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Republic of Lebanon

Under the patronage of His Excellency the Speaker of Parliament

Supporting the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Lebanon

Lebanese Parliament, Thursday 5 December 2013

Statement of Mr. Luca RENDA Country Director, UNDP Lebanon

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to be present with you today in this important workshop, representing the United Nations Development Programme; only a few days before the International Anti-Corruption Day which the UN commemorates every year on December 9 since 2003.

I would like to begin by thanking all of you for joining this impressive group of ministers, parliamentarians, judges, public officials, journalists and civil society activists. I would also like to address my gratitude to H.E. the Speaker of Parliament and the Members of Parliament for hosting us in this historic building which holds great meanings for democracy and societal participation. I would also like to thank the Government for its contribution to the organization of this workshop, and salute the presence today of three Ministers: Excellencies the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Administrative Reforms.

I believe we all share the belief that corruption poses serious threats to development and stability, because it undermines democracy, the rule of law and the quality of daily lives of ordinary citizens, especially women, the poor and other marginalized groups. For these reasons, we at UNDP are committed to provide all the support we can to all countries across the world that are seeking to address this problem, together with our partners, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which is represented here today as well.

We acknowledge and applaud Lebanon's expressed pledge to advance the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which it has joined in 2009; we also commend Lebanon's commitment to enhance its engagement in the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET), which it currently chairs in the person of H.E. the Minister of Justice. Those two frameworks provide solid grounds for current and future anti-corruption efforts.

Our workshop today provides an opportunity for all of us to look back at what has been done in the country over the past two years, and discuss the next steps.

**Your Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen**

We are conscious that the fight against corruption is long, complex and multi-faceted. And for those reasons, the contributions of all parties are needed. Today's workshop is part of this process. We will hear about two very important reports that have been prepared by the Government:

1. The first is an assessment of the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption; particularly chapters III on criminalization of corruption and law enforcement, and chapter IV on international cooperation.
2. The second is a series of recommendations for a national anti-corruption strategy that builds on earlier efforts, including a document developed in cooperation between UNDP and the Lebanese Transparency Association titled "Towards a national anti-corruption

strategy". If taken forward and further elaborated, Lebanon may as well be on its way to have its first anti-corruption strategy in its history.

Both reports were drafted in an effective and coordinated manner by two committees that worked under the auspices of the inter-ministerial anti-corruption committee that was established by H.E. Prime Minister Mikati in late 2011.

In parallel, there is also important progress on a number of draft anti-corruption legislations; I wish to highlight particular seven key legislations which are currently pending in Parliament, dealing with:

1. Right to information;
2. The National Anti-Corruption Agency
3. Whistle-blower protection;
4. Illicit enrichment;
5. Central Inspection;
6. Audit Bureau; and
7. Public procurement.

We will be looking forward to your interactive discussions that will take place in the second session on how to take further steps towards the adoption of these laws.

The workshop will also offer us the opportunity to engage in a more focused discussion on anti-corruption and integrity in specific sectors. Indeed, UNDP Lebanon has just recently developed additional studies that will be published next week on the occasion of the International Anti-Corruption Day. Those studies address the issue of corruption in three sectors: health, water and education. The third session of our workshop takes a further step forward by bringing attention to two additional sectors which are customs and real property administration.

Lebanon is also playing a stronger role at the regional level, in the framework of ACINET and also the Arab forum on Asset Recovery, which is a joint initiative between the G8 and Arab countries in transition. We will probably hear more about all these efforts from Their Excellencies the Ministers present at this session. But I would like to seize the opportunity to offer our congratulations to the Lebanese delegation that attended the *5th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the UNCAC*, held last week in Panama, where Lebanon's efforts were widely applauded and the delegations' positive role in the Conference was well recognized.

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are very pleased and honored that UNDP was able to lend Lebanon the assistance needed to undertake these admirable efforts at the national, regional and international levels. But we also recognize that various challenges continue to exist and that there is a need for further efforts. And I wish to reiterate our strong engagement to continue our support to Lebanon in its aspiration to strengthen the principles of rule of law, proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency and accountability.

In closing, I wish to recall the Statement of the UN Secretary General on the occasion of the International Anti-corruption Day last year when he said that *“Corruption is not inevitable. It flows from greed and the triumph of the undemocratic few over the expectations of the many.”* I also wish to echo his *“call on everyone to work towards a sustainable future where corruption is exposed and rejected, where integrity prevails, and where the hopes and dreams of millions are realized.”*

I thank you once again and wish you fruitful discussions.
