

Policy Statement National Interest Government

Despite the exceptional circumstances of security and living concerns and despite the tremendous local and regional pressures, national interest had to prevail. National interest is illustrated by a consensus government that comes before you today hoping to gain parliamentary confidence after gaining the confidence of participating political forces. Lebanese citizens saw in this government a glimmer of hope to improve their living conditions and enhance security, safety and national immunity.

This government's task is to pave the way for major constitutional commitments. This government does not claim to achieve all what citizens aspire for in its short mandate; it will only work to achieve what is reasonable, possible and plausible as well as issues of highest priority, namely security and stability.

Our government aspires to act as a political safety net in order to enhance the country's security and bridge security gaps that plots instigators might exploit to sow seeds of discord and seek destabilization.

Our government emphasizes upon the unity of the state, its prerogatives and exclusive authority over national policy related issues to ensure Lebanon's safety and security and to preserve national sovereignty. The government stresses as well upon its commitment to the principles and provisions of the Constitution, the democratic system rules, the National Pact and the Taef Agreement.

Our government gives particular importance to fighting all forms of acts of terrorism by all means available to the State. It will continue as well building the capacities of the army and security forces in a way that will enable them to perform their task in that perspective, in addition to their duties in protecting the borders and providing security. In this context, we affirm that we will accelerate the process of providing the army with weapons and equipment through various funding sources, and in particular thanks to the Saudi generous donation worth three billion dollars.

We consider that the most immediate challenge facing the government is to prepare for the presidential elections within constitutional time frame, as per the Constitution and in application of the principle of democratic rotation of power.

This government commits to strive for a new election law as well as an administrative decentralization draft law to parliament for approval.

This government, by its unifying nature and performance, will pave the way for national dialogue, under the leadership of the President of the Republic, and for resuming the debate on national defense strategy. The government will also follow up and implement the decisions taken during the previous dialogue sessions.

This government stresses upon the principle of dialogue and the maintenance of civil peace and will seek to deter any resort to violence, weapons or sectarian incitation and prevent the country from sliding into sedition in order to achieve national unity and strengthen internal immunity, as per the national dialogue decisions taken in Parliament and in the Presidential Palace in Baabda.

The positive echo, the constitution of this government had, reflected positively on the overall climate in the country. We hope to see this positive atmosphere, which already reflected on financial markets, act as a gateway to experiencing a new phase of national economic recovery, which in turn will improve citizens' living standards and conditions.

The government, aware of the state's fiscal problems, will work on addressing them and on submitting a general budget law draft and will take all necessary measures to revitalize key economic sectors, especially tourism which has suffered significantly. The government will be addressing in parallel the wages issue by initiating dialogue with employers and trade unions within the available capacities, and will ensure the follow up of wages increase and pension and social security regime already submitted to Parliament.

The national interest government will pay special attention to the energy file and commits to continue and speed up the oil exploration and extraction licensing process. It insists on Lebanon's right in its water and its wealth of oil and gas and is committed to accelerate the necessary procedures to delimitate Lebanon's exclusive economic zone maritime borders.

This working program requires the revitalization of the state apparatus by filling the many vital vacancies in the public administration.

The government, in compliance with international resolutions, confirms its commitment to establishing and disclosing the truth in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and his companions and will follow up the progress of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon which was originally set to serve justice and truth without politicization or revenge whatsoever so as not to affect Lebanon's stability, unity and civil peace.

As for the abduction of Imam Moussa Sadr and his companions in Libya, the government will exert all possible efforts on all levels and will support the official follow-up committee to ensure their release and safe return.

The government will work on taking the necessary measures to address the issue of Syrian refugees whose numbers exceed the country's capacity to deal with, in order to contain the security, political, social and economic repercussion of their temporary presence in Lebanon. The government will call upon the international community and the Arab world to assume their responsibilities in helping Lebanon to fulfill its ethical and humanitarian obligation and facilitate their return to their homeland.

Our government will follow-up the implementation of the decisions taken by the International Support Group for Lebanon in New York on September 25, 2014 and adopted later on by the UN Security Council as well as those taken in Paris on 5/3/2014. It will also follow up this issue related meetings held in France, Italy and elsewhere. In this context, our government will work

on establishing projects and programs designed to reduce the economic and social impacts of the Syrian crisis as well as setting the pertaining funding mechanism via the Multi Donor Trust Fund launched by the World Bank, provided it complies with the Constitution and legislation.

Our government will exert all efforts to strengthen relations and cooperation with sister and friendly countries, partnership with the European Union within mutual respect of national sovereignty. It will work on establishing best relations with international bodies and applying with their resolutions and affirms its commitment to the UNSC 1701 resolution implementation in order to extend the state sovereignty on the entire Lebanese territory as well as to the United Nations and Arab League Charters.

By virtue of the state's responsibility and role to preserve Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and the safety of its citizens, the government stresses upon the state's duty and quest to liberate the Shebaa Farms, the Kfarshouba Hills and the Lebanese part of Ghajar village by all legitimate means as well as upon Lebanese citizens' right to resist the Israeli occupation, repel its attacks and regain occupied territories.

In these regional difficult times, we are required to reduce our losses as much as possible, through adopting dissociation policy, protecting our country from neighboring countries crises fallouts and preserving our civil peace and Lebanese citizens' livelihood.

This is "national interest" as we understand it, and on this basis we ask for your vote of confidence.