



UN in Beirut Pays Tribute to Haiti's Victims



The UN family in Lebanon gathered this week in a solemn ceremony to pay tribute to the victims of the Haiti earthquake that struck the island last week and claimed numerous fatalities, including many UN staff. The commemorative event was attended by representatives of the top three Lebanese leaders, ambassadors and UN staff who all observed a minute of silence in a tribute to victims of the tragedy.

The somber memorial service also included a funeral musical from the repertoires of Bach and Albinoni that added a special comforting and uplifting touch to mourners at the ceremony.

ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader Aldafa said that working with passion and dedication was the maxim for Hedi Annabi, Luis Carlos Da Costa, Doug Coates and other colleagues who perished in the Haiti tremors. "They gave their lives for peace and worked their best in service of humanity. The noblest of sentiments is when a man sees himself in the service of peoples of the world, feeling their distress and determined to alleviate and end their suffering," Aldafa said.

"This is the mission of the United Nations. This was the ultimate goal of our colleagues who passed away in Haiti. They lived with courage and died bravely. What they have done gives the United Nations hope for a better world in the face of any arising challenges or difficulties. The disaster that struck Haiti and hit us all with the loss of our colleagues illustrates how fragile life is. It is, nevertheless, a testimony to the strength and determination of human beings. This disaster has been met with the utmost determination," he added.



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ESCWA, UNIC Launch WESP 2010 in Beirut

ESCWA and UNIC Beirut launched the major annual UN report entitled "World Economic Situation and Prospects 2010" at a press conference held at the UN House. Issued at the beginning of every year, the report represents a collective effort by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, and the five UN regional economic and social commissions, including ESCWA.

Speaking at the conference were UNIC Beirut Director Bahaa Elkoussy, Head of the Economic Analysis Section at ESCWA's Economic Development and Globalization Division Ali Kadri, and Economic Affairs Officer Yasuhisa Yamamoto.

UN in Beirut Pays Tribute to Haiti's Victims (Cont.)

For his part, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams said "Not in war, but in a tragic natural disaster the UN has suffered its single largest calamity." "Our own suffering – the loss of family, friends and dear colleagues – is overshadowed by the tragedy that ordinary Haitians are witnessing."

Williams added that Annabi, da Costa and many of our colleagues who lost their lives on that fateful day in Haiti last week understood that very well and believed in it. They believed in a UN that is trying to make a positive difference in people's lives, every day, they believed that sacrifices become worthwhile when they help improve the daily existence of others, even if on the other side of the planet.

Also speaking at the ceremony was UNIFIL's Deputy Force

Commander Brigadier-General Apurba Kumar Bardalai who said that the death of so many colleagues in Haiti has thus been a very personal loss for many of "us" as well as a professional loss for the UN and the international community at large.

"Being just a short flight away from New York, MINUSTAH was one of the most sought-after duty stations for UN peacekeeping staff," Bardalai said.

"UNIFIL, as a mark of respect to our befallen peacekeepers in Haiti, is determined to make every effort towards the achievement of peace and stability in southern Lebanon," he said. Participants in the ceremony then inscribed words of sympathy on a book of condolences. ■

ESCWA, UNIC Launch WESP 2010 in Beirut (Cont.)



Elkoussy presented a background on the report, which indicates that economies in Western Asia were expected to post a 3.6 per cent growth rate in 2010. He added that this year will be marked by a shift from pessimism to "cautious" optimism, mainly because oil prices were on the rise once again.

For his part, Kadri gave a detailed overview of the report saying that Western Asia witnessed in the past months a significant economic improvement that is expected to last in 2010. "In the region where the major crude oil

exporters are located, the strong recovery of crude oil prices, in the range of US\$65 to \$80 per barrel since the 2nd quarter of 2009, contributed to this optimistic projection," Kadri added.

The report states that Western Asia saw a negative economic performance in 2009. Due to the fall in oil prices and external demand as well as lower private foreign capital inflows, Western Asia's economies shrank by 1.0 per cent; a severe contraction after witnessing positive economic growth of 4.6 per cent in 2008. ■

Miss Lebanon at ESCWA

Miss Lebanon, Martine Andraos, paid a visit to ESCWA in order to learn more about the scope of its work and activities, particularly in the area of "sustainable water" that is the main issue she is targeting.

Andraos met with ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader AlDafa and head of the Energy Section in the the Commission's Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD) Walid Dghaili, who underlined to her the importance given to water resources in ESCWA's work, projects and activities. The Millennium Development Goals were

pointed out by Miss Lebanon, who was keen to know what progress has been made in achieving them before the 2015 deadline.

Andraos and ESCWA officials agreed to cooperate in raising awareness about the crucial need to preserve water resources and about environment protection in general.

Miss Lebanon toured the ESCWA headquarters, visiting its library, printing shop and other parts. She also signed the book of condolences for victims of last week's Haiti earthquake. ■



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