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**UNITED NATIONS EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION**

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**THE ROLE OF TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES
IN FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION**

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A. HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Diasporas in modern Lebanon started to be structured and play different roles in the socio-economic development of Lebanon since the end of the nineteenth century. Emigration from Lebanon and the role of Lebanese returnees in Lebanon, were tightly related to the economic, political and cultural expansion of Western (manly European) countries and their penetration in the Arab World in general and Lebanon in particular. We start this paper presenting very briefly the main historical and geographical patterns of contemporary Lebanese emigration.

A limited, migration, existed since the seventeenth century and before: Lebanese, migrating to Egypt for commercial purposes, and to Italy for studying.

In Lebanon and since the beginning of the second part of the nineteenth century, an important movement of emigration started, to Egypt, the U.S.A, to a lesser extent to Latin America, and on a very limited level to Australia and Sub-Saharan West Africa. ⁽¹⁾

Between the first and the second world wars (1918-1945) emigration from Lebanon changed in some aspects : On the one hand, Lebanese emigration to Egypt, the USA and Latin America, declined because of the world economic recession. On the other hand, emigration from Lebanon to South Saharian Africa developed, the sending and receiving country being generally under the same colonial rule : France. ⁽²⁾

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1. The Lebanese diasporas and the development of Lebanon

The main contribution of Lebanese diasporas to the economic development of Lebanon is through sending funds to be used in Lebanon.

a- The remittances from Lebanese Diaspora

Lebanese Migrants in general and especially those who work in Arab oil exporting countries and Subsaharian Africa, send generally a part of their incomes to Lebanon. The remittances are of crucial importance in some periods. This was the case during the last fifty years and specially from 1973 to 1990, because of the “oil boom”, and the “wars for the others” on Lebanese territory (1975-1990).

These remittances had a limited role (5% to 7% on national income) in the fifties, and their role declined

Table1: Total amount of remittances received by 100 households having emigrants abroad, in Saïda 1981

Amount of remittances	Nihil	Less than 25000 L.L.	25000 L.L. to 50000 L.L.	50000 L.L. to 75000 L.L.	75000 L.L. to 100000 L.L.	More than 100000 L.L.	Total
Number households	23	14	12	13	13	25	100
% of the total number of households	23%	14%	12%	13%	13%	25%	100%

Source: Michel El Hachem – op. cit. (in endnote 3) – p. 77

Remark: 1 L.L. = 23.2 US cents in 1981.

Given the fact that the average duration of migration of the group studied was 11 years, three quarters of the emigrants were sending less than 10.000 L.L. yearly. (2320 U.S. \$ at the average exchange of 1981). Such small amounts could hardly be used for investments, and were mainly financing family and relatives. This was boosting consumption, inflation, imports, and the deficit of foreign trade :

- Consumption was boosted because these amounts were not important enough for investment.
- Inflation was boosted because these amounts were increasing the supply of money in an economy with

entrepreneur. This case is frequent in the construction, transport, retail trade, and various services activities.⁽⁹⁾

Medium size firms are mainly established by white collars emigrants, small and medium entrepreneurs coming from Arab oil producing countries and West Africa. A field survey conducted in 1982 with emigrants from the town of Beit Shebab returning from Guinea shows that among two thirds of these emigrants established firms:

- 45% established medium size firms in the field of trade (textiles, supermarkets)
- 30% established medium size manufacturing firms
- 10% established firms in the service sector.⁽¹⁰⁾

Large size firms were also established in various sectors and they are generally better known :

Investments in agriculture and stock farming are frequent on the Southern coast, Central Bekaa and Akkar areas of rich and irrigated agriculture. These investments are gradually gaining the inner parts of South Lebanon, where they are changing gradually the environment characterized by traditional dry farming. These agricultural projects are carried out mainly by emigrants from West Africa who are numerous⁽¹¹⁾ among Southern Lebanese emigrants.

In the construction, public works and engineering sectors, several groups of Lebanese contractors from the diaspora, invested capital, mainly generated in Arab oil countries and Africa, in similar activities in Lebanon. (We mention in tables 10 and 11 in annex some of the groups).

80% of these contractors worked in the Arab oil exporting countries. Most of them invested in the construction and public works industry in Lebanon especially during the nineties, in the framework of the reconstruction process that started after 1990.

In the banking and financial sector, the identified investments of emigrants capital are also sizable. Lebanese emigrants invested capital is evident in forty two over 86 acting banks in Lebanon. (Table 12 and 13 in annex gives the data collected concerning these investments).

The 49 identified participations of Lebanese emigrants (in table 12) come mainly from Arab Gulf (20 participations) and South Saharian A918.5(ewcou)12. 07(r)-2.5(ino(ecto(ra.5(s)0(e)10.9(3(idee)11.57.9(i)e(g)1)10.9(3), 2

e- Emigrants contribution to the opening of new markets for local products overseas

This economic role of emigrants in Lebanon even existing since decades, has developed fastly these two last decades, because of the new competitiveness acquired by some Lebanese manufactured goods in the world market as a consequence of the sharp fall of the rate of exchange of the Lebanese pound and the low salaries in Lebanon since 1984.

Many emigrants, particularly in Europe, and North America are active in this field and contribute to the diversification of Lebanese exports. The markets for these exports shifted from a 95 percent orientation towards Arab markets in 1984 to a relatively diversified orientation, where Arab markets absorbed 60% of Lebanese exports in 2001 and 38% in 2002.

2- The Lebanese diasporas and their contribution to some social aspects of development in their country of origin

Lebanese emigrants have not invested only for their direct personal profit. Many of them funded projects of public interest, which are also worth to be mentioned.

This type of activity remind us of the “evergetism” of greek emigrants since the XIXth century.

Lebanese emigrants established or funded institutions of public interest in numerous fields. We try here to present some facts concerning this aspect of the role of emigrants in several fields (education, public health, water and electricity supply, social services, monuments). This presentation is far from being complete. The whole subject needs a systematic survey.

a- Emigrants role in promoting education

For Lebanon, this role began before independence in 1943 and is obvious in several fields. We have to mention some major achievements in this field :

- The founding of the Yafeth Library at the American University of Beirut by the Yafeth family in Sao-Paolo.
- The funding of the Amiliya network of schools and other social institutions of the Amiliya association by Southern Lebanese emigrants to West Africa and the Arab Gulf.
- The funding of St. John Damascen Antiochian Orthodox University of Balamand by Issam Fares, Fouad Debbas, Rafik Hariri and other Lebanese, emigrants to the Gulf countries.
- Building and funding of schools : such as at Kfarzeina (North Lebanon) by emigrants to Australia and Dik el Mehdi (Metn) by emigrants to West Africa.
- The funding of “Université St Joseph” premises in South Lebanon by Rafik Hariri (emigrant to Saudi – Arabia).
- The funding of a network of training centers in IT by Mohamad Safadi in North Lebanon.
- Providing financial support for students and educational institutions by several emigrants (Rafik Hariri; Issam Farès, Fuad Debbas, Emile Bustani, Michel Eddé and his sons, Mohamad Safadi, Georges Frem and others) and emigrants funded institutions, like the “Islamic Association for higher education and career advice” funded by Lebanese emigrants to the Gulf. ⁽¹²⁾ (for further information see table 26 in annex).

b- Emigrants support to the health sector

We have to mention, the funding of Tell Shiha Hospital in Zahleh by emigrants originating from this city. ⁽¹³⁾ The founding of St Louis Hospital in Junieh by Lebanese emigrants to America, ⁽¹⁴⁾. The funding of a health center in Bkassine (caza of Jezzine) by H. Ghanem, an emigrant originated from this village ⁽¹⁵⁾. We have to mention also the numerous donations from Southern Lebanese emigrants to Imam-Al-Sadr's and

Islamic Shiite Supreme Council's medical institutions in South Lebanon and in Beirut's South Western

- The funding of Naum Labaki's monument (former Parliament Speaker in 1923-1924) in Baabdash, by emigrants to Brazil originating from this village.

Field and bibliographical research on these social contributions should be developed.

3- Transfer of knowledge to the country of origin through Lebanese expatriates ⁽²¹⁾

We should emphasize an important experience in benefiting from Lebanese diasporas for the socio-economic development of the countries of origin. We mean the experiences concerning the transfer of knowledge through Lebanese expatriates. These experiences tend to transform some aspects of globalization from bad luck to positive opportunities.

Lebanon tried to attract some of its "expatriate brains" during the last decade: Private Lebanese institutions tried to attract them also. We shall list in this respect some of the measures already partly implemented in order to attract "Lebanese expatriate brains".

- The American University of Beirut Medical Faculty invites American medical doctors of Lebanese descent to teach and work in its hospital, and tries to extend cooperation with them.
- The Association of Lebanese Engineers organized in August 2001, a congress for Lebanese engineers in the world in order to interest them to engineering activities in Lebanon and the Arab world.
- The UNDP provided a support, even limited, to such moves, through a program known as: "Transfer of knowledge through expatriate nationals"(TOKTEN).
- In Lebanon, such a program was implemented in the 1990ies with UNDP, UNESCO, and the Center for Lebanese Studies in Oxford (UK). This program caused the return of several expatriates to work successfully in Lebanon.
- In the Council of Development and Reconstruction of Lebanon (CDR), after the end of the "War for the others" in 1991, when planning, financing and implementing activities were preparing for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, CDR was in need to expand its technical staff in order to have more highly skilled staff with international experience. Needs in specific skills were announced in the international press. Hundreds of demands were received from Lebanese in Western Europe and North America. Dozens of people with appropriate competences were hired, at good conditions. The result was satisfactory at the levels of productivity and efficiency.
- The Lebanese American University is doing the same through its New York office, when it needs professors in some fields.
- This office contacts Lebanese professors and researchers working in American Universities and research centers in order to attract them.
- Several Lebanese public entities, banks and corporations, undertook similar steps to staff key positions with competent Lebanese working abroad in the 1990ies.
- The creation and or development of corporations in the field of consulting, manufacturing industry, and high tech services, with the cooperation of expatriate Lebanese professionals and scientists. In the high-tech field we can mention the computer programming firm created in Beirut by Nehmeh Tawk a computer specialist returned from France, this firm exports programs to France.
- This kind of move took place during the 1960ies and 1978ies. Such as the APD (Arab Project Development in Beirut) experience, and in several engineering, computer and other industries by Lebanese, and others Arab expatriate citizens. This model deserves a better study in order to be improved and generalized.
- The creation of hospitals and medical centers, by attracting expatriate medical specialists.
- This experience was implemented, through the creation of the "Eye and Ear Hospital" by Lebanese physicians working in the USA, Canada, and Europe. These Lebanese hospitals have a regional role around Lebanon, attracting patients from several Arab countries.

Manuel Yunes	Maronite	Batrun	Venezuela
Tufik Assaf	Druze	Aley	Venezuela
Yussef Hammud	Shia'a	Sur	Nigeria
Abdallah Rassy	Greek Orthodox	Akkar	Saudi Arabia
Jebrane Tawk	Maronite	Besharreh	Nigeria
Farid Gebran	Latine	Beirut	Cyprus, Egypt
Camille Akl	Maronite	Batrun	Colombia

Table 4:: Deputies with migration experience in each region in pre (1975-1990) war Lebanon

Parliaments	1943 Election		1947Election		1951Election	
Regions	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Mount Lebanon	4/20	20 %	1/19	12.5 %	3/25	12 %
North	0/13	0%	0/12	0%	2/16	0%
South	0/10	0%	0/10	0%	0/18	0%
Beirut	0/7	0%	1/9	11.11 %	1/12	8.3 %
Bekaa	0/8	0%	0/7	0%	0/9	0%

Parliaments	1953Election		1957Election		1960Election	
Regions	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Mount Lebanon	2/24	8.3 %	4/20	20 %	5/33	15.15 %
North	0/9	0%	1/16	6.25 %	0/18	0%
South	0/8	0%	0/11	0%	1/18	5.5 %
Beirut	0/7	0%	2/11	18.8 %	1/14	7.14 %
Bekaa	0/6	0%	0/9	0%	1/16	6.25 %

Table 4 (continued)

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Minorities	-	-	0/1	0%	0/6	0%
Parliaments	1964Election		1968Election		1972Election	
Communities	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Maronites	5/23	15.6%	3/23	9.37%	3/30	10%
Greek Orthodox	0/1	0%	2/13	15.38%	1/11	9.09%
Greek Catholics	0/6	0%	0/7	0%	0%	0%
Armenians Orthodox	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Protestants	1/1	100%	0/1	0%	0%	0%
Shiites	2/18	11.11%	2/19	10.52%	3/19	15.78%
Sunnites	1/21	4.76%	0/20	0%	0%	0%
Druses	1/6	16.6%	0/6	0%	1/6	16.6%
Minorities	0/1	0%	0/1	0%	0%	0%

After the 1975-1990 wars, the number of deputies with migration experience grew: from 11 in the 1992parliament, to 21 in the 1996 and 2000 parliament, to 25 in the 2005 parliament. This is a clear

Some parties achieved a remarkable financial organization of their "disapora". The S.N.S.P. in particular had an efficient financial network especially in West Africa. This network also supported party members flying from prosecution, or the families of the imprisoned party members, in an efficient way since the sixties.

The Amal and Hezbollah networks are mainly established among Shiaa emigrants in West Africa, the U.S.A. and the Gulf. It is a development of the tradition of fund raising established among Shiaa emigrants, by the Amiliya Association since the thirties and by Imam Mussa since the sixties.

The Progressist Socialist Party of the Druze leader Walid Jumblat and the Free Patriotic Movement of General Michel Aoun have recently developed similar activities.

d- Leadership and membership of communal and/or populist political organizations in Lebanon emerging from the Lebanese diasporas.

Memberships of emigrants in the overseas branches of political parties have been mentioned above. Many migrants returning to Lebanon have been involved in party membership.

Some of these parties were and are headed by emigrants or sons of emigrants:

- The National Bloc Party with Raymond and Carlos Eddeh.
- The Kataib with Pierre Gemayel.
- The S.N.S.P. with Antun Saadeh, Assad Achkar, Abdallah Saadeh, Massaad Hajal.
- The Amal movement with Imam Mussa Al-Sader and Nabih Berri.
- The Free Patriotic Movement with Michel Aoun.
- The current after Future with Rafic and Saad Hariri.

Some returning migrants established populist militias and political groups like Henry Sfeir (Central Africa) in Kesrwan and Abdel Rahim Murad (Brazil) in the Bekaa valley.

It is interesting to notice that the role of emigrants is very weak in the traditional parties relying on notables and family loyalties: The "National Liberal Party" of Shamun, the "Progressist Socialist Party" of Jumblat, the "Bloc National" of Eddeh, etc... Emigrants seems to prefer modern populist political parties, (communal or secular) seeking for change. In this sense diasporas are a factor of political modernization in Lebanon. This leads us to deal with the relations between "communities" (Tawayif) and diasporas.

e- The communal organization of the Lebanese diasporas in the world and its functions.

Since the beginning of the "wars for the others" in Lebanon in 1975, the different Lebanese communities (tawayif) have begun, to set up world wide organizations for their emigrants.

Maronite lay politicians began in 1979 to set up a "Maronite World Union", who organized several conferences since its creation (Mexico, Montreal, Sydney, Los Angeles...).

The Druzes set up a similar organization since 1983, and have an annual international Druze congress.

The Greek Catholics set up later the "World Union of Greek Catholics".

Finally late Sheikh Muhamad Mehdi Shamseddine President of the Moslem Shia'a Supreme Council announced the creation of a "Union of Lebanese Muslim Shia'a emigrants in the World", lead by Mohamed Mahmud Hammud, concerning West Africa, Australia, North and South America, Europe and the Middle East. This Union is a part of the Moslem Shia'a Supreme Council.

These organizations, in addition to their role of preservation of the communal identity and cohesion of Lebanese emigrants overseas, have the function of providing political and financial support to their communities in Lebanon, through the mobilization of their members overseas.

f- Politically passive returning emigrants

F- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS TO MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF LEBANESE DIASPORAS IN DEVELOPMENT

We list the main recommendations we could present in this respect:

Restaure emigrants of Lebanese descent in their citizenship with an appropriate legislation as it is the case in several countries including Syria.

need in some fields : solar energy, wind energy, water treatment, improvement of the use of water, study of the most frequent diseases, soil science, protection of soils against erosion, desertification and pollution, agricultural research in the field of animal and plant production, biotechnology and applied biotechnology, communications and computer science in all their fields and applications.

- A special attention should be given to development of technological and scientific parks (technopoles), in cooperation between universities, research centers and high tech corporations.

- There is a necessity of wide spreading information on the volume and variety of Lebanese brain drain, and its consequences in deepening the gap between Lebanon and the Industrialised World.

- Some aspects and mechanisms of globalisation could be used in order to serve the scientific and technological development of Lebanon and the Arab World : knowledge networks, linking expatriates to their country of origin appeared during the nineties, thanks to the possibilities offered by the new information and communication technologies (internet, video conferences,...). Expatriates could through these networks, if they are interested in the development of their country of origin, support the building of local companies, provide markets for their products and services in their countries of residence, share in common research programs, support the funding of Lebanon by international organizations. Job opportunities in local companies, universities, research centers, could be proposed to expatriates in their country of origin through internet, web sites ⁽²³⁾.

- Arab cooperation will facilitate the transfer of knowledge by arab including lebanese expatriate offering wider horizons for this transfer.

- Cooperation of private sector, academic sector, and public sector, will boost this transfer of knowledge, offering more efficient opportunities to it. The Government and the private sector should organize opportunities to attract skilled migrants. ⁽²⁴⁾.

- Dissemination of information on successful Lebanese and Arab experiences in this field, is of a paramount importance, in order to reverse the negative preconceived ideas, people have on the possibility of this transfer. This dissemination should also cover experiences like the Indian, the Taiwanese, and the South Korean experiences ⁽²⁵⁾.

- Lebanese emigrants, do not send only money, they send also new models and ideas, when they visit their country of origin, and when they return to it. If the country is enough developed these ideas could be transformed in projects like in South Korea and Taiwan, in the engineering high tech and other sectors.

Brain drain is not the only cause of under development; it is also one of its consequences.

G- POLICY ORIENTED PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIVE REFLEXIONS

The Lebanese diasporas are having a growing economic and political role in their country of origin. This role was mainly to assist relatives at the end of the Ottoman period. Between the two world wars, emigrants have began to invest more in some important projects. After the independences and especially since the sixties, their investments accelerated as much as their support to projects of public interest and their political role as MPs and in the political parties. And since the oil boom, the inflow of remittances they send is again playing an important role for a great number of households. On the other hand, emigrants play a key role in several sectors of the economy :ls.6(rat)t3 TC(MPs hey)dS3 TC(c8.1(ot.2(x)13.r

means of transport and communications. The roles, Lebanese diasporas of each part of the world, are playing in their country of origin seem to be of unequal importance: emigrants to the Arab oil exporting

Second: For Lebanon there is a necessity to eliminate barriers between the arab national economies through free trade areas, and through the liberalization of the movement of persons in addition to the free movement of goods, services and capital. These are conditions for the building of an Arab economy with a critical mass for the 21st globalised century, in which the Lebanese economy and the Lebanese diasporas could play a more positive developmental role. Such an economy is certainly more attractive for Lebanese diasporas to contribute to the development of its country of origin, than the present narrow national economy.

This “Arab economy” will provide job and investment opportunities more than the sum of jobs and investment opportunities of the present national arab (including Lebanese) economies, due to the economy of scale effect.

Third: This market approach is necessary but insufficient. We need to build Lebanese corporations of critical size in the national, sub regional and Arab framework by the private sectors of the different Arab countries (including the Lebanese private sector and especially the Lebanese emigrants). Some have been studied, few have been implemented, in spite of the disponibility of capital in the Arab (and especially in Lebanese) financial institutions, and the Arab financial markets.

Fourth: In addition to the political, cultural and economic conclusions, we mentioned above, there is an urgent necessity to establish or reestablish and reinforce the rule of law in the arab countries (including Lebanon), in order to attract emigrants, their skills and their capital ⁽²²⁾.

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