

Good morning, Mr. Ghassan Zeenny, Vice-President of the Institut des Finances "Bassil Fleihan";

Dear Professor Gustavo Piga, Director of the International Master in Public Procurement Management of the University of Rome Tor Vergata;

And Dear Colleagues and Professors;

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to join you today, on behalf of the Embassy of Italy in Beirut.

This training programme on *Economic Diplomacy and European Development Cooperation* is first of all a testament to Italy's long-standing and consistent commitment to strengthening Lebanon's institutions.

The programme is, in fact, part of a broader capacity-building initiative launched last year by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in partnership with the Institut des Finances "Bassil Fleihan" and the University of Rome "Tor Vergata". Its first edition was already a full success, for which I wish to thank our partners, and we have been proud then to renew and expand the programme in 2025. We have opened up to more participants, new scholarships have been allocated to Lebanese officials to study in Rome, and today we are launching a new training module specifically dedicated to Lebanese diplomats.

We are especially proud that, through this initiative, we are re-establishing a direct and meaningful cooperation between our two Ministries of Foreign Affairs. It is surely a sign of mutual confidence, but also of the will to deepen an institutional relationship that has long served as a bridge between our Countries. We trust that this dialogue will develop further and give shape to new exchanges and joint collaborations between our diplomatic services, building on our cooperation, shared values, and a common vision for a more prosperous Mediterranean region.

Our joint initiative is particularly relevant also for its timing. As Mr Ghassan Zeenny has already mentioned, today, at this very moment, the Government of Lebanon is opening the "Beirut One" Conference, aimed at rebuilding investors' confidence in this Country's economic opportunities. Our initiative also accompanies the reform-oriented agenda of the Government led by Prime

Minister Salam and precedes by few weeks the next EU-Lebanon Association Council in mid-December.

By focusing on European cooperation mechanisms and on the instruments of economic and trade diplomacy, it stands as a concrete contribution to Lebanon's ability to engage with international partners, shaping trade relations, attracting investments, supporting national industries, and making full use of present and future opportunities for recovery and sustainable growth.

Let me also stress that Italy's engagement in the training programme that we are opening today also reflects the broader approach that guides our foreign policy, based on long-term and equal partnerships, capacity building, and respect for national ownership. As one of Lebanon's key economic and development partners, Italy attaches special importance to strengthening institutions and human capital. And diplomats play a vital role in this effort, as the actors that are meant to bridge national aspirations and the opportunities that exist beyond national borders. Effective diplomacy and sound governance are the foundations of sustainable progress, and together they can form the bedrock of a shared space of prosperity in the Mediterranean, which both our countries have a common interest in advancing.

I wish to thank the Institut des Finances and the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" for their professional dedication to this programme, for sharing their expertise and for supporting the strengthening of Lebanon's diplomatic corps. Even beyond skills and knowledge, we hope that this program will also reinforce a mindset rooted in initiative, innovation and problem-solving as critical tools to build trust and foster new and existing partnerships.

Finally, I want to extend out thanks to all participants, for their commitment to this shared effort. I wish you all a productive and inspiring training experience. Your work in the coming days will contribute to strengthening the valuable partnership that unites Italy and Lebanon.

Thank you, and best wishes for the most successful outcome to this initiative!