16th Session of the COP

Cancun, December 9, 2010

Statement of the High Level Segment by the Lebanese Delegation

Excellencies, Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me first to express sincere appreciation for the Government of Mexico for the warm hospitality and the arrangements for this conference.

It is an exceptional honour and a great pleasure for me to speak to this eminent congregation, with its highly important theme: climate change – a significant global environmental predicament that stands to shake the realms of the human civilisation.

Distinguished guests,

Clinicians know that early aggressive treatment following acute injury makes a huge difference to the patient's chances of survival; it's a concept known as the "golden hour". Any delay is fatal. Climate change is delivering an acute injury to humanity, which will become much worse in the future; however and unfortunately we have already used up many precious minutes of our "golden hour".

Climate change appears to be more rapid, more serious and more dangerous than was thought a few years ago. It looks increasingly likely that what seemed to be the worst-case scenarios projected by the IPCC 4th assessment report in 2007 will be realized, or maybe even worse. The earth is warming, the warming is accelerating, and we are responsible for that warming. Unfortunately, it is our countries, those that least contributed to this warming, that are the most affected by its impacts.

Lebanon remains vulnerable to the many impacts of climate change. Temperatures are projected to increase between 1°C and 5°C from now till the end of the century and rainfall is projected to decrease by 25 to 50% over the same period.

Such drastic changes in climate will only aggravate the already existing environmental, social and economical challenges Lebanon is facing today.

Scientific projections have already pointed out to alarming impacts on Lebanon such as a dangerous and irreversible reduction in the total volume of water resources which are already under pressure from urbanization and population growth. This summer, documented as the hottest in many past decades, Lebanese water authority officials stated alarming decrease in the potable water content, as well as an unprecedented increase in the relative sea levels and seawater intrusion into coastal aquifers which will not only affect urban areas but also irrigated agriculture.

Distinguished representatives,

Lebanon's greenhouse gas emissions are insignificant on the global level. Nevertheless, the impact of global climate change on Lebanon is tremendous. We believe that combating climate change is a shared responsibility that rests on all our shoulders. It is more important to find a common solution that effectively reduces the impacts of climate change on our world, than to debate the relative responsibility of each of us. The future is in our hands, if handled with nature's wisdom.

Lebanon's geographical location is on a political fault with special climatic conditions. Lebanon is a model of historical and social adaptation, and firmly believes that adaptation is an important response option along with mitigation based on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" which we remain firmly committed to.

For all these reasons, we are fully engaged in the global battle against climate change. Accordingly, in a voluntary effort to curb global greenhouse gas emissions, we **will** take action, as we have voluntarily committed to increase our renewable energy mix to 12% by 2020 in Copenhagen back in 2009. Moreover, the Lebanese Government has started mainstreaming climate change in its strategies and policies; the recently approved Electricity Policy Paper has reiterated Lebanon's 12% commitment whereas the National Water Sector Strategy, which is under preparation, and has taken into account the impact of climate change on the

water sector, both paving the way for the preparation of a national low carbon, climate resilient, development strategy.

We have been working with that spirit with our partners of the Arab League and the G77 & China, and we will continue doing so.

It is most probable that the current negotiation process will not end here in Cancun, and will continue to COP 17. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we achieve agreement on priority issues in Cancun such as financial mechanisms and adaptation and we are working diligently with our partners to reach a fair, ambitious and legally binding agreement.

Finally,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I conclude by conveying my Minister's highest salutations to his colleagues, as he was unfortunately unable to attend this COP due to the fires that ravaged the Lebanese forests during the past week. As I address you distinguished guests, the Council of Ministers is meeting to work on this crisis. I believe that now more than ever the analogy of climate change being a 'silent emergency' is clear. We therefore have to understand that failure to act decisively and substantially within the next few years will have severe consequences.

I am in the hope to bring back good news to Lebanon, as I am cautiously optimistic on a positive outcome.

Thank you.