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**Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon**



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**Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban**

UN Day Message

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October 24 -the UN Day- this year marks the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, and 75 years of steadfast partnership between the UN and Lebanon, a founding member.

This anniversary comes at a difficult time for people around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed hard-fought gains in global social and economic development. Fewer children are able to go to school. People have become poorer, and more afraid. It is a time that reminds us of the absolute value of human dignity and of global solidarity. As in 1945, it is a time that vindicates the need for more and better global cooperation, leadership and responsibility.

The UN and Lebanon are inseparable. Lebanon and eminent Lebanese contributed to the UN since its inception. Many Lebanese personalities served in top and other responsible positions with honor and dignity. They contribute to the pursuit of UN objectives both in the UN Headquarters in New York and elsewhere dealing with important files and negotiations, and in numerous UN political and peacekeeping missions and operations all around the world. Many Lebanese served and continue to do so in UN agencies, funds, and programs with dedication and professionalism. Many times, in their common history the UN came to help Lebanon to safeguard and strengthen its security and stability, with UNIFIL at the forefront. The UN has helped Lebanon to cope with many humanitarian challenges including those concerning Palestinian and now Syrian refugees. The UN works with Lebanon on sustainable green development, human rights, gender equality or good governance agendas, including fight against corruption or technical assistance on elections. The UN supports the authorities and communities to help them deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Lebanon, 2020 has been a year of deepening hardship and mounting frustration. The severe economic crisis which sparked widespread popular protests has been compounded by the deepening COVID-19 crisis. The tragic blast of 4 August that caused the death of 193 people, injured many thousands and damaged scores of households, businesses and heritage sites, has once again amplified grave concerns of total lack of accountability for the lamentable situation of Lebanon and management of its public affairs.

The hardest hit by this multi-faceted crisis are the people: Those rapidly growing in numbers who have their stories of shock, neglect, deprivation and loss of livelihoods, perspective and dignity; those who saw lives of their dearest, their homes and futures blown away; those who lost hope and find themselves unable to start again. It is these people who are at the forefront of the UN efforts to end need and put Lebanon back on the path to sustainable development.

This is a critical time for the people of Lebanon and their leaders. A defining moment. And perhaps more urgently than elsewhere, in Lebanon the messages of solidarity and responsible

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leadership must be taken to heart. Strong political will and firm leadership to pursue a reform agenda are also needed for Lebanon's early recovery, to pave the way for longer-term development, while the people must always be at the center of bringing back and building a better Lebanon.

In the period to come, the UN will continue standing closely with Lebanon and its people, will continue to encourage and facilitate the decisions that are necessary to fulfill their legitimate aspirations for the future.

For many in this region, Lebanon has traditionally shined as a beacon of democracy, pluralism, tolerant coexistence, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, of the media. These longstanding Lebanese traditions based on UN norms and rights have increasingly come under strain. Abuses and violations have been regularly happening, with many challenges ahead. Such regress, such encroachment on rights and liberties are unacceptable.

The people of Lebanon assisted by the international community must remain committed and determined to fight for their rights, for their democratic heritage to be renewed and endured. Leaders must seek and enact measures to protect and promote its unique model of coexistence and unity in diversity needed to restore people's trust and confidence, to rekindle their hope in stability and renewed prosperity in Lebanon.

The way out of the current crisis is well known: rapid meaningful structural reforms in political, economic, and social areas, good governance with full transparency, accountability and independent judiciary as effective instruments in the fight against corruption and a move towards a truly inclusive civil society devoid of sectarian patronage, where the opportunities, protection, and rights are equal for all, including women and youth. The voices of Lebanon's women and youth must be heard. Their presence, needs and aspirations must figure at the forefront of a new social contract that will help to create a better Lebanon, where all citizens can enjoy equal rights and opportunities in public and private domains.

For 75 years, Lebanon has supported the UN and the UN has stood with Lebanon. In these difficult times, the UN remains resolute in its commitment to this cherished, unique country and its brave, industrious, resilient people to help them rebuild their country, lives and livelihoods for a better, dignified tomorrow.

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