



Council of the
European Union

**Brussels, 7 December 2020
(OR. en)**

13730/20

**MAMA 181
MED 84
RL 3**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
No. prev. doc.: 13414/20
Subject: Council conclusions on Lebanon

Delegations will find in the Annex the text of Council conclusions on Lebanon as approved by the Council on 7 December 2020.

Council Conclusions on Lebanon

1. The EU notes with increasing concern that the grave financial, economic, social and political crisis that has taken root in Lebanon has continued to worsen over the last months. The Lebanese population is the first to suffer from the country's increasing difficulties. The EU calls on Lebanon's political leadership to listen to the people as they articulate their aspirations and concerns, to take their demands seriously and harness their inputs and implement reforms without further delay.

2. Along with the COVID-19 pandemic, the explosion on 4 August 2020 at Beirut port has exacerbated the multiple challenges Lebanon was already facing. The EU extends its deepest condolences to the families of the many victims and those injured in this tragic explosion. The EU urges Lebanese authorities to deliver on their commitment to an impartial, credible, transparent and independent investigation without further delay.

3. The EU welcomes the rapid and significant mobilisation of the international community in support of the Lebanese people in the wake of the 4 August explosion. The EU and its member states have rapidly provided the most substantial assistance in this regard. In addition, the EU has undertaken jointly with the World Bank and United Nations a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA).

4. The EU stands together with the Lebanese people and will continue to deliver in support of a people-centred recovery. In this light, the EU welcomes the conference in support of the Lebanese people organised by the United Nations and France on 2 December, with a wide participation of civil society and enterprises and calls for utmost efficiency and transparency in the delivery of international assistance and the provision of humanitarian assistance in a principled manner. The EU expresses its support for the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework to "build back a better Lebanon" guided by the principles of transparency, inclusion and accountability.

5. a. This support must pave the way for a broader sustainable recovery. Beyond a people-centred recovery, EU substantial assistance for the reconstruction of a democratic, transparent, inclusive and prosperous Lebanon will continue to depend on tangible progress on necessary reforms.

b. The EU therefore underlines the urgent need for the Lebanese authorities to implement reforms in order to rebuild the confidence of the international community and create the conditions that will attract support from investors. It further calls on the Lebanese authorities to implement their prior commitments, including those made in the context of the CEDRE conference (2018), and which enjoy the support of the International Support Group (ISG) for Lebanon and other members of the international community. The EU calls on the Lebanese authorities to urgently deliver reforms building on the agreements reached after the explosion of 4 August 2020 by all of Lebanon's political leaders to bridge political differences in support for reforms.

c. This entails in particular meaningful and profound economic and governance reforms to restore economic stability, improve delivery of public services, address the rising levels of poverty, reduce inequalities, make public finances sustainable, restore the credibility of the financial sector, guarantee the independence of the judiciary, ensure the respect for human rights and the rule of law, fight corruption and meet the legitimate aspirations peacefully expressed by the Lebanese people. The EU is ready to support reforms but the reform process must be owned by Lebanon.

d. Effective talks with the International Monetary Fund must resume as soon as possible. Key policy priorities, such as the urgent adoption of a capital control law, a swift and thorough forensic audit of the Banque du Liban (BDL) and measures to ensure banking sector stability should be enacted urgently. Lebanon must take leadership in prioritizing key governance measures, including credible regulation of the electricity sector, the establishment of a commission to prevent corruption, an adequate public procurement system and other measures that ensure concrete changes are made and guarantee transparency and full accountability to the Lebanese people.

e. The reform process should be inclusive and involve women, youth, civil society and the private sector in order to regain the trust and the confidence of the people and should ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected.

f. The EU is providing significant support for the most vulnerable communities in Lebanon, including support for social safety nets, during this moment of crisis. It calls on Lebanon to ensure that these extraordinary efforts are sustainable and that human rights are protected, and that national systems are therefore reinforced to meet the basic needs of the population.

6. The EU continues to urge the current caretaker government to act swiftly and decisively within its constitutional limits. However, a programme fully supported by Parliament that includes precise, credible and time bound reform commitments addressing Lebanon's difficulties can only be fully implemented by a functional government. The EU calls on all Lebanese stakeholders and political forces to support the urgent formation of a mission-driven, credible and accountable government in Lebanon, able to implement the necessary reforms. The EU also underlines the need to ensure women's and youth's meaningful and effective participation in all these processes.

The EU underlines that Lebanese civil society should be both strengthened and fully involved in all relevant decision-making. The EU also highlights the importance of the private sector in Lebanon's reconstruction.

7. The EU commends the continued and tremendous efforts made by Lebanon and the Lebanese people to host over 1 million Syrian refugees until such a time when conditions for their safe, voluntary and dignified return in line with the applicable norms of international law and the principle of *non-refoulement* will be met, as per previous Council conclusions and as stated by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on 10 November 2020. The EU is fully delivering, including through the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, on its commitments made at Brussels Conferences on 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region', including the fourth edition, which took place on 30 June 2020. The EU also commends Lebanon for its support to Palestinian refugees, including those who fled Syria.

8. The EU welcomes the launch of discussions between Lebanon and Israel on the delineation of their maritime boundary that are facilitated by the US and hosted by UNSCOL in UNIFIL premises, and encourages the parties to clear obstacles and make swift progress in this regard bearing in mind the positive repercussions a successful outcome will have for both parties and for peace and stability in the region.

9. The EU reaffirms its commitment to the unity, sovereignty, stability, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon. It reiterates the importance of Lebanon's commitment to a policy of disassociation from all regional conflicts, in line with the Baabda Declaration.

10. The EU also stresses the importance of Lebanon's continued commitment to the full implementation of its international obligations, including United Nations Security Council resolutions 1559, 1680, 1701 and 1757. The EU commends the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL in maintaining peace and stability in South Lebanon. The EU underlines the importance of strengthening the operational capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, and other state security and justice institutions, as the sole providers of stability, order and security in the country while abiding by international and human rights law. The EU continues to support the work of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Ján Kubiš.
