



Statement

by

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Minister of **Energy** and **Water** of Lebanon

at the

High-Level Dialogue on Energy

New York, September 24, 2021

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*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

It gives me a real pleasure to be with you today and address the United Nations General Assembly on behalf of H.E. General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic. Our meeting today comes at a critical point in the history of mankind: while countries are still facing the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and still trying to recover from its devastating economic consequences, climate change remains a real threat that requires immediate actions from our side.

The challenges that countries are facing due to climate change combined with the pandemic are also witnessed in our small country Lebanon. The energy sector in our country has been under huge pressure for decades now, and is undoubtedly a major burden to our national economy. Although access to electricity is ensured to around 99% of the Lebanese population, however continuous brownouts and blackouts make the heavily subsidized Lebanese energy system unreliable. Facing this reality, Lebanese citizens are forced to seek unaffordable solutions generating their own backup electricity with all the associated negative environmental consequences.

Despite the enormous efforts invested to improve the situation, the Lebanese population still suffers from the lack of electricity, with major negative effects on the national economy. In addition, the country lacks a modern infrastructure of the electricity system that is robust enough to accommodate large renewable energy projects. Yet, as a new government has been recently assigned, one key objective of our government is to find a permanent solution to this sector, and it is unquestionable that sustainable energy is the main milestone to build a reliable and prosperous energy sector in Lebanon.

This government will build on the past achievements in this regard. In fact, during the ten past years, the decentralized solar photovoltaic market increased from barely few kilowatts of installations to more than 100 MW today, witnessing annual increases of more than 170% year-to-year. The solar water heaters market covers today around 800,000 square meters of installations, making Lebanon among the top ten countries in the world in terms of annual market increase as per the reports of the International Energy Agency.

Furthermore, the Lebanese Government succeeded in 2018 to sign the first three Power Purchase Agreements in the history of Lebanon to build 228 MW of wind farms by the private sector. More than 400 MW of solar farms were planned. However, the severe economic and financial crisis that Lebanon is witnessing has delayed all these projects. Lebanon is going through tough times, yet we do know that sustainable energy is going to be one key aspect to get out of this crisis.

At the level of energy efficiency, it is important to note that our country has embarked on an ambitious journey to implement energy efficiency measures in the different sectors of the economy. The ESCO business is growing, and the work on energy-efficient appliances is moving forward in compliance with international agreements, namely the Kigali amendment to the Montreal protocol.

Laws and regulations are being developed to increase insulation in the buildings stock and move towards near-zero energy houses. It is of utmost importance to focus on energy efficiency since it is still by far the best path to save on energy, reduce emissions, and ensure a sustainable future.

The new government is committed to continue the national efforts towards developing sustainable energy in Lebanon, specifically in accordance with the Renewables Readiness Assessment and Renewables Mapping (Remap) developed with the support of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Together with IRENA, we have set more ambitious targets to have renewable energy contribute to 30% of the electricity consumption by 2030. Our aim is to have 4,000 MW of solar farms installed by 2030, and around 1,000 MW of wind farms. Such big projects would entail the use of large storage capacity using the latest technologies available.

This commitment by the Lebanese Government to these targets can only be achieved by a strong partnership between Lebanese and international administrations, institutions, and companies.

Our commitment is now translated into the “Lebanon Energy Compact” submitted few days ago to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and CEO for Sustainable Energy for All thanks to the support of IRENA.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a “decade for action”, so let us all join efforts today to build a future for the future generations to be proud of.

Thank you all.