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LEBANON

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FY 2009 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE GOALS

The foreign assistance priorities of the United States for Lebanon are rooted in the bedrock policy of support for Lebanon's democracy, sovereignty, and independence. Continued, active United States Government (USG) engagement with the Government of Lebanon (GOL) is needed to ensure that the constitutional institutions of the Lebanese state can function and that the GOL can exercise responsibility over all of its territory in the face of extremism and the threat posed by foreign-funded militias, including Hizballah. Lebanon supports Middle East peace in regional discussions and in its bilateral contacts with other Arab states. Sectarian and political tensions in Lebanon continue to threaten Lebanon's stability, and weak GOL institutions limit options for USG assistance. With targeted U.S. support and assistance, Lebanon can reduce the risks of these threats and develop in a way that helps fulfill U.S. objectives of supporting a stable, prosperous, and sovereign Lebanon that contributes to overall stability in the Middle East.

The GOL took steps to address larger, strategic issues, including beginning the development of a strategy to deal with major national issues through its "National Dialogue." This effort represented a move towards using dialogue instead of violence to resolve internal conflict. A five-month stalemate over cabinet formation ended in November 2009, but the USG remains committed to Lebanon meeting a long list of critical Paris III economic reforms, including the privatization of key sectors such as mobile telecommunications. USG support for Lebanese economic reforms includes establishing the foundation for an effective private sector with the goal of increased job creation and income generation.

The USG and GOL share the priority of strengthening the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Force (ISF), with the goal of making Lebanon's internal and international security solely the domain of the Lebanese state. USG support for Lebanon's public sector assists the GOL in establishing standards of good governance, improved municipal management, and expanded support for legitimate GOL services throughout the country. The USG also supports provision of legitimate GOL services through improving management, supply, and quality of water resources. Through its programs, the USG is strengthening civil society to be more responsive to Lebanese citizens' needs. USG-funded education programs focus on improving

student achievement through basic and higher education support. Education and expanded economic opportunities for youth provide alternatives to the lure of extremism and encourage cross-confessional, non-sectarian dialogue.

HIGHLIGHTS BY PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Peace and Security

Extremist groups continue to operate in Lebanon. The USG has set up a robust program to upgrade the capacity of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies to counter the terrorism and extremist threat. U.S. programs equip and train the LAF and ISF to accomplish their strategic missions, which is essential for Lebanon to meet its border and internal security enforcement obligations under UNSC Resolutions 1559 and 1701. USG funding for programs with the LAF and ISF supported the following:

- Provision of patrol and supply vehicles and secure communications for the LAF, USG-organized training for LAF officers to face terrorist elements in the country and support for expanded capabilities, and supplying logistics and support systems that can accommodate the needs of a modern military.
- Assistance to the ISF that provided training, modern police equipment, vehicles, refurbished training facilities, and installation of a nationwide police communications system.
- Humanitarian Mine Action activities. The United States continues to be one of the largest providers of direct technical assistance, supplies, and equipment to the LAF's Lebanese Mine Action Center, which is the sole governmental authority responsible for the coordination and conduct of mine clearing operations in Lebanon.

Governing Justly and Democratically

Lebanon's governmental institutions are moving towards higher levels of accountability and transparency, but there is still much progress to be made. USG funding provided support to the institutions of democracy, the presidency, prime minister and cabinet, parliament, and judiciary to improve their effectiveness and to counter interference by Iran and its allies in Lebanon. USG-sponsored governance programming is directed towards improving professionalism, transparency, and accountability in government at all levels so that it is able to provide better services to the population, boosting Lebanese citizens' confidence in government institutions and thus strengthening the role of the state. In FY 2009, USG funding supported:

- Widening the capacity of the Lebanese judiciary to support the rule of law through enhancing the independence of the judiciary. Activities included developing the capacity of the Judicial Training Institute to expand training opportunities and expose judges to modern methodology, improve court administration and reduce backlog court cases, and assist the justice ministry in developing a long-term strategic plan for the judicial sector.
- Strengthening democracy and good governance through improved local government practices. USG assistance helped empower municipalities to take the lead in economic development through effective democratic engagement with citizens and the private sector through a Lebanon-wide municipalities program.

- Supporting peaceful and successful parliamentary elections. Support included strengthening the capacity of the GOL to conduct transparent elections, assisting political parties and candidates better to represent constituents, and strengthening civil society's capacity to observe elections and increase public confidence in the electoral process.
- Direct capacity-building of Lebanese civil society organizations through the provision of small grants, allowing these organizations to play a more robust role in advocating for good governance, the rule of law, and enhanced democracy.

Investing in People

A large portion of the Lebanese population suffers from inadequate access to clean water. Lebanon's lack of water treatment facilities allows pollutants to cycle through the water supply. The USG supports a number of activities that assist the Lebanese to improve environmental practices, provide sound and technically appropriate solutions to environmental problems, and create awareness on proper waste management options leading to a healthier environment. In FY 2009, USG assistance:

- Opened two community-based water treatment plants to alleviate pollution of the Litani River, a key water source in Lebanon, and started work with villages to construct two more.
- Assisted the Lebanese with training and expertise to improve the country's environmental practices, providing sound and technically appropriate solutions for proper waste management options.

The Lebanese public education sector, while seen as one of the best in the region, still faces significant challenges. There exists a noticeable gap between public and private education facilities in Lebanon. Public schools often lack basic teaching materials, the facilities frequently have been neglected and are in disrepair, and teachers do not have up-to-date training to teach material effectively to students. American educational models that distinguish themselves through an extended secular curriculum and support for free and critical thinking have proven to be effective tools to help bridge the gaps in Lebanon's schools. USG support for education in Lebanon in FY 2009 included:

- Targeted infrastructure repairs and rehabilitation of public schools and expanded after-school activities that developed the skills of students, teachers, and parents.
- Scholarship support for underprivileged Lebanese students to attend established American educational institutions in Lebanon at the primary, secondary, and university levels.

Economic Growth

Lebanon has made some limited progress on measures to reform and increase the transparency of its economy, a key priority supported by the USG and other international partners. However, many benchmarks set by the international community for increased economic reforms remain unfulfilled, most notably the privatization of the two national telecom companies in Lebanon. Lebanon's telecom cost basis to the end user is among the highest in the world, a significant drain on resources for private business in the country. USG assistance in FY 2009 supported:

- Procurement of communications equipment to assist the GOL as it moves forward in privatization of the telecoms sector. This will contribute to the establishment of a regulatory

environment for a competitive telecommunications market and deliver state-of-the art services at affordable prices to the Lebanese people.

The gap in economic opportunities between urban and rural communities in Lebanon remains vast. USG development assistance continues to foster economic growth in poor areas of the country through municipal governments that service more than 100 villages. Although the agricultural sector produces around six percent of Lebanon's GDP and is the main source of income for rural communities, the farming sector still faces many challenges, including uneven or non-existent marketing techniques, high production costs, limited quality control, and limited governmental support services. In FY 2009, the USG expanded economic opportunities in rural and peri-urban areas through technical and financial assistance, which included:

- Enhancing business linkages and microenterprise development as well as providing access to microfinance. The USG supported projects through the provision or facilitation of micro, small, and medium enterprise loans to stimulate income generation and job creation in Lebanese villages.
- Targeting specialty niche agribusiness value chains to improve agriculture productivity resulting in increased farmer's income and job creation in Lebanese rural areas
- Establishing a new program of quality control and certification for Lebanese agricultural products. This program will expand the availability of certified and accredited laboratories and agro-product development facilities and the market-oriented services they provide.

Humanitarian Assistance

The USG provided assistance in the reconstruction of Mudeirej Bridge in response to the physical, economic, and humanitarian damage caused by the July 2006 conflict between Hizballah and Israel. The bridge, which is one of the largest reconstruction projects in Lebanon, is 420 meters long and consists of two spans. The completion of repairs to the bridge will restore vital commercial links between Beirut, the Bekaa, and neighboring countries.