as a major donor in Lebanon, including through the newly created EU Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis.

16. The European Union remains gravely concerned by the **situation in Syria**. It reiterates its full support to urgently finding a political solution to the crisis based on the principles enshrined in the Geneva Communiqué (2012). The EU remains strongly engaged in providing assistance to those affected by the conflict in Syria, including vulnerable host communities in the neighbouring countries.
17. Concerning the **Middle East Peace Process**, the unsustainable situation in Gaza, the recent increase of violence on the ground, the continuation of settlement activity, which is illegal under international law, and the deteriorating regional context underline the need for a comprehensive peace, based on the two-state solution, ending all claims and fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis for security and those of Palestinians for statehood. The EU reiterated the importance of renewed efforts to help the parties return to the table and has called on the parties and on all major stakeholders, including the Quartet, the League of Arab States and the UNSC, to take the necessary steps to that end. In this regard, the EU reaffirms its strategic interest to see an end to the conflict and is willing to play a major role and actively contribute to a negotiated solution of all final status issues based on the principles expressed in the July 2014 Foreign Affairs Council conclusions. In this regard the EU reiterates the strategic importance of the Arab Peace Initiative for all parties and for the entire region.
18. The European Union remains fully committed to the **Union for the Mediterranean**, in which 43 partners from the EU and the Mediterranean engage to effectively address common regional challenges. The European Union welcomes the visit of the UfM Secretary General, Fathallah Sijilmassi, to Beirut in November 2014 to discuss UfM-related issues. That visit is a sign of the proactive engagement of Lebanon in Southern Mediterranean regional activities, thus contributing to the constructive functioning of the UfM.

19. The European Union welcomes that **human rights and fundamental freedoms** are generally well respected in Lebanon. The EU further recalls that not all parts of Lebanon's population benefit from these rights equally and encourages Lebanon to actively **fight against discrimination** on any basis, including gender, sexual orientation and disability, to provide appropriate legal protection to **vulnerable groups** including all refugees present on the Lebanese territory, and to ensure improvement of the legal conditions – and their appropriate implementation in practice – for **Palestinian refugees** in particular. The EU was concerned by the findings of the Report by the UN Committee Against Torture issued in September 2014 and calls on Lebanon to address the issues raised by the report and to put an immediate stop to the use of torture.
20. The European Union encourages Lebanon to persist in its commitment to advancing the **justice reform**, especially with regard to ensuring the independence of judicial appointments, restricting the jurisdiction of military courts, improving prison management and detention conditions, and fighting impunity at all levels including through full cooperation with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.
21. The European Union stresses that the ratification of the major Hague conventions by Lebanon would allow building a framework of **civil judicial cooperation** between Lebanon and the Union. The EU notes this would be particularly timely considering the emphasis put on justice in the 2013-2015 EU-Lebanon ENP Action Plan.
22. The EU recalls the historic trend towards the progressive **abolition of the death penalty** worldwide. The EU positively acknowledges Lebanon's existing de-facto moratorium on executions and encourages Lebanon to proceed towards a de-jure abolition of the death penalty.
23. The European Union is fully aware of the immense challenges that the current developments in Syria and Iraq pose in particular to Lebanon. The EU notes the **deterioration in Lebanon's macroeconomic indicators**, notably the public debt ratio, putting in question Lebanon's economic resilience in the face of the crisis situation in the country. The EU encourages the government of Lebanon to take urgent action toward **fiscal consolidation** and to renew the foundations of sound public finance management, especially the adoption of a **national budget by the Parliament**.

24. The European Union encourages Lebanon to take further steps to promote **sustainable and knowledge based growth and the creation of decent jobs** through support to productive activity, SME development, innovation, Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation, cooperation in the food and agriculture sector (including Geographical indication policy and food safety/sanitary and phytosanitary issues), two-way trade, and investment.
25. The EU encourages Lebanon to intensify its efforts towards **World Trade Organisation accession**, including by advancing relevant legislative initiatives, and to take steps to improve the general business and investment environment.
26. The EU welcomes Lebanon's **signature of the Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin**, encourages its ratification as soon as possible and invites Lebanon to actively participate in the process of revision of the rules of origin.
27. The EU calls on Lebanon to promptly ratify the Protocol establishing a Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) for the resolution of trade disputes under the EU-Lebanon Association Agreement.
28. The European Union encourages further progress towards negotiations of an **EU-Lebanon Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA)** and stresses the important benefits for Lebanon in moving ahead in this field.
29. The EU encourages Lebanon to take urgent measures to improve energy supply and limit power cuts, as first steps in a broader overhaul of the **energy sector**, encompassing also the development of renewable energies, energy savings, and exploitation of oil and gas in a transparent manner.
30. The European Union encourages Lebanon to continue moving towards more sustainable and efficient management of natural resources, including water, and to exploit the potential for green growth in the country.

31. The EU encourages Lebanon to adopt a comprehensive **national climate strategy** as well as prepare a mitigation contribution by the first quarter 2015 for the purpose of the new climate agreement applicable to all. Considering the urgency to act in order to effectively reduce GHG emissions and maintain the global temperature increase below 2° C compared to pre-industrial levels, enhanced domestic efforts are required also before 2020.
 32. The European Union calls on Lebanon to make all efforts to establish a robust and independent **civil aviation** authority with adequate resources, in order to improve the safety and security oversight of the Lebanese aviation companies. The EU calls on Lebanon to solve the Significant Safety Concern issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization as soon as possible by implementing the international aviation safety standards.
 33. With regard to the education sector, the European Union welcomes the implementation of the Lebanese Education Development Plan, as well as the drafting of national standards for teachers. It encourages Lebanon to make full use of the new Erasmus+ programme to support the modernisation of its higher education system. The EU calls on Lebanon to enable enrolment of the Syrian children to the Lebanese schools to the full extent possible, in order to prevent the potentially negative consequences of a 'lost generation'.
 34. The European Union – beside and beyond its significant response to the crisis situation in Lebanon – will continue allocating **regular financial assistance** to Lebanon in accordance with the second ENP Action Plan and the respective programming documents, using the European Neighbourhood Instrument.
 35. The European Union welcomes Lebanon's readiness to sign the protocol on a Framework Agreement that will enable Lebanon to participate in the **EU programmes** according to its choice.
 36. The European Union looks forward to a fruitful and constructive meeting of the **EU-Lebanon Association Council**.
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**ASSOCIATION
BETWEEN
THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND LEBANON**

The Association Council

Brussels, 30 January 2015

UE-RL 3001/15

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Meeting: Seventh session of EU-Lebanon Association Council

Date 8-9 February 2015

in : Brussels

- 1. Adoption of the agenda**
 - 2. Approval of the draft minutes of the sixth EU-Lebanon Association Council**
(Brussels, 17 October 2012)
 - 3. Situation and outlook as regards EU-Lebanon relations**
 - 3.1. Political and socio-economic developments in Lebanon
 - 3.2. Implementation of the Association Agreement and of the ENP Action Plan
 - 4. Political dialogue on issues of common interest ***
 - 4.1. Developments in Lebanon and implications of the crisis in Syria
 - 4.2. Regional developments
 - 5. Any Other Business**
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* Points to be dealt with in the informal session