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Under the patronage of Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil, the General Directorate of Land Register and Cadastre (GDLRC) and the French General Directorate of Public Finance (DGFIP) ratified the technical cooperation program (FEXTE) of the GDLRC's French-Lebanese twinning project. The Director General of the GDLRC, Mr. George Maarawi, signed on behalf of the Lebanon and Ms. Sylvie Sturel, Head of the International Cooperation Mission (MCI), signed on behalf France.

The signing ceremony included the release of the letter of intent concerning the execution of a project supporting the GDLRC in the Ministry of Finance and funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) through the technical cooperation program (FEXTE).

The cooperation will focus on supporting the initiative launched by the political and administrative authorities in Lebanon to reform the activities of the GDLRC, mainly the modernization of real estate legislation to increase revenues, the organizational and institutional development of the GDLRC and the enhancement of the quality of services offered to citizens in terms of duties and procedures to be carried out by public notaries during the registration of deeds in the Land Register. It will also tackle the methods used for gathering the large amount of organized and nonstructural data and how to put such data and analyses at the service of enlightened decision-making.

The letter of intent, considered a memorandum of understanding, mentioned that the cooperation activities that can be carried out within the scope of the project are compatible with national laws and regulations as well as with the international commitments of the signatories.

Speech of Mr. George Maarawi, Director General of the GDLRC

“The GDLRC has undertaken an ambitious modernization project through a strategic endeavor based on the work plan of the Minister of Finance which aims initially to restore to public property and real estate affairs their crucial economic roles and to establish a modern administration at the service of the user, by reviewing and enhancing practices and procedures so they adapt to the expectations of the citizen toward the administration.

The GDLRC is committed to pursuing this momentum of reforms aiming to improve its performance by building on the achievements already accomplished and by benefiting from the advantages of the reforms in place.

The GDLRC seeks to provide fast services of excellent quality to users in an attempt to implement best practices and participate in creating a competitive business environment; the real joint challenge lies in the performance of employees, procedures and IT systems. Therefore, this project is the continuation of the 4 European twinning activities that France has carried out with the Ministry of Finance between 2009 and 2015. The project also aims to achieve concrete outcomes, the most important of which is to benefit from the French experience in modernizing laws and in matters related to the procedures to be followed by public notaries when registering deeds in the Land Register. This shall simplify the registration procedures of deeds in the Land Register for the citizen, expatriate and investor.”

He added “our mission today is not limited to technical assistance. We want to establish a relationship built on mutual trust and listening, while looking for consensual solutions and making it a point to respond to all inquiries and provide citizens with advice and information.

He also indicated that this step comes after the launching of a series of e-services developed and expanded with a dynamic work environment, highlighting all the aspects of the work related to the management of State Property and real estate affairs by providing users with documented and accurate facts that are regularly updated.

This fruitful cooperation shall lay the ground for a strong and long-lasting relationship between the French General Directorate of Public Finance and the Lebanese GDLRC.

Speech of the Head of the International Cooperation Mission (MCI)

The Head of the International Cooperation Mission (MCI) in France, Ms. Sylvie Sturel, indicated that the project to support the modernization of the GDLRC’s activities is funded through a donation of 1.2 million euros from the Fund for Technical Expertise and Experience Transfers (FEXTE) of the French General Directorate of Public Finance.

She stated that this funding reflects the excellent bilateral relationship between Lebanon and France, as well as the will of the French government, especially the will of the French Ministry of Finance, to provide support to the Lebanese Ministry of Finance by supporting its reform strategy. She indicated that upon the request of the DG of the GDLRC, Mr. George Maarawi, this project aims to support the initiative launched by the Lebanese political and administrative authorities, to modernize the GDLRC.

Therefore, the following four main objectives were determined:

- 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.

Jacques de Lajugie, Head of the Economic Mission at the French Embassy in Lebanon was present and represented the French Ambassador to Lebanon, Mr. Bruno Foucher. He stated the following:

“I am happy that our cooperation focuses on fiscal issues. First, because we have not given this matter the attention it needs for some time now and second because the cooperation that will take place at the Cadaster falls within a context where the control of public accounts is an important priority for the Lebanese government. I hope the cooperation in the real estate field will be as smooth as the projects we have previously implemented together.” He stressed that France and its leaders are determined to further deepen the relationship between France and Lebanon in all areas, particularly the financial and fiscal fields.