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HISTORY

The year 2009 has been characterized by unprecedented opinions and conclusive meetings for the Lebanese local governments. On the one hand, the commitment of the President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel SLEIMAN, was remarkable since it has allowed, on the basis of the current Municipal Act (known as Law 118) and Taif Agreement while officially addressing the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD, to relaunch the debate over decentralization in Lebanon.

On the other hand, the Committee of Lebanese Mayors and the member cities of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network consisting of Lebanese metropolises and major cities have organized and structured their movement through several internal meetings as well as seminars that allowed to revitalize dialogue between local communities, governmental institutions as well as international and cooperation agencies established in Lebanon.

The most important meetings were held in February and March 2009: The round table "Establishing dialogue between Lebanese local communities and national and international institutions" (February 2) and the "Third Hispano-Lebanese Seminar on Decentralized Cooperation" (March 17) organized with the support of the Diputacio de Barcelona, were held under the high patronage of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD. As for the seminar "Decentralized cooperation, an ambitious initiative" (March 19), it was held under the high patronage of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, Mr. Ibrahim CHAMSEDDINE.

Three essential points could be drawn from these meetings:

- The need for reflection on the issue of decentralization and efficiency of the municipalities' role in managing their territories and in contributing to the debate on and the drafting of the new decentralization law
- The importance of strengthening municipal capacities through a Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities
- The necessity of coordinating between the different authorities dealing with local development in Lebanon (government authorities and agencies, municipalities and foreign cooperation)

Mission of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors

- Promoting the relationship between the Lebanese member cities of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
- Promoting the relationship between municipalities and the European and Mediterranean cities and the cities' networks
- Encouraging collaboration with governmental institutions and local as well as international programs dealing with local development and municipalities
- Representing member cities of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) during meetings with funders and international institutions
- Suggesting new and diversified issues in order to develop municipal action
- Encouraging cities to join the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

These points were discussed in a meeting between the Committee of Lebanese Mayors and the President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel SLEIMAN, on July 27, 2009. During the meeting, the Committee of Lebanese Mayors informed the President of the Republic of the International Seminar “Decentralization in the Near East” and requested his patronage. The Committee also submitted the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities to the President of the Republic and the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD, who attended the meeting, and solicit their support for this program.

The Committee of Lebanese Mayors consists of:

- Beirut, President
- Urban Community of Al-Fayhaa, Vice-President
- Sidon
- Baalbek
- Zahleh
- Sin el-Fil
- Ghobayreh
- Jbeil - Byblos
- Urban Community of Chouf – Soueyjani
- Urban Community of High Jord – Bhamdoun

Other mayors attended the meeting:

- Zouk Mikael
- Amchit
- Jdeidé Bauchrieh el Sed



Meeting of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors and the President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel SLEIMAN, in the presence of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD, on July 27, 2009

This process was managed by the Office of United Cities and Local Governments (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan) / Technical Office for Lebanese Municipalities (UCLG/BTVL) and has led to the organization of the International Seminar “Decentralization in the Near East”. The seminar was held on the 17th, 18th and 19th of October 2009; it was inaugurated by the President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel SLEIMAN and concluded by a speech of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD.

THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR “DECENTRALIZATION IN THE NEAR EAST”

Hotel Quality Inn, Tripoli - Lebanon

17, 18, 19 October 2009

Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Lebanon who has delivered a speech at the end of the session, enabled organizers to take the floor. Several speakers took the rostrum successively: Mr. Rachid JAMALI, Mayor of Tripoli, President of the Urban Community Al-Fayhaa and Vice President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors, Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS, Mayor of Beirut, President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors, President of the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG, and Mr. Jordi LABORIA MARTORELL, Vice-president of the Diputació de Barcelona for the Development and Local Assistance Cooperation, Representative of the Presidency of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of the UCLG (DAL Commission).

The DAL Commission is an international platform grouping local governments from all around the world and local governments' networks. The commission's role is to implement the UCLG International Organization's strategy in terms of reinforcement of decentralization processes and local autonomy so to improve local governance in the world.

In December 2008, the DAL Commission started to develop the “National Dialogs on Decentralization” program, that aims at facilitating the gathering of local governments, central governments and Civil society organizations representatives of a specific region, around questions and challenges concerning decentralization. The International Seminar “Decentralization in the Near East” comes within series of dialogs that took place in Uruguay (December 10th, 2008), Argentina (3-4 September 2009), Mexico (28-29 September 2009) and Guatemala (23-24 November 2009) - in collaboration with UN-Habitat – and in Albania (2-3 November 2009).

These dialogs succeeded in having notably influence on ongoing decentralization processes in the host countries, initiating, as a matter of fact, new ways of dialog and exchanges between different actors of a same territory.



"In Lebanon, Municipalities and Urban Communities are the most adequate forms of local governments to implement decentralization; however, as they have very few means and capacities, it is impossible for them to have a role when it comes to developing and activating their territory. Therefore, they cannot answer the needs of their cities and villages. This induces an imbalanced development between cities and rural regions on a national level. Tripoli, which suffers from the decreasing socio-economic situation is to be compared with all other Lebanese cities and illustrates that disastrous imbalance that could be resolved by a solid and efficient decentralization."

**Mr. Rachid JAMALI, Mayor of Tripoli
President of the Urban Community of Al-Fayhaa, Vice-President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors and Vice-President of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)**

"We suggest, Mr. President of the Lebanese Republic, to organize, with your support, a national working group that would give municipal action all the attention it needs to improve the municipal performances. Municipalities should be able to meet citizen's needs and to accomplish the Third Millennium Goals suggested by the United Nations and that are actually our daily concern."



**Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS, Mayor of Beirut
President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors, and President of the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG**



"It is important to understand the strength of municipal action and its influence on the international scene. On the one hand, territorial administrations are the levels of governments that are the closest to citizens. On the other hand, they share a same interest with their counterparts and this makes experience sharing possible (...). Our main objective is reinforcing municipal action on an international level; this is implemented through reinforcement of local powers - and especially institutional - support to decentralization processes, democratization and local governance."

**Mr. Jordi LABORIA MARTORELL, Vice-President of the Diputacio of Barcelona for Development Cooperation and Local Assistance
and Representative of the Presidency of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of UCLG**

Speech of the President of the Republic of Lebanon

*The President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel SLEIMAN
Opening Ceremony, October 17, 2009*



*"Distinguished Assembly,
Dear Tripolitans,*

Lebanon might not be larger than a French department, a Spanish region or a Brazilian city. It might be also one of the least stable countries given its modern history. However, it remains the most diversified country at the level of its geography, society and constitution, revealing as part of its unity the most touching images of social interaction in its richness and diversity.

We are not afraid to tackle our problems. In fact, what prevented Lebanon from being an overall active model at the regional level and a reactive model at the internal level is the fact that its citizens sometimes moved away from the social contract that binds them on the basis of coexistence, openness and peace.

There is no contradiction between diversity and unity: Lebanon is indeed a strong central State that respects particularities and supports diversity while raising it to the status of message (...).

A strong Lebanon is the one that combines centralization of belonging, identity and freedom of worship with the particularities of the religious communities and regions.

Lebanon needs more than ever a clear determination of its leaders and citizens, in order for them to make every effort to serve the public cause and for the State to become a priority for all its institutions whether in their daily concerns or their programs. Lebanon needs to follow the example of the efforts made by the former President of the Republic, General Fouad SHEHAB, who laid the pillars of the State of Institutions and designed on its administrative division.

Forty years have passed... What have we added to these successes? What have we done with what we have inherited? If you ask what the Lebanese people think about the performance of the Lebanese State, the answer is nothing else than consternation, grief and anger at the waste of the rights of the generations to come.

I don't know a sole Lebanese who doesn't dream of a modern State, in which he could take great pride whether in the East or the West. And you are well aware of the skills, the innovation and excellence of the young Lebanese. It is high time for the Lebanese truth to be revealed, when there would be no room for respite and selfishness.

For all these reasons, decentralization was one of the themes of my inauguration speech and should be one of the main points of the ministerial declaration of the future government. In order to emphasize the importance that I personally attach to decentralization, I have asked the Minister of Interior and Municipalities to develop a global vision of this issue to be submitted to all concerned parties, in order to draft a bill that would be transferred to the Cabinet and then to Parliament. The Ministry of Interior carried out a methodological work and developed a working document setting out the relevant issues related to decentralization. This work tackles the subject in a methodical and rational way in order to best manage diversity within unity, while being far from the "tailored" spirit, especially that the decentralization issue has gained unanimous support since the Taif Agreement and was mentioned in the Document of National Understanding under reforms, in parallel with the balanced development of regions.

The implementation of a balanced development of regions is a promise that we must keep, particularly in the North region and in its cherished capital Tripoli-Al-Fayhaa, despite the complex political situation and the global financial crisis that affects all the financial and credit systems and institutions in the world.

It is true and worth noting that our banking system has remained immune to this crisis. However, we should reinforce the country at the economic and social level, knowing that it would be the best guarantee and security for Lebanon and its people.

The official international reports reveal that the Lebanese economy could record a growth beyond the estimates made earlier this year, and that the expatriates' deposits and the investments could, in a suitable environment, create jobs and provide the desired growth and balanced development throughout the country.

Decentralization, in a safe and stable environment, may play a central role in achieving these objectives. The concerned Lebanese armed forces are to retaliate strongly against all troublemakers who threaten the security of Tripoli, of the northern residents and of the entire country, in order to protect their interests and their peaceful life.

I hope that the decentralization issue will be discussed seriously with the upcoming municipal elections, in order for us to start a new beginning in the process of State building.

We want a real decentralization that definitely gives municipal councils a financial and administrative autonomy.

We want an active and efficient decentralization that revitalises the Lebanese regions and provides a broad local participation.

We want a decentralization that does not eliminate the role of the central State or the right of local people who are the most fit to manage their daily life.

We want a decentralization that strengthens democracy and its application.

We want a decentralization that creates jobs and generates development projects.

We want a decentralization that is reinforced by the central authority, and that could support it if necessary.

Thanks to this partnership, we will make the institutions more efficient. Through this partnership, we will give Lebanese people hope for a better future.

Therefore, I urge that your conference - the importance, seriousness and organization of which are outstanding - reflects on the administrative division to be adopted in the decentralization project; on the councils of Caza mentioned in the Document of National Understanding and on the mode of election of their members; their prerogatives, their relationships with the central authority; the determination of their financial revenues as well as the regulation of the civil servants. I can only emphasize the importance of funding and resources in any successful experience of decentralization.

I also urge all political parties and the concerned civil society organizations to present practical and rational proposals in order to come up with a complete, participative and national project. The works of your conference will probably add to this file some cross-border experience of those who have succeeded in managing such files.

Since 1998, municipal elections fulfill their role in the renewal of elites, the strengthening of democracy, the accountability and the development of regions where the State is inefficient due to incapacity or negligence. Municipal councils are the most aware of the problems of citizens. In the run-up to the municipal elections, we hope that the reforms already initiated in previous elections be further developed, such as the election of mayors by direct suffrage or, perhaps, the adoption of proportional representation in one way or in another. All these reforms and many others need reformers who watch over the interests of citizens day and night and understand their fears, which underlines the need to accelerate the formation of a national unity government. A government where the public interest and the welfare of citizens will be the main concern (...)."



Inauguration speech of the Mayor of Tripoli, Mr. Rachid JAMALI



Lebanese Prime Minister, Mr. Fouad SINIORA greets the dignitaries attending the conference



View of participants



Standing for the Lebanese national anthem

Works of the Seminars

Besides the opening ceremony on the 17th of October 2009, the International Seminar “Decentralization in the Near East” was held over two days. The first, on the 18th of October 2009, dedicated to local governments from the Mediterranean area, has allowed the guest cities to take the floor and share their experiences. The second, on the 19th of October 2009, was entirely dedicated to a presentation of the case of Lebanese municipalities and a reflection on their aspiration for a greater autonomy.

The Participants



Day1: Decentralization Through the Experience of Local Governments

October 18, 2009

Round Table I: Status of decentralization in the Mediterranean region

Round Table II: Examples of decentralization in Europe

Round Table III: Tools that can be used by local governments for an efficient management of their territory within a decentralized system

Round Table IV: Reinforcement of local communities through networking

The first day of works provided an overview of decentralization in the Mediterranean region as well as an overview of the implementation of the powers of local authorities in the decentralized systems of Europe and the Mediterranean region. Finally, it helped to understand how local communities could put forward their interests through their networking and the unification of their voice.

The various elements mentioned in these discussions and debates include:

- The recognition of local governments as an interface between central government and local populations that could be defined as mixed, diverse and disparate, and whose needs are as diverse as they are. In this sense, decentralization is necessary to integrate and enhance the different contributions of populations. The role of the different institutional levels is then to integrate, enhance and take into account such contributions, train skilled human resources and promote local leadership and a project-based work culture. **Therefore, we need clear and concrete standards, as well as trained elected representatives with means.**
- **The definition of the particularities of the municipality being a legal entity enjoying financial and administrative autonomy**, but whose relationship with the central State, particularly with respect to the management of financial affairs should be studied.
- The recognition of the complex situation of local communities in the Near East, whose cultural and political diversity is superimposed on the internal difficulties of many countries. **In some countries, the government cannot fully respond to the complexity of the local population; thus, it transfers a part of its responsibilities to local governments.**

In general, this first day of work has enabled the local elected representatives to share their experiences on practical issues related to decentralization. Thus, water management, housing and urban regeneration policies as well as their means of financing were discussed at the local level. At the same time, the networking issue was brought up, whether at a political level in order to conduct political lobbying activities nationally and internationally, or at a practical level so as to best manage the development projects related to several territories.

Represented countries in the seminar, through local governments taking part in the debates:

- Spain
- United States
- France
- Italy
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Morocco
- Palestine
- Turkey

The networks of cities taking part in the seminar:

- Cooperation Agency for Local Entities (Italy)
- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
- United Cities of France
- Italian Committee of United Cities
- Arab Towns Organization

Quotations

"It is important to develop human and territory resources that can express horizontal and vertical leaderships and promote actions of social cohesion as well as local and international solidarity."

Ms. Augustangela FIORONI *Secretary General, League of Local Autonomy of Lombardy, Italy*

"Decentralization will only be effective if accompanied by a greater democratization."

Mr. Daniel MARCOVITCH *Member of Paris Municipal Council, Vice-President and President of the Decentralized Cooperation Commission of the Syndicate for Sewage for the Parisian Agglomeration*

"We must create networks of local governments in order to lobby other elected local, national or international officials, whether on a political or thematic level."

Mr. Theodoro ROMERO HERNANDEZ *President of the Catalan Fund for Cooperation and Development, Mayor of Santa Margarida de Montbui*

« We should consider under a different light the role that local governments can play with regard to the relationship with citizens, especially in the framework of private-public partnerships, where certain local governments can have direct intervention on their territory. »

Mr. Gian Paolo MORELLO Secretary General of the Italian Committee of United Cities and Director of the Agency of Cooperation for Local Entities

« It is necessary to involve municipalities to have a greater impact on local development. »

Mr. Jamal BOU OBEID Secretary General, Jordanian Ministry of Municipalities

« We need to involve municipalities in all aspects of real life at the social, cultural, health and educational level ...and their financial resources must be multiplied. This enables them to play an effective role in improving social and human rights. »

Mr. Hasan ÜNVER Mayor of Nevşehir and member of the Executive Committee of Municipalities Union in Turkey

« The diversity of the people of the Near East requires a cultural and social diversity that is superimposed on the political decentralization issue, and that must be taken into account. »

Mr. Abdul Rahman BIZRI Mayor of Sidon, President of the Urban Community of Sidon and member of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors

« We must study well the decentralization issue in Lebanon so as not to confuse it with deconcentration, which is the case in the laws being drafted »

Mr. Sami MENKARA Former Minister, Former Mayor of Tripoli, Advisor of the Office of United Cities and Local Governments (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan) / Technical Office for Lebanese Municipalities (UCLG/BTVL)

Round Table I



MM. Jamal BOU OBEID, Khaled OSSEILY, Sami MENKARA, Abdel Raouf el TELL, Abdel Rahman el BIZRI and Hassan AGHMARI

Round Table II



Mr. Jordi LABORIA MARTORELL, Mrs. Janet MIKHAIL and Mrs. Agustangela FIORONI, Mr. Cédric LEBRIS and Mr. Paolo MORELLO

Round Table III



MM. Abdellatif ATROUZ, Daniel MARCOVITCH, Rachid JAMALI, Joseph CHAMI and Paolo MORELLO

Round Table IV



Mr. Rachid JALKH, Mrs. Sylvana ACCOSSATO, Mr. Théodoro ROMERO, Mrs. Noha el GHOUSSAYNI, Mr. Ghassan el SAMMAN and Mr. Murat DAOUDOV

Day2: The Empowerment of Lebanese Local Authorities

October 19, 2009

Round Table V: Lebanese local governments: Situation, stakes and perspectives

Round Table VI: Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities

The second day of debates focused on the practical case of Lebanon. The aim was twofold. On the one hand, it was a matter of addressing decentralization in Lebanon with the concerned parties; the dialogue was conducted in the presence of Mr. Robert GHANEM, member of the Lebanese Parliament and President of the Commission "Administration and Justice" in charge of drafting a municipal bill. On the other hand, the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities has been discussed with a number of foreign cooperation established in Lebanon and in the presence of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD.

Decentralization in Lebanon - Reflection and Recommendations

The Lebanese elected representatives who took the floor brought up essential points that will frame, in their opinion, the momentum of decentralization issue in Lebanon and the different drafts of municipal bills in question in Lebanon.

1. The first point consists of **considering the Municipal Law called 118 dating from 1977 as adequate**, since it gives a status of legal entity to the municipality and takes into account the sovereignty and autonomy of Lebanese local governments. However, the different decrees which amended the said Municipal Law and its approximate application have made it inefficient. In order to revitalize it, it is recommended to:

- **Review the decrees and decisions amending the Municipal Law 118** and rediscuss them in the light of their practical application so as to ensure law enforcement.
- **Clarify the distribution of competences between the State and the two levels of local governments** (urban communities and municipalities), knowing that the deconcentrated system and the decentralized system would not annihilate one another but would require clarification of their respective roles in order to limit interferences at the local level.

- **Lead the reflection on decentralization by strengthening local institutions**, in terms of their financial means or human resources. In this sense, it would be necessary to review the operation and distribution of the Autonomous Fund of Municipalities.

2. The second point has enabled participants **to openly discuss the issue of lack of transparent and constructive dialogue between local and central institutions**, which has led to the following recommendations:

- **The State should rely more on local authorities when it comes to managing their territories and to implementing local development projects.** This would ensure a balanced and harmonious development of regions.

- The authorities reflecting on a new municipal law should **take into account the fears of the Lebanese local authorities concerning the laws being drafted that seem in contradiction with the spirit of the current municipal law and then with the municipalities' interests.**

- The different parties have welcomed the organization of the seminar, considering that **this initiative allowed for the first time local authorities to come into direct contact with each other and to launch the debate with the Lebanese authorities** i.e. Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and Parliament which have become aware of their requests. The municipalities have asked for this approach to be pursued.

- Lebanese local authorities have requested to have **an advisory role and an active participation in the drafting and implementation of development projects.**

- Local authorities have asked **to discuss and follow up in the drafting of the new municipal law and the decentralization law, if any.**

Local Elected Representatives' Quotations

"It is necessary to have an overview of the situation regarding the distribution of powers and responsibilities and greater transparency in terms of current revenues of municipalities and their management."

Mr. Assaad ZOGHEIB *Mayor of Zahleh, Member of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors*

"We must keep and strengthen urban communities."

Mr. Abdel Salam KHALIL *Vice-President of Ghobairy, Member of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors*

"This is the first meeting between the cities and the Lebanese authorities representing the executive and legislative powers. It is especially the first time that a legislator hears the requests made by the Lebanese local elected representatives. Thank you for this opportunity."

Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS *Mayor of Beirut and President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors*

"We need to differentiate clearly between the powers of the "local" and the "central" in order not to impede the work of the cities when they want to strengthen local services or implement cooperation projects."

Mr. Rachid JAMALI *Mayor of Tripoli, President of the Urban Community of Al Fayhaa, Vice-President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors*

"We must remember that our action as municipalities is oriented towards public good. And in order to achieve it, we are convinced that it is important to keep the Law 118 and abrogate the contradictory decisions and decrees."

Mr. Nouhad NAUFAL *Mayor of Zouk Mikael, President of the Urban Community of Keserwan*

"We ask to be part of the discussions concerning the municipal law."

Mr. Abdel Mohsen HUSSEINI, *Mayor of Tyr and President of the Urban Community of Tyr*



Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities

The Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities was presented by the President of the Committee of Mayors and Mayor of Beirut, Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS in the presence of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD. The program aims, on the one hand, at preparing the municipal institution to actively participate in the current debates on decentralization in Lebanon and to accompany this process, and on the other hand, at reinforcing the municipality in order to enable it to fulfill its role as a driving force for local development and take charge of its responsibilities as a management authority of the local public life.

Objectives of the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities:

- Reinforcing the municipal institution
- Providing the elected representatives with the conceptual means to strive for local development through:
 - Training on the necessity of a Strategic Plan for Local Development and establishment of the services required for its implementation
 - Training on the different sectors of the municipal management (urbanism, socio-economy, internal and external communication)
- Ensuring the establishment of public services (pilot phase)



In Response to the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities...

... The representative of the Lebanese government said:



"Following the lead of the President of the Lebanese Republic, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities encourages the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities as it welcomes favorably all projects going in this direction and wishes to be a partner therein. It is important to mention that it is not enough that such projects are funding projects; they must be also accompanied by qualitative inputs and an exchange of experiences. We, at the Ministry of Interior, are ready to provide a framework in order to coordinate, organize and facilitate these projects."

Mr. Ziad BAROUD

Minister of Interior and Municipalities

... The donors said:



"We must launch a reflection, all together, municipalities, governments and donors and we will help you strengthen your approach."

Mr. Gabriele CHECCHIA

Ambassador of Italy in Lebanon



"We are ready to invest in such an approach, only if it is an anchor program that involves the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities so as to create a support pole for the municipalities, that would be a basis for a debate on decentralization." "We are ready to reflect on the training and empowerment of local authorities in handling of public services."

Mr. Patrick LAURENT

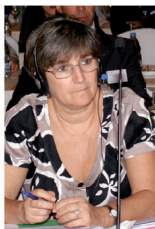
Head of the European Commission Delegation in Lebanon



"Decentralization is an open debate in Spain, so we are well positioned to assist Lebanon in this process on which we expect that a national consensus is reached and is reflected in a clear legal framework in which the role of the citizen would be central."

Mr. Rafael REIG

First Secretary at the Spanish Embassy in Lebanon



"We are ready to support an institutional or field work, whether through the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the French Agency for Development which proposes tools for the French local governments who would get involved with Lebanese cities."

Ms. Martine HERLEM

Cooperation Attaché, Embassy of France in Lebanon

... The partner cities and networks said:

"We are witnessing today a historical moment that shows a fundamental change in the relations between central government and Lebanese local governments. The statements and commitments we heard during these two days show an unprecedented impulse for the decentralization process in Lebanon. This has been made possible thanks to the unshakable conviction of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors and the continuous support of United Cities and Local Governments (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan)/ The Technical Office for Lebanese Municipalities (UCLG/BTVL). We wish to accompany Lebanese local governments on this path full of hope and that starts today in Tripoli."

Mr. Jordi LABORIA MARTORELL *Vice-President of the Diputació of Barcelona for Development Cooperation and Local Assistance and Representative of the Presidency of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of UCLG - Spain*

"In addition to credits we could provide either directly or through our partner organisms, we can enable the Lebanese cities to benefit from our relations with the private sector. In fact, I extend an invitation to visit Kuwait and enter into contact with the private and financial sector. I am also willing to work with you all so as to find ways to strengthen the powers of the elected representatives and take actions on the role of youth and women at the local level."

Mr. Ahmad Al AADASANI *Deputy Secretary General of the Arab Towns Organization and Former Minister - Kuwait.*

"It is undeniable that decentralization should have an impact on the life of citizens, which underlines the importance of the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities. In this sense, we are interested in supporting the Committee of Mayors, and we are ready to reinforce its lobbying effort and to form a contact group in order to further discuss the municipal law."

Mr. Jean-Marie TETART *Vice-President of the General Council of Yvelines in charge of Transport Policy and Decentralized Cooperation, Mayor of Houdan - France.*

"We must understand decentralization not only as a technical management tool, but also as an instrument of transformation of the State that allows greater participation of people and ensures the conditions for reconciliation within the country, in the Near East and in Mediterranean region. In this sense, we are at your disposal to collaborate."

Mr. Massimo TOSCHI *Minister of the Tuscany Region for peace and cooperation - Italy.*

"We have heard the request made by the President of the Republic of Lebanon for the support of the decentralization process and we are ready to help. Turkey has experienced this process since 2003 and is ready to share its experience with Lebanon."

Mr. Murat DAUDOV *Head of European and International Relations of the Union of Municipalities of Marmara – Turkey.*

"On behalf of the French Minister of Industry, Mr. Estrosi who is also President of the Euromed Group and the Mayor of Nice, I would like to welcome the initiative of the Lebanese local governments and assure them of our direct support for the cooperation and for the decentralization process."

Mr. Christian ABRARD *Deputy Director of the Cabinet of the President of Nice Côte d'Azur Community – France.*

"The Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities will facilitate the implementation of local development projects that we lead within our decentralized cooperation and the acceleration of the multilateral approach of European cities in Lebanon."

Mr. Philippe CICHOWLAZ *Deputy General Director in charge of International Relations and European Affairs, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region – France.*

Views of the participants



The COMMITMENTS

The discussion that took place enabled all participants to make commitments on matters of concern to them as follows:

For the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD:

The Minister is working on a draft bill on municipalities and on a questionnaire that should set the ground for a better understanding of the concept of decentralization in Lebanon. The Minister commits, upon the request of the Lebanese local elected representatives, to hand over the existing documents in order to launch the discussions and the consultations on that issue and to give elected representatives an active role in the conception and drafting of the municipal law through the Committee of Lebanese Mayors. He also commits to get closer to the Parliamentary Commission in charge of drafting the law and, generally speaking, to have discussion with all stakeholders to avoid duplication on one hand and, on the other hand, to have a better understanding of the difficulties they are facing. In this sense, the Ministry insists on keeping the dialogue open and on having permanent regular contact with the Lebanese Mayors.

For the Parliamentary Commission “Administration and Justice” in charge of drafting the law on decentralization, its President and MP Mr. Robert GHANEM:

The group in charge of drafting the law on decentralization is composed of lawyers and works in close cooperation with the Parliamentary Commission. This body wishes to receive the comments of the local elected representatives to take them into consideration in the draft law and invites them to discuss these issues directly. To this effect, Mr. Robert GHANEM commits to invite the Committee of Mayors to conduct talks with the Parliamentary Commission. They shall tackle in particular the issue of reinforcing human and financial resources of the local governments.

For the Higher Council for Privatization, its Secretary General, Mr. Ziad HAYEK:

The Higher Council for Privatization proposed a draft bill to promote the Public-Private Partnership in Lebanon in 2007, but the Parliament hasn't ratified the text yet. Therefore, it would be useful to establish a dialog with the local elected representatives in order to discuss and develop this law.

For local governments, elected representatives:

The local governments addressed the Committee of Lebanese Mayors and its technical bureau, the United Cities and Local Governments (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan) / Technical Office for Lebanese Municipalities (UCLG/BTVL), to follow the issue of decentralization in Lebanon and the related issues. They also committed to hold regular and methodical meetings with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities in order to go forward on such matters. The elected representatives finally noted the necessity to have talks with the Parliamentary Commission “Administration and Justice” through the Committee of Mayors that will come with a unified voice in order to take part to the study and the discussion on the law on decentralization.

LEBANESE MAYORS' DECLARATION

Adopted behind closed doors on October 18, 2009

Read in the presence of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities during the seminar closing session

We, Lebanese Mayors,

Representing cities from all over the Lebanese territory and in which we were elected,

Are gathered on this day at the occasion of the International Seminar "Decentralization in the Near-East" which is taking place in Tripoli from 17 till 19 October 2009 under the High Patronage of the President of the Lebanese Republic, General Michel SLEIMAN,

In the presence of the President of the Lebanese Republic and the Prime Minister, Mr. Fouad SINIORA and with the participation of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Ziad BAROUD,

In conformity with the Taif agreement concluded in 1989 which addressed the issue of administrative decentralization, and taking up the words of the President of the Republic in the opening session, the Lebanese Mayors confirm the declarations of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and ask that:

The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities takes all measures that promote the role of the Lebanese municipalities in order to bear their responsibilities and be faithful to the mission assigned to them by the current municipal law considered as a proper gateway to the implementation of the administrative decentralization, provided that contradictory decisions and decrees be abrogated from the law;

The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities pursues talks with the Committee of Lebanese Mayors in order to study the question of decentralization in Lebanon in a methodical and regular way;

The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities adopts the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities that we propose as a framework to reactivate municipal life and ensures coordination with similar programs, as we ask donors to support and accompany this program.

Tripoli, 19 October 2009

CONCLUSION

All the parties welcomed the initiative of the event organizers on many levels, as it allowed the gathering of all stakeholders concerned by local development: foreign cooperations, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, local governments and donors. In parallel, it also allowed all concerned actors to establish an in-depth dialogue on the issue of decentralization in Lebanon: Parliamentary Commission, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and local governments.

This seminar was seen by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities as the “founding seminar” which sets the grounds for a methodical and regular dialogue with the Lebanese municipalities on decentralization, as well as with their partners, the Arab and European cities whose contribution in terms of experience and counseling would be invaluable. This event also reflected and showed clearly the support of the State to the initiative of local authorities, a relation that shall permit to work towards the achievement of a balanced and well-controlled development of all Lebanese regions.

This unifying statement meets that of the President of the Parliamentary Commission “Administration and Justice” who is in favor of consulting and involving widely the local elected representatives in the drafting of the municipal law.

The many interventions of the elected representatives showed their commitment in this constructive process. The International Seminar “Decentralization in the Near East” has been described as unprecedented for the Lebanese local authorities and launches “a new era in the municipal work,” said Mr. Rachid JAMALI, Mayor of Tripoli and Vice-President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors, who hosted the event.

As for the reactions of the Mayors concerning the statements of the legislative and executive powers representatives, they welcomed their openness and their willingness to cooperate and to discuss vital issues for the Lebanese municipalities. Mr Abdel Monhem ARISS, Mayor of Beirut and President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors described this contribution as “responsible”; “showing a true comprehension of the municipal reality.” He expressed his gratitude to the participants, and suggested to join efforts in the future so to work together on the drafting of a road map that would clearly define a working plan.

ANNEXES

Agenda of the Seminar

October 17 : Opening Ceremony

18.00 Lebanese National Anthem by Al Fayhaa Choir

- o **Mr. Rachid JAMALI**, Mayor of Tripoli, President of the Urban Community of Al-Fayhaa, Vice-President of the Lebanese Mayors Committee, and Vice-President of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
- o **Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS**, Mayor of Beirut, President of the Lebanese Mayors Committee, and President of the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG
- o **Mr. Jordi LABORIA MARTORELL**, Vice-President of the Diputacio of Barcelona for Development Cooperation and Local Assistance and Representative of the Presidency of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of UCLG
- o **Mr. General Michel SLEIMAN**, President of the Lebanese Republic

19.00 End of the Opening Ceremony

20.00 Musical Evening by el Fahaa Choir- Safadi cultural center

21.00 Dinner

Day 1 : Decentralization through the experience of local governments

October 18

08.30 Welcoming of participants

09.30 Decentralization: an opportunity for local governments

- o **Mr. Rachid JAMALI**, Mayor of Tripoli, President of the Urban Community of Al-Fayhaa, Vice-President of the Lebanese Mayors Committee, and Vice-President of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)- Welcome word and opening of the working sessions
- o **Mr. Béchir ODEIMI**, Representative of United Cities and Local Governments (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan) and Director of the Technical Office for Lebanese Municipalities-Presentation of the two-day's work seminar
- o **Mr. Francesc OSAN I TORT**, Chief of the Office of Diplomacy of Cities, Direction of International Relations at the Diputacio of Barcelona – Decentralization at a crossroad: situation and perspective

10.00 **Round Table I: Status of decentralization in the Mediterranean Region**

President : **Mr. Abdel Rahman BIZRI**, Mayor of Saïda and President of the Urban Community of Saïda, Member of the Lebanese Mayors Committee

Moderator : **Mr. Abdel Raouf el TELL**, Mayor of Irbid (Jordan)

Mr. Sami MENKARA, Advisor of the Office of UCLG/BTVL, former Mayor of Tripoli and former Minister – Presentation on the situation of decentralization in the Near East

Mr. Hasan ÜNVER, Mayor of Nevşehir and Member of the Executive Committee of the Union of the Municipalities of Turkey – The path towards autonomy for Turkish municipalities

Mr. Khaled OSAILY, Vice-President of Palestinian Association for Local Authorities and Mayor of Hebron - Local authorities of Palestine and the day-to-day management

Mr. Jamal BOU OBEID, - Development of the decentralization process in Jordan and the consolidation of municipal institutions

Mr. Hassan AGHMARI, Governor, Director in charge of the elections, Moroccan Ministry of Interior – Evolution of Decentralization in Morocco

11.15 Coffee Break

11.30 **Round Table II: Examples of decentralization in Europe**

President: **Mrs. Janet MIKHAIL**, Mayor of Ramallah

Mrs. Augustangela FIORONI, *Secretary General, League of Local Autonomy in Lombardia - Distribution of local powers and their interaction in Italy :Region, Province, Commune*

Mr. Jordi LABORIA MARTORELL *Vice-President of the Diputacio of Barcelona for Development Cooperation and Local Assistance, Representative of the Presidency of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of UCLG - Decentralisation in Spain: the time for local government?*

Mr. Cedric LEBRIS representing Mr. Jean Marie TETART, *Vice-President of the General Council of Yvelines in charge of transportation policies and decentralized cooperation, Mayor of Houdan - To join forces creating intermunicipal links in order to meet the needs of citizens: The French experience*

12.15 Analysis of experiences and debate

12.45 **Round Table III: Tools that can be used by local governments for an efficient management of their territory in a decentralized system**

President: **Mr. Rachid JAMALI**, *Mayor of Tripoli, President of the Urban Community of al Fayhaa, Vice-President of the Lebanese Mayors Committee*

Moderator: **Mr. Joseph CHAMI**, *Mayor of Jbeil-Byblos, member of the Lebanese Mayors Committee*

Mr. Daniel MARCOVITCH, *Member of Paris Municipal Council, Vice-President of the Interdepartmental Syndicate for Sewerage of the Parisian Agglomeration (SIAAP), President of the Commission of Decentralized Cooperation at SIAAP - Decentralization of prerogatives related to water in France*

Mr. Gian Paolo MORELLO, *Secretary General of the Italian Committee of United Cities and Director of the Agency of Cooperation for Local Entities – Role of Italian local authorities in housing policies: Social Public Real Estate and urban requalification*

Mr. Abdellatif EL ATROUZ, *University Professor/Researcher - Financing territorial strategies in Morocco*

13.45 Analysis of experiences and debate

14.00 Lunch

15.30 **Round Table IV: Reinforcement of local governments through networking**

President: **Mr. Theodoro ROMERO HERNANDEZ**, *President of the Catalan Fund for Cooperation and Development, Mayor of Santa Margarida de Montbui*

Moderator: **Mrs. Noha EL GHOUSSAYNI**, *Mayor of Baakline, President of the Urban Community of Chouf Souejani, Member of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors*

Mr. Ghassan SAMMAN, *Director of Public Relations and of Communication, Arab Towns Organization - A Transnational Organisation at the Service of Arab Towns Development*

Mrs. Sylvana ACCOSSATO, *Mayor of Collegno and President of the Italian Committee of United Cities - The Role of Mayors' Associations in Italian National Policies on Decentralizations*

Mr. Murat DAOUDOV, *Head of European and International Relations of the Union of Municipalities of Marmara - Turkey - The model of cooperation and domains of action of Turkish Unions of municipalities*

Mr. Rachid JALKH, *Member of Beirut Municipal Council - The Lebanese Mayors Committee and The Technical Office for Lebanese municipalities: a genuine experience*

- 16.30 Analysis of experiences and debate
- 17.00 Conclusions
- 17.15 End of day 1
- 18.00 Study session of the Mayors' Declaration Text- Upon invitation
- 20.00 Musical Evening by Dervishes of Tripoli - Safadi Culturel and sport Center
- 21.00 Dinner

Day 2 : The Empowerment of Lebanese Local Authorities
October 19

- 08.30 Welcoming of Participants
- 09.30 Presentation of the day's proceedings
- 09.45 **Round Table V: Lebanese local Governments: situation, stakes and perspectives**

President : **Mr. Robert GHANEM**, *Member of Lebanese Parliament, President of the Parliamentary Commission "Administration and Justice"*

Moderator : **Mr. Assaad ZOGHAIB**, *Mayor of Zahle and Member of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors*

Mr. Nohad NAUFAL, *Mayor of Zouk Mikael, President of the Urban Community of Kesrouan Ftouh – About Municipal Law No.118 and other law proposals on decentralization in Lebanon*

Mr. Abdel Salam KHALIL, *Vice-President of Ghobayre, Member of the Lebanese Mayors Committee – What does it mean to be a local collectivity in Lebanon in 2009?*

Mr. Abdel Mohsen el HUSSEINI, *Mayor of Tyre, President of the Urban Community of Tyre - Role of Lebanese urban governments in local development and planning*

- 11.15 Coffee break
- 11.30 Dialogue Session with Lebanese local authorities

Presided by **Mr. Rachid JAMALI**, *Mayor of Tripoli and Vice-President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors* and **Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS**, *Mayor of Beirut and President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors*

- 13.00 Lunch

14.30 Round Table VI: Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities

President: **Mr. Ziad BAROUD**, *Lebanese Minister of Interior and Municipalities*

Vice-Presidents: **Mr. Rachid JAMALI** and **Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS**

Moderator: **Mr. Bechir ODEIMI**, *Representative of United Cities and Local Governments (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan) and Director of the Technical Office for Lebanese Municipalities*

INTERVENTIONS DURING THE ROUND-TABLE

Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS, Mayor of Beirut and President of the Committee of Lebanese Mayors - Headlines of the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities (SPLM)

Members of the foreign cooperation offices in Lebanon take turns successively to clarify their position towards the Support Program for Lebanese Municipalities

- o **Mr. Gabriele CHECCHIA**, Ambassador of Italy in Lebanon
- o **Mr. Patrick LAURENT**, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Lebanon
- o **Mr. Rafael REIG**, First Secretary in charge of consular affairs and cooperation at the Spanish Embassy in Lebanon
- o **Mrs Martine HERLEM**, Cooperation Attaché, French Embassy in Lebanon

European local authorities take turns to explain their position regarding the SPLM

- o **Mr. Jordi LABORIA MARTORELL**, Vice-President of the Diputacio of Barcelona for Development Cooperation and Local Assistance and Representative of the Presidency of the Commission of Decentralization and Local Autonomy of UCLG
- o **Mr. Paolo MORELLO**, Secretary General of the Italian Committee of United Cities and Director of the Agency of Cooperation for Local Entities (Italy)
- o **Mr. Hubert DROIT**, Member of Municipal Council of Ormesson sur Marne (France)
- o **Mr. Philippe CICHOWLAZ**, Deputy Director General for International Relations, Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Region (France)
- o **Mr. Massimo TOSCHI**, Regional Minister for peace and cooperation, Tuscany Region (Italy)
- o **Mr. Christian ABRARD**, Deputy Director of the Cabinet of the President of Nice Côte d'Azur Community (France)
- o **Mr. Eduard BARCONS**, Manager of the Cercs-Berguedà Consortium for training and initiative (Spain)
- o **Mr. Jean Marie TETART**, Vice-President of the General Council of Yvelines in charge of transportation policies and decentralized cooperation, Mayor of Houdan (France)
- o **Mr. Ahmad Mohammed Saleh al AADSANI**, Deputy Secretary General, Arab Towns Organization
- o **Mr. Theodoro ROMERO HERNANDEZ**, President of the Catalan Fund for Cooperation and Development, Mayor of Santa Margarida de Montbui (Spain)

Elaboration of an action plan

- 17.00 Conclusions and closing session of the Seminar in the presence of the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, **Mr. Ziad BAROUD**, Solemn lecture of the Mayors' Declaration, presented by **Mr. Abdel Monhem ARISS** and read by **Mr. Rachid JAMALI**.

LIST of PARTICIPANTS

Spain

Jordi LABORIA MARTOREL, Vice-Président à la Coopération au Développement et l'Assistance Locale, Diputacio de Barcelone, Francesc OSAN, Chef du Bureau de la Diplomatie des Villes, Diputacio de Barcelone, Olívia PATON, En Charge de la Diplomatie des Villes, Diputacio de Barcelone, Teodoro ROMERO HERNANDEZ, Président Fonds Catalan de Coopération au Développement et Maire de Santa Margarida de Montbui, Eduard BARCONS, Directeur Consorci De Formacio I d'Iniciatives Cercs-Bergueda, Diana LOPEZ, Responsable Coopération Décentralisée, ONU- Habitat Barcelone

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