

Beat: Politics

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT MACRON CLOSING THE CONFERENCE OF CEDRE TO SUPPORT LEBANON

FOLLOWING THE VISIT OF PM SAAD HARIRI

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USPA NEWS - At a time when the Levant is undoubtedly experiencing one of the worst moments in its history with the cruel tragedy of the Syrian people, the uncertainties that continue to surround the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and tensions around the largest powers in the region it is more important than ever to preserve a precious good among all, that of a peaceful, diverse and harmonious Lebanon, faithful to the pluralistic commitment that presided over its creation. And your mobilization marks the conviction shared by the international community that a responsible, strong, preserved, encouraged and supported Lebanon is absolutely essential for patiently building the conditions for restored peace in the Middle East." Stated President Macron as preamble of the closing statement of the CEDRE conference held at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, on April 6th, in presence of Lebanese, PM, Saad Hariri, Bruno Le Maire, French Ministry of Economy and Finance and J Yves Le Drian Minister of Foreign Affairs and his counterpart Gebran Bassil from Lebanon. Forty Eight countries have participated to the conference.

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Many may have the temptation, in the context that I just recalled, to let go; to say that, in a way, regional conflicts could be right in all national balances. The choice that your country has made in recent years is to continue on its path. Today, it is a unique path in the region, that of having stability, institutions, strengthening the State, moving towards freely organized elections and preserving a democratic and pluralistic framework.

I want to believe - and I believe all those who are here today - that this singular choice can be an example that will help us stabilize the whole region. I am sure of one thing: if we yield to the pressures of the region, if we decide in a way to import into Lebanon all the conflicts of the region and let the destabilization see day or increase, then we will have somehow cut a possible path and we will have added misfortune to misfortune.-----

This commitment is the one your country has taken, it is the one you have committed to pursue, the one I committed to with you last September during the visit to France of yourself, Mr. the Prime Minister ; it is the one that I then reaffirmed with your president, General Aoun, when he came on a state visit to France and which he himself strongly reaffirmed.

Faced with the urgency of helping Lebanon revive its economy, I was keen to see this conference organized in the first half of 2018, and I confirmed it at the meeting of the international support group. December 8th. It is now done. This working day, under the co-chairmanship of the Ministers Jean-Yves Le Drian and Bruno Le Maire, whom I thank, has been fruitful. And I would like to thank all countries and international organizations as well as business and civil society representatives for their analysis, political support, mobilization and contribution. I would also like to thank the Ambassador Duquesne, as you pointed out, who has worked in recent months to ensure that this conference is organized in the best conditions and can obtain the result of this day. Thanks to this mobilization and to the spirit of responsibility shown by the Lebanese authorities, the situation is now more favorable. It is more favorable because you have decided collectively to commit because - and I will come back to it - the Lebanese government has embarked on reforms and because the Lebanese are preparing to elect their representatives in Parliament on May 6. , after 9 years without parliamentary elections. And the government is working today to address the country's security, economic and humanitarian challenges. Today's mobilization not only contributes to this need for the entire region but also to the coherence that we ourselves must have with regard to Lebanon.-----

Lebanon is indeed a country that has been deeply affected by the wounds of the entire region, marked by conflict; it still bears today the stigma of the conflicts and crises that it has gone through, which have favored illegal practices, delayed essential economic investments and which today still have basic needs to cover: access to electricity, water, waste treatment, public transport, internet, health, a healthy environment; an immense human capital to make fruitful and to its own difficulties, were added the difficulties of the region since Lebanon had to face all the consequences of the Syrian civil war, by welcoming on its territory more than one million of Syrian refugees. It is this exceptional mobilization that we collectively need to guarantee stability and which Lebanon needs to succeed

this way.-----

Today you have made an important step forward and I want to thank you again. First of all because this mobilization has made it possible to bring not only public commitments but also private commitments and to accompany Lebanon on this path. France, as I have confirmed, will stand by your side by granting 400 million euros of concessional loan to Lebanon and in addition, doubling the amount of donations that the French Development Agency grants today to the Lebanon. France will grant 150 million euros in donations over the same period in addition and France's commitment of a total of 550 million euros in grants and loans on concessional terms, will finance priority infrastructure projects, listed in the investment plan of the Lebanese authorities.-----

In total, the current conference will mobilize just over \$ 11 billion in public engagement. I hope that several countries will continue to join in the coming hours and days to these commitments. It will also help to mobilize private commitments and the full support of companies. But all this makes sense only because there is above all the commitment of the Lebanese government and your in-depth desire to transform the country and carry out indispensable reforms. When it comes to water, justice and public procurement, you have made the first decisions that were long overdue and structuring. It is appropriate in the coming months and after the parliamentary elections in a reinforced way, to continue these reforms - we come together to talk about it - and I know how much you hold to that because it is what in the long term, will allow Lebanon to fully succeed; This is what will allow all those who carry public commitments to confirm and pursue them, but this will allow them to be multiplied by private commitments, investments in the long term, the return to a normal economy, the ability to train, hire and deploy new economic sectors. We will be with you for this work but it implies, I know, a lot of courage, a lot of determination. And I hope that the commitment of the international community today will be a strong signal to the Lebanese people, both of support but of collective determination to pursue these reforms even more strongly.

France, as you know, has always been present when it came to holding in the most difficult times; it did it in the most critical moments - I think of the dark hours of the civil war during which France was involved in the Finul exactly 40 years ago. But afterwards, our support also consisted of helping Lebanon to recover, to rebuild itself, to face its financial difficulties. This is what we did at previous economic conferences that met in Paris and since 2007, President Chirac - to whom I want to pay tribute for his constant commitment alongside Lebanon - had taken the initiative of a support conference that had allowed Lebanon to recover after the terrible conflict of summer 2006.-----

Eleven years later and while Lebanon has endured a lot, especially since the beginning of the Syrian civil war as I mentioned it, it is a question of renewing our effort, but not of seeing through it a point of completion but a new beginning. A new start for your country, a new start that accompanies the entire international community and with essential follow-up that will start tomorrow. This conference only makes sense if it is backed by your determination, by the courage of your President, by strong institutions and vigorous actions, but also by a precise follow-up that will begin as soon as the formation of the new government that we hope soon after the elections. Because I have confidence in our collective determination, but because I also know that, in the eyes of the Lebanese people, of the whole region and of the international community, this collective effort makes sense only if it accompanies profound transformations.-----

You have understood this, Prime Minister, my dear friends, we are collectively behind Lebanon, taking into account all the challenges of the moment and all the challenges of the region. This explains the unprecedented mobilization of the international community and the success of this conference. But that's what gives you - and sorry for that again - an equally unprecedented responsibility: to preserve the treasure that is Lebanon in the region by what it represents and what it constitutes ... By this ability to make everyone represented, regardless of their religion, their political sensitivity or their origin and that of doing everything in your power so that this model, by its success, inspires others. And we will continue tirelessly, throughout the region, to make that pluralism, this long-term capacity to build peace become the model because I am convinced of one thing: there may be values "that depend on from one region or another, we can put into perspective what our world has sometimes built, but respect for others, peace, the right to believe or not to believe, these are not values which belong only to Europe or to the West, they are values "for the whole of humanity. This is what we have been able to build in recent decades and your country illustrates it. And when some would have us believe that in your area, a new model could emerge that is the model of the domination of one religion, one ethnic group, one on the other ... they cruelly stammer history. So, as you understand, helping Lebanon today, we want to help the whole region and by helping all over the region, I'm convinced of one thing, that we help ourselves a lot. And for all these reasons, Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to thank you for your commitment and the success of this conference. I want to tell you how much, Prime Minister, we are counting on you and your President to carry out these indispensable reforms and to follow this path of Lebanon, and how much you know how to count on us to triumph this particular way because I believe it to be profoundly universal. Thank you."Source : Elysee.

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United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com