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Press release issued by the Lebanese Transparency Association - No Corruption

No Corruption stresses on the importance of Mainstreaming Transparency within the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework - 3RF

On the occasion of the International Day for the Right to Access Information, the Lebanese Transparency Association - No Corruption, the national chapter of Transparency International, organized a series of panel discussions under the title "Mainstreaming Transparency within the Framework of Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction 3RF." The panel discussions were held on the 28th and 29th of September with the participation of representatives from the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, local and international civil society organizations, researchers and journalists, as well as activists in the field of reforms.

The panel discussions revolved around four themes. The first discussion tackled the issue of transparency in aid where Dr. Leila Dagher presented the findings of the research which was conducted by the American University of Beirut Crisis Observatory on the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of international aid provided after the August 4 port explosion. The Regional Advisor from the Middle East and North Africa region in Transparency International, Mrs. Kinda Hattar, stressed on the responsibility of the international community in supporting a conducive environment to mainstream the principles of transparency and accountability when providing aid as well as their duty in focusing on sustaining recovery in a manner that averts Lebanon from relying exclusively on aid in the long run. Mr. Julien Courson, Executive Director of the Lebanese Transparency Association - No corruption, concluded the first panel through emphasizing on the criticality of mainstreaming transparency across all civil society organizations. Courson also accentuated that despite the pioneering role of civil society organizations within the 3RF framework, their role does not substitute that of state institutions. Hence, the international and local community must join efforts to support the recovery of state institutions through strengthening integrity, accountability, and transparency principles into their organizational structures.

The second panel revolved around transparency in projects financed by the World Bank through the Lebanon Financing Facility (LFF), the trust fund allocated to Lebanon as part of the 3RF. The rationale, progress and challenges of the LFF portfolio were presented by the World Bank's Head of Lebanon Operations and LFF's program manager, Mrs. Mouna Couzi who also highlighted the key principles adopted to guarantee a people-centered recovery. The "Building Beirut Businesses Back & Better (B5)" Fund's project manager and the World Bank's Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, Mrs. Zeina El Khoury, detailed the governance standards and the means through which outreach is conducted throughout the B5 project implementation. Mr. Courson concluded the session through presenting a scientific methodology developed by the Lebanese Transparency

Association – No Corruption that tracks transparency in humanitarian and development projects. Courson explained that the participatory methodology will be applied on the B5 fund and all projects under the LFF by LTA's monitoring unit in close collaboration with the World Bank team.

On the 29th of September, the panels were resumed with a third discussion on the progress in the reforms under the 3RF as well as the coordination efforts among stakeholders to push for the reforms. Mr. Jaap Van Diggele representing the 3RF Secretariat stressed on the significant role of civil society organizations in implementation of crisis response but also in pushing for policy reforms. The importance of the 3RF stems from its establishment to this policy-making role of civil society organizations through the Working Groups. Attorney at Law Carine Tohme, representing the 3RF Independent Oversight Board (IOB), addressed the slow pace of reforms which overshadowed minor successes such as the enactment of the Public Procurement Law. The Advisor to the Council of the Lebanese League of Businesswomen (LLWB), Mrs. Asmahan Al-Zein, discussed the noticeable disparities between the pace of civil society organizations' interventions in responding to the crisis and the striking inertia of the state institutions towards enforcing much needed reforms. The panelists concurred that there will be no substantive reforms without the commitment of the Lebanese State to ensure the proper implementation of the framework. In the fourth and final discussion, Dr. Khalil Gebara, Senior Operations Officer at the World Bank, addressed the critical role of civil society organizations in monitoring the progress achieved under the 3RF. He also emphasized the present opportunities and tackled the obstacles hampering the participation of civil society organizations in the process of implementing and evaluating the framework. Mrs. Roula Mikhael, Founder of Maharat Foundation and member of the IOB highlighted the pioneering role of civil society in monitoring the implementation of the framework which is only maintained through a smooth flow of information among stakeholders as well as with the general public. Mr. Edward Bitar, Founder of Live Love Lebanon and Live Love Beirut shared success stories achieved by small, medium, and large local civil society organizations in responding to the emergency. He then built the case for further empowerment of local civil society organizations through their engagement in policy-making, program design, project implementation and performance monitoring at the local level and in a sustainable fashion.

Mr. Julien Courson concluded that the 3RF framework is a golden opportunity for Lebanon to improve its institutional framework for recovery while also enhancing social justice, rebuilding infrastructure, and securing sustainable economic recovery. He added that enforcing the necessary reforms is fundamental in restoring people's faith in governmental institutions and the Lebanese State. Mr. Courson finally reiterated three underlying principles for transparency: access to information, timely and systematic dissemination of information, and accessibility of information by the general public. He finally stressed that mainstreaming transparency is not secondary, rather a cornerstone in the prevention from corruption and the fight against it.