



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Message on the Occasion of the Beirut International Marathon
Beirut, Lebanon**

Monday, 11 October 2010

The United Nations System in Lebanon is pleased to support the Beirut International Marathon, which takes place on 7 November. This year, the United Nations is dedicating its participation at this landmark sports event to the youth of Lebanon, in line with the worldwide commemoration of 2010 as the International Year of Youth.

Lebanon's youth represents the future of this country. It represents new hope, new beginnings, new challenges. Lebanon's young people will have to continue the marathon that current generations have been engaged in: the quest to build a stable and peaceful country, with sustainable security for all its citizens from internal and external threats, and with sustained and equal prosperity for all. This will require hard work and effort, to build the institutions of the Lebanese state, to implement the necessary reforms in all sorts of realms, and to strengthen the notion of a unified Lebanon. Some of this work is already being done. But it will fall to today's youth to continue and intensify this endeavor. Their biggest test will be, much like in a marathon, one of perseverance and endurance.

But in order to enable the young people of Lebanon to assume such vast responsibilities tomorrow, we all must work today to ensure their rights and welfare. This is the marathon that Lebanon faces today.

The responsibilities and rights of youth are a key theme raised by the International Year of Youth, which the United Nations marks between August 2010 and August 2011. During this year, the United Nations advocates global efforts to meet the needs of young people in terms of education, employment, health and other rights, in order to enable youth, in turn, to become active and constructive members in the development of their countries.

The Beirut International Marathon not only resembles the challenges that youth confront. It also reminds us of the unifying character of sports events in bringing people from different nationalities, religions, ethnic groups, ages and political backgrounds together. For Lebanon's youth, the marathon is one opportunity to put differences aside and focus on what joins the Lebanese together, rather than what sets them apart.
