



Statement

by

**H.E. Mr. Nazem El-Khoury
Minister of Environment of Lebanon**

at the

High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly

on

**Addressing Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought
in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication**

Tuesday, September 20, 2011

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017*

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Heads of Delegations,

Standing here today looking out at the Assembly is a lot like looking at a photograph of Earth taken from space... an indivisible blue sphere, without borders and with one common interest that far outweighs any and all differences... to safeguard the only place in the universe we can call home.

On behalf of the Lebanese people and myself, allow me to say what an honor and privilege it is to be a part of this picture,

With this picture in mind, we would like to underscore the dire necessity and significance of the global action that this Assembly has undertaken to address global environmental issues, ranging from Climate Change to Desertification, which are both intertwined challenges that stand to destroy the very fabric of human civilization.

This is especially true in the Middle East, where the anticipated environmental and climatic changes affecting water availability and food security are expected to instigate further forced migrations and aggravate existing conflicts over the distribution of resources. The continuous Israeli attempts to extend pipes into the Lebanese "Wazzani" spring in Southern Lebanon are but one example of such conflicts.

Mr. President,

We recognize and are humbled by the numerous attempts to bring about global concerted activities towards combating Desertification. In specific, we welcome the United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/160, which states that this "high-level meeting should contribute to raising awareness of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought at the highest level", as well as the Assembly's conviction to "reaffirm the fulfillment of all commitments to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and its 10 year strategic plan and framework".

This requires the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective, appropriate and fair international response.

There are voices calling for developing countries to curb their emissions in order to achieve further reduction. Lebanon not only welcomes and recognizes the positive impact of such actions on desertification, we also abide by the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" as stipulated in article 3.1 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In this respect, Lebanon has already taken action, since we have voluntarily committed to increase our