



Plenary sitting

B9-0467/2021

14.9.2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Lebanon
(2021/2878(RSP))

Pedro Marques, Tonino Picula, Evin Incir
on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Lebanon
(2021/2878(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Lebanon, in particular those of 16 January 2003 on the conclusion of an Association Agreement with the Republic of Lebanon¹, of 10 March 2005 on the situation in Lebanon² of 7 September 2006³ and 12 July 2007 on the situation in the Middle East⁴ and 22 May 2008 on the situation in Lebanon⁵,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006), 1701 (2006), 1773 (2007), 1832 (2008), 1884 (2009), 1937 (2010) and 2004 (2011), 2064 (2012), 2115 (2013), 2172 (2014) and 2236 (2015), 2305 (2016), 2373 (2017), 2433 (2018), 2485 (2019), 2539 (2020) and 2591 (2021),
- having regard to the EU-Lebanon Association Agreement which entered into force on 1 April 2006,
- having regard to the commitments agreed in the framework of the EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities in November 2016, the CEDRE Conference in 6 April 2018, the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) in December 2020 and the International Support Group for Lebanon meetings on 11 December 2019, 23 September 2020 and 19 May 2021,
- having regard to the statement of 5 August 2020 by Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on the explosion in Beirut,
- having regard to the statements and remarks by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) Josep Borrell of 19 June 2021 during his visit to the country, of 16 July 2021 on the Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri stepping down, of 3 August 2021 on the one year anniversary of the Beirut port explosion and of 4 August 2021 during the Conference in support of the Lebanese people,
- having regard to the statements by the European External Action Service (EEAS) Spokesperson of 26 July 2021 on the government formation process, of 7 August 2021 condemning the firing of rockets from Southern Lebanon and of 12 September 2021 on the government formation,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 7 December 2020 on Lebanon and to its framework for targeted sanctions adopted on 30 July 2021,

¹ OJ C 38 E, 12.2.2004, p. 307.

² OJ C 320 E, 15.12.2005, p. 257.

³ OJ C 305 E, 14.12.2006, p. 236.

⁴ OJ C 175 E, 10.7.2008, p. 579.

⁵ OJ C 279 E, 19.11.2009, p. 69.

- having regard to the statement of 26 August 2021 by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the deteriorating socio- economic situation in Lebanon,
 - having regard to the statement of 28 July 2021 by the Co-Chairs of the second 3RF Consultative Group meeting,
 - having regard to the International Conferences on Assistance and Support to Beirut and the Lebanese People of 9 August 2020, 2 December 2020 and 4 August 2021,
 - having regard to the final report by the European Union Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Lebanon 2018,
 - having regard to the World Bank Lebanon Economic Monitor (LEM) of 1 June 2021,
 - having regard to the Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) prepared by the World Bank Group in cooperation with the European Union and the United Nations,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Lebanon is a close and important partner of the European Union; whereas this partnership is based on common interests, long-standing historical and cultural ties, regular political and social dialogue and wide-ranging people-to-people contacts;
 - B. whereas a stable, fully sovereign, united and democratic Lebanon is of crucial importance for the stability, security and peaceful development of the whole Middle East;
 - C. whereas Lebanon is facing unprecedented economic, political and social challenges, characterised by a deep recession, a sharp rise in unemployment, hyperinflation and acute fuel, medication, water and electricity shortages;
 - D. whereas corruption is one of the key challenges stifling Lebanon’s development and prosperity, and deepening alienation from and distrust of the political system; whereas corruption is widespread and permeates all levels of society, as reflected by the country’s global and average performance scores in most governance areas; whereas the National Anti-Corruption Institution is still not operational as the appointment of its commissioners is pending; whereas the National Commission for Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons and the National Human Rights Commission, including the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, remain inoperative; whereas the new government should fully implement the anti-corruption strategy and ensure the independence of the judiciary;
 - E. whereas on 4 August 2020 a large quantity of ammonium nitrate stored at the port of the city of Beirut exploded, killing more than 200 people, leaving more than 6 500 injured and 300 000 people homeless, and severely damaged critical health infrastructure and medical supplies; whereas the RDNA estimated damage caused by the explosion of between USD 3.8-4.6 billion and losses of between USD 2.9-3.5 billion; whereas the costs of the reform and reconstruction track were estimated at USD 2 billion;

- F. whereas one year after the blast, the investigation into the causes of the explosion has not yet been concluded and those responsible not identified and held to account; whereas on 4 August 2021 thousands of protesters demonstrated once again in Beirut demanding accountability for the port explosion; whereas the Lebanese security forces used excessive force against peaceful protesters resulting in large numbers of people being injured;
- G. whereas on 10 August 2020 Prime Minister Hassan Diab and the Lebanese cabinet resigned as a result of political pressure exacerbated by the explosion; whereas Lebanon was left without a government for more than 13 months; whereas a new government led by Najib Mikati was announced on 10 September 2021; whereas the new government will urgently need to deliver the necessary substantive policy package of reforms in order for Lebanon to combat corruption and preserve its stability, unity, security, sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity;
- H. whereas the accelerating deterioration of the economy has severely affected all segments of Lebanese society and, in particular, its most vulnerable groups, as well as the country's institutions and services; whereas according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Lebanese pound has lost approximately 90 % of its value, while food prices have increased almost tenfold since May 2019; whereas more than 70 % of the population lives below the national poverty line, the unemployment rate has risen to over 40 % of the workforce and an increasing share of households have difficulty accessing basic services such as food, water and healthcare; whereas according to the latest World Bank LEM, the economic crisis is likely to rank among the top three most severe crisis episodes globally since the mid-19th century;
- I. whereas in March 2020 Lebanon defaulted on USD 30 billion of foreign currency bonds; whereas in April 2020 the Lebanese Government approved an economic plan and requested an IMF programme on the basis of the necessary reforms; whereas negotiations with the IMF have made no progress towards unlocking financial aid due to the political deadlock on the government formation process, disagreements over economic reforms and the scale of losses in the financial system; whereas the IMF has designated USD 860 million of special drawing rights (SDRs) to strengthen the country's depleted reserves and to help with its many urgent needs; whereas an agreement with the IMF is crucial in order for the Lebanese economy to recover;
- J. whereas the 3RF was launched in December 2020 to help Lebanon address the urgent needs of the population affected by the explosion on 4 August 2020 and to support the recovery and reconstruction of Beirut through a costed and prioritised framework of key actions under four pillars; whereas the 3RF is designed to allow better donor coordination and a major role for civil society; whereas progress on reforms under the 3RF has been slow because of months of government formation deadlock;
- K. whereas the devastating explosion, hyperinflation and the acute medication, fuel and electricity shortages have put additional pressure on the Lebanese health system, which was already under heavy pressure owing to the multiple waves of the coronavirus pandemic and the financial crisis; whereas since the beginning of the pandemic more than 610 000 coronavirus cases and 8 150 deaths have been recorded in Lebanon;

- L. whereas Lebanon has the world's highest number of refugees per capita; whereas the economic crisis and pandemic-related restrictions have accelerated job losses among refugees, host communities and migrant workers; whereas an estimated 90 % of Syrian refugee households live in extreme poverty; whereas Palestine refugees continue to be excluded from basic services and fundamental social, political and economic rights, including being faced with restrictions on the right to own property and the right to work; whereas education is a very serious problem with around 40 % of school-aged Syrian refugees remaining out of any learning programme; whereas this situation is adding to the hardship of the already most vulnerable and marginalised communities in Lebanon, including refugees, thereby increasing the risks of exploitation, child labour and gender-based violence;
- M. whereas Lebanon is one of two countries in the Middle East hosting large numbers of migrant domestic workers regulated by the kafala system; whereas the Lebanese Ministry of Labour adopted a standard unified contract on 8 September 2021, which included new protections for migrant domestic workers but nevertheless lacks sufficient enforcement mechanisms;
- N. whereas the EU has been at the forefront of the donations to help both Syrian and Palestine refugees in Lebanon; whereas since 2011 the EU has contributed EUR 2.4 billion to help Syrian and Palestine refugees through various instruments such as the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI);
- O. whereas municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections are scheduled for May and October 2022; whereas it is crucial for all political leaders to respect the electoral calendar of 2022 and to ensure inclusive, transparent and fair elections with equal access to campaigning for all and access to vote for all Lebanese citizens, including those who reside outside the country as the most recent electoral law adopted in 2017 allowed them to and as the Lebanese Constitution stipulates;
- P. whereas the Supervisory Commission for Elections lacks the necessary means to carry out its mandate, raising concerns regarding the transparency and fairness of the campaign and the elections scheduled for next year;
- Q. whereas the 1989 Taif Agreement contained important calls for administrative decentralisation, democratisation, sustainable development and equal rights of citizens; whereas these calls have not been implemented to date;
- R. whereas the EU has committed to the stability and unity of the country through economic assistance, support to Syrian and Palestine refugees and, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, through programmes strengthening the health system and addressing its socio-economic consequences; whereas in 2020 the EU provided EUR 333 million in assistance to Lebanon; whereas the EU and its Member States will continue responding to the most urgent needs of the Lebanese people; whereas an agreement for a programme with the IMF will allow the EU to look at concessional lending and guarantees, and to provide trade measures and a macro-financial assistance programme;
- S. whereas the most recent International Conference on Assistance and Support to Beirut

and the Lebanese People that took place on 4 August 2021 received pledges to the value of USD 370 million dollars, to which should be added substantial in-kind assistance;

1. Expresses its continuous support for Lebanon and its people, and pays its respects to the victims of the Beirut port explosion;
2. Is deeply concerned about the unprecedented political, institutional, economic, social and security challenges Lebanon is facing, all exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19;
3. Takes note of the judge's efforts to make progress in the investigation into the causes of the port explosion; deplores the fact that one year after the blast, the investigation has still not been concluded; urges the Lebanese authorities to respect the judicial procedures and the independence of the judiciary and assist every effort that would allow those responsible for the decisions that led to the blast in the port of Beirut to be properly investigated and held to account;
4. Regrets the delay in the government formation process, as well as the lack of progress in the implementation of urgent reforms; welcomes the announcement of the new government; regrets the fact that the new cabinet contains only one woman; urges the new government to swiftly implement key governance and economic reforms that will ensure political and economic recovery, including the credible regulation of key economic sectors, such as the electricity sector;
5. Calls on the Lebanese authorities to provide support for the most vulnerable communities in Lebanon, including through social safety nets; encourages the new government to closely involve the country's civil society, including all political parties, youth movements, women's rights movements, human rights and humanitarian organisations, refugees, migrants and the LGBTIQ+ community during the reform process through inclusive policy dialogues;
6. Urges the new Lebanese Government to fully implement its international commitments, including those agreed in the framework of the EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities in November 2016, the CEDRE Conference on 6 April 2018, the 3RF in December 2020 and the International Support Group for Lebanon meetings;
7. Encourages the new Lebanese Government to resume talks and to reach an agreement as soon as possible with the IMF; calls on the parties to the agreement to consider all possible options to safeguard the integrity of the funding, including that of sending international advisers mandated to advise the Lebanese Government and monitor the use of funds;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to release additional humanitarian aid, in particular food aid and hospital and pharmaceutical material, and to provide alternative energy resources for all schools and hospitals, channelled through entities other than public entities such as well-known international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Lebanon, while always respecting the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and international humanitarian law; underlines the need for robust monitoring of EU aid in order to ensure that it is transferred directly to those in need;

9. Reiterates its support for the EU's determination to assist Lebanon in its economic restructuring and the reconstruction of its infrastructure; calls on the Commission to reform the long-term funds and reformulate the strategy and recovery plan for Lebanon in the framework of the EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe and to establish closer cooperation with civil society, in order to promote further democratisation in the country;
10. Calls for the EU and its Member States to support grassroots activists and civil society actors working on reforms and anti-corruption in Lebanon and to pursue an approach that supports bottom-up humanitarian and stabilisation efforts; praises the initiatives of local communities and civil society aimed at establishing local mechanisms to deliver aid, improve services and redefine the rights and responsibilities of citizens and the government;
11. Calls on the Commission to engage constructively with the new Lebanese Government in delivering the structural and sectoral reforms required to unlock significant EU macro-financial assistance and in strengthening our trade relations, in particular through further preferential trade and customs facilitation;
12. Urges the new Lebanese Government to take all steps necessary to ensure the timely conduct of transparent, fair and democratic municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections in 2022; stresses the importance of urgent reforms to ensure clarity on the applicable electoral framework, as well as measures to strengthen the participation of women, young people and persons with disabilities in the political process; calls for the full implementation of the recommendations stemming from the 2018 EU Election Observation Mission; calls on the Lebanese authorities to request that the VP/HR deploy an election observation mission; urges the new Lebanese Government to provide the Supervisory Commission for Elections with all the necessary funds, staff and equipment in order to fully carry out its mandate; urges the Commission and the Member States to provide all the technical and financial assistance to enable the elections to be held in the best conditions possible and to strive to guarantee the fairness and transparency of the whole process;
13. Reaffirms the need for internal stability and unity, and calls on the Lebanese authorities to protect the right to peaceful protest;
14. Urges the new government and political leaders to undertake credible measures to fight corruption, combat tax evasion, put an end to financial impunity, ensure funding and the appointment of the Commissioners to the National Anti-Corruption Institution and other measures that ensure concrete changes are made and guarantee both transparency and full accountability to the Lebanese people;
15. Calls on the Lebanese authorities to approve the 2021 budget and prepare the 2022 budget, including a strong programme on social protection, implementing the Emergency Social Safety Net Programme and the National Poverty Targeting Programme; urges the Lebanese authorities to provide for a sufficient budget line for the 2022 elections;
16. calls on the Member States to show much stronger commitment to responsibility-

sharing, so as to enable refugees to find protection beyond the immediate neighbouring region, by means of resettlement, humanitarian admission schemes, simplified family reunification and more flexible visa regulations; recalls that in order to achieve enduring solutions for displaced persons, sufficient long-term funding and programming are crucial to support internally displaced persons and refugees beyond the humanitarian programme cycle;

17. Recalls the vulnerability of Syrian and Palestine refugees in Lebanon; calls for their inclusion in the EU's response and stresses the need to ensure adequate, predictable and multi-layered funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other actors working with refugees, to ensure the full provision of essential services to refugee communities in the country; stresses the need to enhance cooperation and dialogue with NGOs and other service providers helping refugees in the country;
18. Calls on Lebanon to ensure the necessary protections against forced labour, as enshrined in national labour law and international human rights standards, including fundamental principles and rights at work, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189 of 2011) in order to address the exploitative nature of the kafala system;
19. Welcomes the framework for targeted sanctions adopted by the European Council; calls on the EEAS to launch an internal procedure that would identify a list of accountable persons and entities that fulfil the criteria of the adopted framework; stresses that the introduction of the targeted sanctions for obstructing or undermining the democratic political process remains an option that could be activated should the responsible actors in Lebanon continue to stonewall reform and the fight against corruption;
20. Calls on the Member States to initiate legal proceedings in their national jurisdictions against the owners of illicitly acquired capital held in their territories and to promote efforts towards the restitution of illegal funds to the Lebanese population;
21. Calls on Lebanon's neighbours to refrain from all interference which could have a negative impact on Lebanese internal affairs and to play a constructive role in achieving stability and unity in the country, within a democratic framework;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and the President, Government and Parliament of Lebanon.