



LIBAN / LEBANON

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Minister of Agriculture ¹

*In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water, and Forests, Professor Ahmed El Bouari, for hosting this conference. Through him, I also thank the Moroccan government and His Majesty King Mohammed VI for their warm hospitality and gracious reception. I express my profound gratitude to our brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of Morocco for their efforts to strengthen the bonds of love and brotherhood between Lebanon and Morocco. My thanks also extend to former Minister Mohammed Sadiki for his persistent efforts to promote cooperation between our two countries.

I would also like to specifically thank the Secretary-General of the "CIHEAM" organization, a true supporter of our efforts to enhance collaboration between Lebanon and the organization. In recent months, we witnessed a historic step with the inauguration of the CIHEAM Bari and the CIHEAM Montpellier offices in Lebanon. These offices will serve as beacons for research and scientific cooperation, reflecting CIHEAM's commitment to supporting us in areas such as sustainable agriculture, food security, and academic development. They will also serve as essential tools to address the significant challenges facing the agricultural sector in Lebanon today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The moment we are living in our region is both critical and perilous. The Israeli enemy continues its brutal aggressions against Lebanon, following its attacks on Gaza and its

¹ Speech delivered in Arabic. Unofficial translation.

children. Through these aggressive acts, the enemy seeks to ignite the region in an open war whose end no one can predict.

From Beirut, I bring you the patience and wounds of its people. I convey the suffering of farmers, engineers, and students in the South of Lebanon, Bekaa, North, Mount Lebanon, and the suburbs. As of the time of writing this address, approximately 2,450 people have been martyred, most of them children and women whose homes have been destroyed, alongside the suffering of at least 11,500 injured individuals. The war has also forced over 1,400,000 Lebanese people to flee their homes, including tens of thousands of farmers who had to abandon their fertile lands in Bekaa, the South, and Nabatieh.

The suffering we witness in Lebanon today goes beyond human losses. The Israeli enemy has used internationally prohibited white phosphorus, targeting not only civilians but also causing extensive damage to the environment and agricultural infrastructure. Vast agricultural lands in the South, Bekaa, and Nabatieh regions have been devastated, and over 65% of agricultural infrastructure in key farming areas has been severely impacted. These prohibited weapons have destroyed the land, ruined crops, and resulted in incalculable losses.

While we had hoped to organize a global conference under the umbrella of CIHEAM on food security, the war has shifted our priorities. We are now faced with addressing its devastating impacts on farmers and food security.

Our meeting today is an opportunity to enhance regional cooperation. The policies of food sovereignty in our region rely on partnerships and interaction to achieve our shared interests. We need collective efforts to address the repercussions of the war and establish new priorities to tackle the poverty and deprivation that threaten food security in our region, pushing some to the brink of famine.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our partnership with CIHEAM is based on a strong conviction that Mediterranean countries face common challenges that can only be overcome through joint scientific and research efforts. This collaboration will lead to the development of comprehensive strategies aimed at enhancing food security and achieving sustainable development.

I would also like to draw your attention to the importance of empowering youth and providing them with job opportunities, which is a fundamental factor in ensuring social and economic stability. CIHEAM plays a significant role in supporting this goal through its programs to develop the agricultural sectors, including fisheries, aquaculture, and entrepreneurship.

In this context, it is essential to emphasize the importance of gender equality in the agricultural sector, as women have proven their vital role in ensuring the success and sustainability of this sector.

I sincerely hope that this conference will agree for Lebanon to host the next CIHEAM conference once the war and Israeli aggression have ended. This conference will be a crucial opportunity not only to enhance scientific and agricultural cooperation but also to support Lebanon in rebuilding its damaged agricultural sector.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank CIHEAM for its continued support for Lebanon, whether through its permanent centers or its diverse programs. I hope Lebanon will always be at the heart of this cooperation, serving as a model for integration and partnership among our countries.

Finally, I present to you a report on the impact of Israeli aggression on Lebanon's agricultural sector and the proposed initiatives to support food security, hoping it will be included in the conference's working papers.

Thank you.