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EU-Lebanon: new support to improve security and social cohesion

Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle met with the Ambassador of Lebanon to the EU Rami Mortada to discuss recent developments in the country and EU's support for Lebanon.

"I strongly condemn the recent terrorist bombings in Tripoli and Beirut. These acts are unacceptable. The International Community must help Lebanon to carry the heavy burden caused by the bloodshed in neighbouring Syria. We stand by Lebanon and are committed to its stability, unity and sovereignty," Commissioner Füle said at the meeting.

He also informed the Ambassador about the additional new financial support, just adopted by the European Commission, for three programs in the area of security and social affairs amounting to €22 million.

"This new support responds to the current urgent needs of the Lebanese society which is facing increasing social tensions, especially due to the uncertain economic outlook and the instability caused by the crisis in Syria," Commissioner Füle stressed.

Out of the €22 million part goes for support of the Lebanese security sector for stability and national cohesion (€8 million), for reinforcing social cohesion (€10 million) and for improving housing and health conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (€4 million).

This additional amount is part of the Annual Action Plan 2013 for Lebanon and was approved in light of the recent events in the region which are affecting Lebanese stability and security to a great extent. The €8 million will go for improving the effectiveness and the democratic control of the Lebanese security agencies in line with the respect for human rights and with the rule of law.

Moreover, the existing low degree of social cohesion is also under strain in the face of the present economic downturn - a consequence of the neighbour's crisis. This situation increases the need for effective social protection and socio-economic data on the affected Lebanese households, most of them without health insurance. With €10 million assistance from the EU, the programme helps the Lebanese Central Administration for Statistics to produce better-quality social statistics, and to improve the quality of the social services offered by the National Social Security Fund.

The living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon are a main factor of social inequality and instability, which is presently increasing as approximately 65.000 Palestine refugees from Syria fled to Lebanon. EU assistance worth €4 million will improve living conditions of the most vulnerable Palestine refugees by rehabilitating shelters and health centres.

The new money announced by Commissioner Füle today is on top of what the EU provided to Lebanon so far in the context of the Syrian crisis. The EU has committed almost €235 million in support to Lebanon since the start of the refugee crisis: about €65 million were given for humanitarian assistance; and €170 million for socio-economic support of the Lebanese hosting communities. This sum includes funds from the recently announced comprehensive assistance package which mobilises additional €400 million for the consequences of the Syrian crisis.

Background

The assumptions under which the National Indicative Programme (NIP) and this Annual Action Plan were initially designed in 2010 have changed. The number of refugees from Syria fleeing to Lebanon is growing exponentially and so are the needs of both the refugees and their Lebanese hosts. In many parts of the country, hosting the refugees is severely overstressing the economic and social resources as well as the local infrastructure of the mostly poor communities.

In this context, it appeared necessary to review the priorities of the EU support to Lebanon through its Annual Action Plans 2012 and 2013. For Lebanon, the EU has reallocated an important part of its bilateral portfolio to address the consequences of the Syrian crisis and mobilised important additional resources to support the Lebanese authorities and communities in coping with the influx of refugees.

This Annual Action Programme 2013 remains in line with the three priorities of the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2011-2013, namely the support to political ("Security Sector Reform") and socio-economic ("Support to Social Cohesion") reforms as well as the recovery and reinvigoration of the economy ("Improving living conditions of Palestine refugees").

This is also directed towards the aims of the Joint Communications of the European Commission and of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy "Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis"¹, "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean"² and "A new response to a changing Neighbourhood"³.

For more information

Website of the DG Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

Website of EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/fule/index_en.htm

¹ JOIN(2013)22 of 24.06.2013

² COM(2011)303 of 25.05.2011.

On the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI):

<http://www.enpi-info.eu/indexmed.php>

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