

Good morning,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today to this meeting, to talk about the three-year development priorities of the government.

Many of you have been in Lebanon for several years, and I am certain that you have noticed the degrading situation at every level, and in every field.

My Cabinet took office under unusual circumstances, and has inherited a burden of several unprecedented crises weighing on the country's already unstable financial and economic system.

Since day one, we were committed to saving the country, restoring local and international trust in the State, and working for its people and future generations.

As we found ourselves in a race against time to ensure the basic needs of our people, the whole world was suddenly and unexpectedly hit by a virus that changed the course of humanity.

The world shut its borders and every country suffered from the subsequent economic downfall.

In Lebanon, while every dossier we encountered was an urgent one, we had to reestablish our priorities to save lives with our limited financial and medical capacities. So far, we have managed to flatten the curve, and curb the spread of the coronavirus. We have implemented strict measures, and declared early on the state of general mobilization. But the severity of the financial crisis was further compounded by the pandemic.

Today, it is essential to gradually rescind the lockdown and partially reopen the local sectors to reanimate our economy.

Despite our successful fight against COVID-19 so far, heavy socio-economic and financial losses are looming: the Lebanese Pound's devaluation, the excruciating social conditions, the people who have lost their jobs, the people who are living in extreme poverty... are all pressing files that we must deal with quickly.

For days and nights, the Cabinet joined efforts to establish a financial reform plan. And for the first time in the history of Lebanon, the government approved a full financial roadmap. The Cabinet is committed to carrying out reforms, and determined to fight corruption, recover the stolen assets, and retrieve the funds that were transferred out of the country after October 17.

We will always rely on the international community's continuous support as we move forward with the financial reforms and the economic development plan.

Lebanon respects its engagements towards the international community. Despite suspending the payment of the Eurobonds, we are keen on working closely with the international financial institutions. On Friday, I signed a request to the International Monetary Fund to formally ask for its assistance.

We are also determined to maintain and further consolidate our relations with the different UN agencies, in regards, notably, to the Syrian refugee crisis. As the UN Secretary General, Mr. Anotnio Guterres, said: "The burden of sheltering millions of

Syrian refugees is far too heavy to be borne by only the neighboring countries.” Lebanon has welcomed Syrian refugees with open arms, despite its weak infrastructure and limited capacities. Today, as the burden of this influx grows heavier due to our internal challenges, we are, more than ever, counting on the United Nations and international community to support Lebanon, as part of the solidarity and burden-sharing with host countries, and to help alleviate poverty and preserve security and stability.

Your Excellencies the Ministers and Ambassadors,
dear Representatives of the international agencies,

Gibran Khalil Gibran once said: “My Lebanon is a flock of birds fluttering in the early morning as shepherds lead their sheep into the meadow, and rising in the evening as farmers return from their fields and vineyards.”

Lebanon is now going through major changes, to bring back hope to the shepherds and work to the farmers.

Our aim is to transform our economy and enhance different productive sectors such as agriculture, industry, and environment to improve the social conditions the Lebanese are currently suffering from.

If we support those sectors, we will get the chance of having a prosperous, more stable economy, create more job opportunities, work on a gradual decentralization, and encourage people to stay in their regions and work in their lands, thus sparing them the grief of internal displacement or immigration.

With the government's reforms and development priorities, we will align with many of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), like eliminating poverty, erasing hunger, establishing good health and well-being, creating decent work and economic growth, increasing industry, innovation, and infrastructure, reducing inequality... to name a few.

I trust that the international community's support to Lebanon will remain a solid one, as it has always been. And I trust that, together, we will work for a better Lebanon, to improve the conditions of the Lebanese.

Thank you.