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**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AT THE  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT  
FOR BEIRUT AND THE LEBANESE PEOPLE**

Fort de Brégançon, 09 August 2020

Madam Deputy Secretary of the United Nations, dear Amina Mohammed, Heads of State and Government, Excellencies.

I would like to start by thanking you for making yourselves available today and for being present in such great numbers in record time at this international conference to support Beirut and the Lebanese.

This commitment is what we owe to the Lebanese people. A few days ago, I was in Beirut, where I saw with my own eyes the aftermath of the tragedy of 4 August. I would like to salute several leaders who have also travelled to Beirut, including President Charles Michel, who was there yesterday and the Secretary General of the Arab League as well. Beirut was already experiencing hardships. Today, it has been wounded right in its heart. The strong and sovereign people are mourning their dead, expressing their anger and wanting to hold their heads high again. Here, I would like to express, in all of our names, our support to families, to the victims' loved ones and to all of those who are on the ground right now, providing care and help, those who are on the front line, dealing with urgent needs and the consequences of the tragedy of 4 August.

Our role is to stand by their side, by Beirut and by the Lebanese people. That is why I want to give you my special thanks for being present. I welcome President Trump, who wanted to be here in person, despite the time difference. We had an opportunity to talk two days ago, but there are Heads of State and Government from all continents on video to provide their support.

The United Nations has set out the needs of the Lebanese people clearly in a document that has been provided to you. The first is healthcare. Many hospitals and medical infrastructures have been affected and we need to respond to the immediate needs for equipment and medicine. The second is food. The explosion has destroyed food stocks and we need to ensure food security urgently. The third is education. Many schools have been destroyed and many children have been affected. These children and their families need to be cared for and they need to go back

to school as soon as possible. The fourth is housing. Hundreds of thousands of people are homeless. More than 300,000, according to the latest figures. We need to provide assistance for housing and reconstruction urgently. Once again, these needs are very real in a country that, along with Jordan and Turkey, has been affected by the migratory crisis stemming from the war in Syria. I welcome the presence of the King of Jordan, who is also on video. These countries have also experienced a deep crisis in recent years.

The purpose of today's conference is to pool our resources to provide very practical responses to the needs of Beirut's population in the coming days and weeks. And we can do this together, with coordination by the United Nations on the ground, in response to the urgent calls for help from the agencies, pooling material resources that we have mobilised and can now deploy.

France has already organised eight airlifts. We have two ships that have already sailed, several private-sector cooperation efforts, and an amphibious helicopter carrier that will sail in a few hours with more resources. I know that many of you have already organised many responses in the short term. Our goal today is to act quickly and effectively, to coordinate our aid on the ground, so that it reaches the Lebanese population as efficiently as possible. This offer of assistance also includes support for an independent, impartial and credible investigation into the causes of the disaster of 4 August. This is a strong and legitimate demand from the Lebanese people. It is a matter of trust and the resources are available and should be mobilised. I would like to thank everyone who will be able to respond to the requests from the Lebanese authorities.

Today, I am convinced that we will send a clear message of support to Lebanon, to our Lebanese friends, to tell them that we are all here to deal with the consequences of this tragedy together. As I said, President Trump is mobilised, along with more than 15 Heads of State and Government, and many ministers, when the Heads of State and Government are not present. We also reached out to Turkey and Russia. Turkey was unable to join the video, but will supply aid. I'm sure Russia will do the same. Israel has expressed its wish to provide aid. I would like to point out to everyone, that, even though geopolitical circumstances make things difficult, we need to organise our responses, because I believe we need to hold a true conference of unity today. Despite our diverging viewpoints, we must all support the country and the people of Lebanon. But the story does not end with the aid that we provide to the people and the leaders of Lebanon. It primarily involves this organisation. I think that the United Nations will come back to this topic.

What we should provide is aid with very close monitoring by the United Nations, which has defined the needs, making it possible to organise the aid on the ground with the support of the World Bank. I welcome the involvement of these organisations and the support of the IMF for many of the operations. It is important for this aid to go to public and private entities, to non-governmental organisations, to civil society, as rapidly as possible and in accordance with the needs that have already been assessed.

We know this, and I would like to end with this. We all know as well that this tragedy hit a country that has been going through a very deep and steadily worsening political and economic

crisis for several months. The explosion on 4 August was like a thunderclap. It is time to wake up and take action. The Lebanese authorities must now implement the political and economic reforms demanded by the Lebanese people. It's the only way the international community will be able to work effectively alongside Lebanon for reconstruction. I told them so in Beirut a few days ago, and President Aoun, whom I welcome, knows it. Reforms are needed in the energy sector and public procurement, reforms to fight corruption. An audit of the central bank and the financial sector should be conducted. The IMF and all of the international institutions should be fully involved. The Lebanese are a free, proud and sovereign people. It is up to the country's authorities to act so that the country does not go under and to meet the aspirations legitimately expressed by the Lebanese people in the streets of Beirut at this very moment.

All of us need to do everything necessary to ensure that violence and chaos cannot prevail. Yet, there are some today who have an interest in such division and chaos. They are the powers seeking to harm the Lebanese people in a way, to undermine peace and stability in Lebanon and in the whole region. That is why I believe that, at this very moment, and in the coming days, it is the very future of Lebanon that is at stake; the future of the Lebanese people, but also the future of a whole region. I don't want to take up any more time. Once again, I thank you for your mobilisation and I am now going to hand over to the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed.