

Welcome Remarks

by

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“ Lebanese Municipalities... Struggling for Survival”

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Serail Bickfaya

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Dear President Amine Gemayel, Dear Nicole Gemayel,

Dear Excellencies, Dear Mayors, Dear experts and speakers, Dear guests, Dear partners, Dear colleagues and friends.

It is a great pleasure and honor to welcome you to today’s event on a topic that is very dear to me: the situation of Lebanese Municipalities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Municipalities serve as the backbone of any functioning society, providing vital services and infrastructure that directly impact the daily lives of individuals.

In Lebanon, a country striving to overcome various challenges, municipalities act as the closest form of governance to the people. They are responsible for a wide range of essential services such as waste management, water and electricity supply, transportation, urban planning.

The people of Lebanon heavily rely on municipalities for their basic needs, especially in areas where the central government's reach may be limited. These local bodies have proven to be instrumental in fostering a sense of community, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the unique needs of their respective regions. They possess the local knowledge and understanding required to implement tailored solutions that are responsive to the specific demands of their communities.

However, municipalities in Lebanon face numerous challenges, including – first and foremost - limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of technical expertise. The country's ongoing economic crisis has severely strained their capacities to deliver the necessary services to the people.

Municipalities are often burdened with enormous responsibilities while grappling with limited funds, hindering their ability to meet the growing demands of their constituents.

Obviously – and I am not telling you anything new here – it is up the Lebanese state, to do its homework and implement the long overdue political and socioeconomic reforms to get the country back on track and also empower municipalities.

However, through its support for municipalities also the international community can and does make a significant difference. By extending support to municipalities in Lebanon, the international community can contribute to improving the lives of the people at the grassroots level. Financial assistance, technical expertise, and capacity-building initiatives are vital to enhancing the capabilities of municipalities, enabling them to deliver better services and undertake sustainable development projects.

Moreover, supporting municipalities aligns with the principles of local governance and decentralization, which are key to a healthy and democratic society. Empowering municipalities means empowering the people, allowing them to have a voice in decisions that directly affect their lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The role of municipalities in Lebanon cannot be overstated. They are the bedrock of local governance, serving as the voice and advocates of their communities. I look forward now to an insightful and productive discussion on this important topic.

Thank you very much.