

Mr. Secretary-General,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A warm welcome to you all on this day, November 22, 2017, which marks the 74th anniversary of the independence of Lebanon, a founding member of the United Nations. On this occasion, I would like to express the deep appreciation of the Lebanese people for the constant support that the United Nations has offered my country to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity during the past decades.

To underline the importance of the relationship between my country and the United Nations, we are greatly honored, Mr. Secretary General, that you have accepted this gift from Lebanon, a "Cedrus Libani," and made yourself available on this very day, November 22nd, to plant it in the gardens of the United Nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the "Epic of Gilgamesh", the oldest surviving work of literature, we already find reference to the Cedar tree, as it is in the "Cedar forest" that Gilgamesh and Enkidu face Humbaba. You may also recall that in the Bible, the Cedar is used as a metaphor for pride and righteousness: "The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like the cedar in Lebanon" (Psalm 92:12).

(Les justes croissent comme le palmier, Ils s'élèvent comme le cèdre du Liban.)

الصالح كالنخلة يزهر، كالارز في لبنان ينمو

And it is this Cedar tree, which has been since antiquity a symbol of eternity, resilience, strength and determination, that has become Lebanon's national emblem and stands at the center of its flag.

Mr. Secretary General,

It is unquestionable that Peace is the supreme goal of our organization. So, let me close with the following quote from the author of *The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint Exupery:

« La paix est un arbre long à grandir. Il nous faut de même que le cèdre, aspirer encore beaucoup de rocailles pour lui fonder son unité. »

(Peace is a tree long to grow. We, like the cedar, have to aspire much more rockeries in order to found its unity.)

السلام شجرة تنمو ببطء. وعلينا كما شجرة الارز ان نغرس اكثر فأكثر في الارض الوعرة لتدعيم وحدتها.

Again, thank you all for joining us today

Mr. Secretary General, you may wish to say a few words.