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Federica Mogherini
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-
President of the European Commission

Ville Itälä
Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

*Dear Federica,
Dear Mr. Itälä,*

Brussels, 26 June 2019

I am bringing to your attention a case of corruption involving the Lebanese authorities and funds allocated to Lebanon through the possible EU's bilateral assistance under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), as exposed recently by Martin Jay, an investigative British journalist based in Beirut¹, through an extensive investigation based on complaints and reports by environmental experts, academics, anti-corruption activists and whistleblowers.

The investigation shows how, in particular, Miniyeh, a city in northern Lebanon, has been enduring an environmental calamity resulting from murky relations with the international aid donors' community, including the EU. The investigation claims that the EU has been responsible either for allowing this corruption scheme to continue, at least by mere negligence. This ought to be clarified as soon as possible.

I note with concern that reports issued by several environmental experts believe there are strong links in the cancer surge in the country and the abetted corruption, making use of EU money, which is having health and environmental impacts for the city of Miniyeh, its population and roughly to the entire country. At the core of this alleged corruption scheme is an EU-funded recycling and compost project, which is believed to be polluting the waters of the entire region of Miniyeh, in the north of Lebanon, and threatening the lives of hundreds of thousands of citizens.

The 18-month long investigation unearthed that funds were channelled by the EU into environmental schemes without concerns about how the money would be spent, thus encouraging that big business and public officials to gorge themselves on the easy cash available.

¹ Jay, Martin, "Growing Link between Lebanon's Cancer Surge and EU Abetted Corruption", available at: <https://intpolicydigest.org/2019/05/11/growing-link-between-lebanon-s-cancer-surge-and-eu-abetted-corruption/>

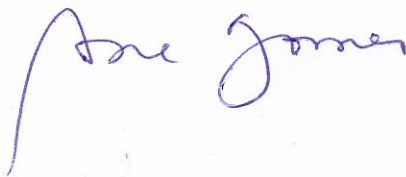
Ana Gomes
European Parliament
Bât. Altiero Spinelli, 14G201, rue Wiertz 60, B-1047 Brussels, Belgium
Tel. : +32 (0)2 284 58 24 Fax : +32 (0)2 284 98 24
anamaria.gomes@ep.europa.eu

The conclusions of the investigation put at stake the EU's credibility as well as the efficiency and integrity of the EU internal and external controls, which may have been infiltrated by incompetent or criminal networks. Besides grossly misusing European taxpayers' money, this case calls for an urgent and deep investigation from the EU bodies, in particular OLAF, so that those found responsible, in the EU and Lebanon, will be brought to justice and that the EU funds to Lebanon will be immediately put under stringent control.

In light of the above, I would like to ask you:

- Is the EEAS, and in particular its EU Delegation in Lebanon, and OLAF aware of these allegations involving EU funds being channelled for a corruption scheme, put in place by the Lebanese authorities, which is threatening the health of many citizens living in the region?
- What mechanisms have been mobilised to ensure accountability, in order to avoid the alleged ongoing scheme of embezzlement of EU funds in the country?
- The investigation and the articles written by Martin Jay claim that there is complacency to check how EU money was being spent in Lebanon and, in particular, regarding these projects. Has any investigation or an auditing process been launched or will it be in the near future?

Best regards,



Ana Gomes

Member of the European Parliament