



Beirut, November 16, 2021

Joint Communiqué

Issued by the members of the Independent Oversight Board (IOB) of the 3RF

The members of the Independent Oversight Board (IOB) (Lebanese Transparency Association – No Corruption (LTA), Kulluna Irada and Maharat Foundation) of the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) attended the third meeting of the Consultative Group (CG), which took place on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at the Grand Serail, in the presence of Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Head of the European Union Delegation in Lebanon Ambassador Ralph Tarraf, Deputy Special Coordinator of the United Nations in Lebanon, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator Dr. Najat Rusdhi, World Bank country operations officer for Lebanon Mouna Couzi, French Presidential Envoy, Ambassador Pierre Dukan, along with ambassadors representing donor countries and representatives of civil society organizations and private sector in Lebanon. The CG meeting was also attended by the Head of the Lebanese Parliament's Finance and Budget Committee MP Ibrahim Kanaan, the Head of the Administration and Justice Committee MP George Adwan, in addition to Deputy Prime Minister Saadeh Al Shami and respectively Ministers of State for Administrative Reform, Finance and Social Affairs, Najla Riachi Assaker, Youssef El Khalil, Hector Hajjar.

Representing the IOB of the 3RF, the LTA's Executive Director Julien Courson, gave a speech in which he initially commended the rights-based approach adopted by the stakeholders within the framework of the 3RF in their rapid response to the Beirut port explosion, and reminded that the members of the board are working as observers of the CG's decisions and the government's progress in implementing policy-related measures and reforms.

The IOB noted with concern the difficult living conditions that the Lebanese are going through, as they're obliged to cope with the increase in poverty, hyperinflation, and devaluation of the Lira at a time when the state is unable and reluctant to address the crises and ensure the protection and safety of its citizens.

Given the limited mandate of the IOB in the 3RF, the IOB called on the State to abide by all constitutional procedures and respond immediately to the manyfold crises, listing five critical action points to be addressed:

- 1- Urged the Parliamentary Administration and Justice Committee, headed by Representative MP George Adwan, to hold open consultations among stakeholders regarding the draft law on the independence of the judiciary.
- 2- Emphasized that the 2022 budget should be the cornerstone of a multiannual stabilization and recovery strategy, with its pillars as follows: debt restructuring, Central Bank and the financial system restructuring, and public financial management enhancement. These pillars are crucial to be addressed in the budget of 2022 to negotiate a program with the IMF, and for the injection of liquidity that is necessary for economic recovery.
- 3- Underlined that the haphazard removal of subsidies combined with: not expanding the NPTP to include more beneficiaries, and not launching the ESSN or ration card results in an untended consequence of impoverishing citizens. The IOB took note of PM Mikati two decisions issued yesterday and reiterated that a social protection program cannot be limited to a ration card but entails providing universal healthcare coverage, a pension system, and free education for everyone.
- 4- Emphasized the importance of setting the necessary decrees for the formation of the National Anti-Corruption Commission and the Whistleblowers Protection Law, and the acceleration of the implementation of the Right to Access Information Law and its implementing decree.
- 5- Reminded of the necessity of adopting clear and transparent criteria for managing the upcoming parliamentary elections 2022 which preserve the principles of participation and fairness of opportunities among candidates and voters.

Finally, the IOB calls on all officials in their respective functions to act with speed as per the following:

- 1- The Cabinet to immediately convene with no further delays;
- 2- The 3RF stakeholders to ensure structured, transparent, and timely flow of information on the progress of reforms and the implementation of related projects;
- 3- The adoption of the recommendations issued by the IOB on the “Bank for Rebuilding Business Enterprises in Beirut for a Better Fund” (B5) as they guarantee a more effective and efficient financial support.