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Under the patronage of the Minister of Finance, Ali Hassan Khalil, represented by the Director General of the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre (GDLRC), George Maaroui, and French Ambassador to Lebanon, Bruno Foucher, represented by the Head of the Economic Department at the French Embassy, Jacques de Lajugie, and in the presence of the Head of the International Cooperation Mission in the French General Directorate of Public Finance (DGFIP), Sylvie Sturel, the GDLRC launched, in Sursok Museum this afternoon, the "Lebanese GDLRC Support and Modernization Project." This project falls within the scope of the partnership with the DGFIP, is funded by the Fund for Technical Expertise and Experience Transfers (FEXTE) of the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement - AFD), and shall be implemented by France Expertise.

Below is the statement made by Mr. George Maarawi, DG of the GDLRC:

I would like to welcome you all today at the launching ceremony of the "Lebanese GDLRC Support and Modernization Project". This project falls within the scope of the partnership with the DGFIP, is funded by the Fund for Technical Expertise and Experience Transfers (FEXTE) of the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement - AFD), and shall be implemented by France Expertise.

This project is the fruit of a French and Lebanese cooperation for the development of the real estate industry. It reaffirms France's support to Lebanon by building modern institutions and working together on developing this sector at all levels, especially in terms of developing the business performance environment through a modern and attractive structure in terms of legislation and procedures, which in turns helps in fighting poverty and promoting rights.

This cooperation entitled "Maan" (together) falls within the scope of the development plans and legislations aiming to motivate investors, especially

that Lebanon is still considered the Arab world's gate to Europe. This cooperation will help Lebanon regain its position at the forefront of countries that attract real estate investments and expatriates, and improve its position in the business environment compared to the world. This is all the result of the bold achievements and reforms taken under the wise leadership of His Excellency the Minister of Finance, Mr. Ali Hassan Khalil, who set himself the objective of following up on the modernization of the GDLRC.

It is worth mentioning here that Lebanon's reform agenda aims at supporting comprehensive growth by overcoming the obstacles hindering the public sector's development, before the private sector, with the need to promote investment in human resources by supporting the youth's brain power and creativity to advance and move forward toward a promising future. Emphasis should also be made on the need to strengthen the reliance on digital economy, which would contribute to the growth of GDP, and we should consequently develop the digital economy vision adopted during the Fourth Arab Economic and Social Development Summit held in Beirut.

A promising new phase is starting; a phase during which we hope Lebanon will take the path to recovery and reestablish its position as a significant economic hub in the region. This ambition reinforces Lebanon's success in securing USD11.8 billion during the CEDRE Conference for the development of infrastructure, with a national will to enact comprehensive reforms and modernize laws to attract businesses and investments, in addition to the laws that have already been passed, including the Public Private Partnership Law and the Electronic Transactions Law. Here lies the importance of this project, which most important objectives are:

- 1- Contributing to the modernization of real estate laws
- 2- Ensuring the organizational and institutional development of the GDLRC
- 3- Improving the quality of services provided to citizens pertaining to the tasks and procedures to be followed by public notaries during the real estate registrations and the issuance of land and cadastral documents
- 4- Making use of unstructured big data collection methods and learning how to use such data and analysis to take decisions that are more informed.

This project falls within the scope of the Directorate's strategic plan to establish a modern administration at the service of the user, provide best practices and procedures for a sustainable real estate industry and create a competitive business environment. The project will also include dozens of visits by French experts who will work various fields of real estate registration, cadastre, information technology and legislation. They will

work side by side with our employees who are the wealth of our Directorate and on whom we rely for the development and modernization of our work methods to ensure fast services of good quality to users and for understanding the needs of each resident or expatriate in order to serve them better.

Below is the speech made by the Head of the International Cooperation Mission in the French General Directorate of Public Finance (DGFIP), Sylvie Sturel:

A year has passed since we signed our commitment to work together on modernizing the Lebanese GDLRC. In November 2018, this project was established by the formation of a dedicated team and the launch of the first diagnostic and audit missions, in accordance with the road map set for the first months.

Today we are officially launching the bilateral cooperation project between the GDLRC in Lebanon and the General Directorate of Public Finance in France. The project will be financed through an appropriate French financing instrument, the Fund for Technical Expertise and Experience Transfers (FEXTE). The financing will take the form of a € 1.2 million donation from the French Development Agency (AFD). This funding reflects our excellent bilateral relationship, but it also reflects the will of the French Government, especially the French Minister of Finance, to provide support, whenever possible, to Lebanon's reform strategy.

This project consists of four main objectives:

- 1- Contributing to the development of suggestions to improve Lebanese legislation related to the management of real estate rights in order to increase revenues
- 2- Modernizing the GDLRC governance
- 3- Improving the quality of services provided to users pertaining to the registration procedures of deeds in the Land Register and the issuance of land and cadastral documents in order to push tax compliance forward
- 4- Modernizing the data collection methods and ensuring their integration in the information system for analysis and decision-making purposes.

The first steering committee will meet this Wednesday and include the main stakeholders: AFD in charge of the monitoring and financing, Expertise France in charge of the operation and the DGFIP as a provider of public expertise. This will be an opportunity review the work already undertaken.

A round table will be held tomorrow at Basil Fuleihan Institute of Finance and will include public notaries from the two countries to discuss expectations and possible issues that can be implemented in the digital field. I would like to wish success to all civil servants and civil society actors who are taking part in this joint project. Allow also to thank H.E. the Minister of Finance for entrusting us with this project.”