



## Press statement

Beirut, 22 June 2023

The European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries conducted an official visit to Lebanon from 19 to 23 June 2023, led by the Chair Isabel SANTOS (S&D, Portugal) who was accompanied by Domènec RUIZ DEVESA (S&D, Spain), Andrus ANSIP (Renew, Estonia), Mounir SATOURI (Greens/EFA/France), Marisa MATIAS (The Left, Portugal).

The Delegation's main objectives with this mission were to hold the 16<sup>th</sup> Inter-parliamentary Meeting with the Lebanese counterparts in difficult times for Lebanon, as well as to assess the current critical situation of the country with various meetings with key members of the Lebanese executive, representatives of civil society and field visits.

The EP delegation and its Lebanese counterparts had the opportunity to reconfirm the solid partnership and their political will to further strengthen cooperation and parliamentary ties between the two institutions while focusing on political, institutional, social and economic matters and discussing the situation of refugees in the country.

The delegation also met with high-level political interlocutors in order to discuss the current political paralysis, the dire economic and social situation of the country, the role of Lebanon in the region, the urgent need for reforms and negotiations with the IMF, the importance of holding the municipal elections, the situation of refugees in the country. To this end, the delegation met with Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berry, Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Deputy Prime Minister Saade Chamy, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdallah Bou Habib, Minister of Finance Youssef El Khalil and Minister of Interior and Municipalities Bassam Mawlawi.

Exchanges with a broad spectrum of civil society and think tanks representatives involved in the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework or working on Syrian Refugees field were complemented by field visits of UNRWA Palestine Refugee camp of Borj El Barajne and of UNWFP Syrian Refugees Informal Tented Settlement in Zahle/Bekaa area. The delegation had the opportunity to scrutinise projects benefitting from EU financial support in the health sector visiting Karantina warehouse, accompanied by WHO. The

delegation also met and exchanged with families of victims of the Beirut Port Blast on the state of play of the investigations on this issue.

During their official meetings with Lebanese counterparts, Members stressed that the European Union and Lebanon are strategic partners cooperating closely on joint challenges. They reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to continue assisting Lebanon and its people to move towards the recovery and stability they deserve while recalled the European Parliament's position that any financial help from the EU must be conditional on a democratic and inclusive government that adopts a clear stance against corruption and improve transparency and accountability of the system.

The delegation underlined that the ongoing political paralysis is occurring while the country is facing a deteriorating socioeconomic situation. Lebanon needs a new President and an effective fully-fledged government that is capable of making decisions and is not limited to addressing only certain issues.

Members pointed out that in order to facilitate the disbursement of the additional international funding and reverse the deteriorating trend of the Lebanese economy, decisive reforms in the financial and banking sector are to be implemented, without any further delay.

The delegation took note of the latest adoption of the law extending the municipalities' term for a maximum of one year which paves the way to postpone municipal elections for a second time and strongly encouraged the Lebanese side to hold the municipal elections as soon as possible.

For the sake of justice and accountability, the investigation of the Beirut port blast must resume and produce results without interferences, which have hampered and delayed repeatedly the judiciary work.

The delegation, acknowledging the impact of the Syrian conflict and of the refugees' presence on the Lebanese society, praised the tremendous efforts made by Lebanese people and government to hosting 1.5 million refugees since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. However, Members reiterated, in line with the EU's established position that returns can only happen if and when the international requirements are met.

For further information, please contact [DMAS@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:DMAS@europarl.europa.eu)