

Statement of the International Support Group for Lebanon

2 March 2023

As the presidential vacancy enters its fifth month, amid lacking reforms, entrenching positions and deepening polarization, the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) is gravely concerned about the ramifications of a prolonged presidential vacuum.

The ISG urges the political leadership and Members of Parliament to assume their responsibilities, act in line with the Constitution, and uphold the Taef agreement by electing a new President without further delay.

The status quo is unsustainable. It is paralyzing the State at all levels, profoundly undermining its ability to address the urgent socioeconomic, financial, security and humanitarian challenges and eroding people's confidence in state institutions as hardships mount.

Eleven months after the Staff Level Agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Lebanon is yet to conclude a financial program. Expediting the adoption of laws necessary to restore confidence in the banking sector and the harmonization of exchange rates are vital to stem socioeconomic deterioration.

Noting that the municipal elections were postponed for one year until May 2023, the ISG welcomes ongoing preparations to ensure the timely conduct of these elections. Renewing the mandate of municipal bodies, which are on the front line serving Lebanese citizens, is important to ensure the functioning of state institutions and strengthen confidence in local governance.

The ISG strongly condemns the violent attack against a UNIFIL convoy in December 2022, which killed one of its members, in Al Aqbiyeh and expects the perpetrators to be held to account and swiftly brought to justice.

Ensuring judicial process is a necessary element to restoring the credibility of Lebanon's state institutions, to implementing the rule of law and assigning proper accountability, and to ending impunity. In this regard, the ISG notes with concern the lack of progress in the judicial proceedings on the Port of Beirut explosion of 4 August 2020.

The ISG continues to stand by Lebanon and its people.

Note to Editors

The International Support Group has brought together the United Nations and the governments of China, France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, together with the European Union and the Arab League. It was launched in September 2013 by the UN Secretary-General with former President Michel Sleiman to help mobilize support and assistance for Lebanon's stability, sovereignty and state institutions.