

## THE SITUATION IN LEBANON

*Lebanon* has made undeniable and remarkable efforts for the preservation of its environment, since the end of the destruction period that our country has witnessed and during which almost all our infrastructure and natural wealths were brought down to earth. Also a noteworthy growing public awareness and concern is perceived among a majority of the Lebanese population as well as the economical and social players as to the essential role of environmental policies, environmental management and the benefit of environment protection. However, there is still much to do and actions to be taken should we want to place *Lebanon* among the eligible countries for the future race to competitiveness on all social and economical levels.

But in spite of this awakening, today's situation in *Lebanon* on the environment front can be described as still weak and confused, and the results obtained of all the actions and efforts undertaken until now are mitigated because of persisting negative streams proceeding from political and social considerations, and consistent lack of information on professional levels. This is particularly true for the industry and many industrial sectors and a big majority of SME's.

For the purpose of this meeting, we have compiled some informations, statistics and figures we deem indicative of the actual general situation of environment and industry, both in their positive and negative aspects.

However, there is always a positive side and a negative one of this situation.

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### *The positive side of the situation*

Is reflected in all efforts, researches done carried out and actions taken and measures by the successive governments of **Lebanon** over the last 10 years on all levels concerning the safety of environment. It is reflected in the very valuable and praiseworthy contribution of the various organizations and institutions (international and local) which have paved the path to efficient long term strategy and policies.

But may be the most important positive aspect is the creation of the Ministry of Environment itself in 19... which is indicative of the sudden awareness of the Lebanese and their growing concern for the preservation of our environment although not yet sufficient. As a matter of fact, it is only fair to testify here that at MoE is the youngest ministry and is composed of a team of young people, dynamic, educated, zealous and most of all loyal to the cause of protection of environment.

### *As examples of the positive side, we can mention some facts among which :*

- Seven areas covering about two percent of Lebanon's total surface area have been declared protected by law and administrated by voluntary organizations and named committees, in addition to around 10 forests and several river basins and high mountains.
- Solid waste collection and disposal services have improved in several parts of the country.
- Standards for industrial stack emissions and wastewater discharges were established with due recognition of Lebanon's obligations under regional and international treaties and conventions.

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- The sustained however limited media coverage and awareness campaigns throughout the country.
- As said before, the general public growing awareness of environmental concerns is really growing and increasing demands to do more to protect the environment.
- The signature and ratification by the government of the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean sea (Decree law 126, 1977).
- The promulgation of important Decrees to regulate essential environmental matters such as 5243 dated 05/04/2001 regarding the classification of industrial establishments to define the degree of environmental threat (although not yet applicable).
- The signature of the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants (POP's).
- The elaboration of National Standards for environmental quality (NSEQ) promulgated by Ministerial decision 8/1 (01/03/2001) prepared by the MoE and SPASI.
- The agreements signed by Lebanon to improve product quality and environmental performance and the development of such a strategy with the assistance of SPASI.

### *The negative side of the situation*

- It shows through many indicators.
- As a matter of fact, several factors hinder the development of environment protection policies and undermine the positive and sustained efforts and actions undertaken in this concern until now.

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- Apart from the permanent threat of pollution that proceeds from the increasing emission of toxic gazes of circulating vehicles and apart from the other natural disasters or forms of pollutions.
- A focus on the industry and the industrial sectors that present a real or potential threat to environment, reveals the negative aspect of the situation, consistent gaps which add to this dramatic situation among other examples.
- This in our opinion proceeds in the mentality and general attitude of the socio-economic players that reflects a second or third degree interest in environmental concerns and problems. In order to explain this negative side of the situation without adopting a criticizing mind, we must be aware of the following realities :
  - As general factors, the ailing economy in Lebanon and the prevailing recession.
  - Inadequate reforms adopted mostly to avoid socio-political issues.
  - Official permissive attitude in some major ecological issues
  - Future economic uncertainties.
- The creation of the Ministry of Industry as such dates back to the year 1972 i.e. only 3 years before the war. The fact that did not allow the Government to do much for this vital sector.
- The fact that since independence, the vocation of Lebanon has always been considered as a country of services and tourism, and therefore industry or even agriculture were not given the right attention.
- The systems and procedures with which the successive governments have tried to solve socio-economic problems. A pertinent example is the "temporary administrative permits" [????] [???]. Such systems have contributed to the wild proliferation of small and medium industrial, touristic establishments contrary to regulations and laws.

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- Significant and important disparities in official figures and statistics. As pertinent examples :
  - \* Number of industries listed in the census carried out by the MoI in 2000 : 22'026
  - \* Number of industries listed in census carried out by the CAS : 29'282
  - \* Difference : 7'256 (33%).
  - \* It is useful to point out here that wild dissemination of industries outside industrial zones (82% of total industries). Many are located in residential areas.
  - \* Industrial zones poorly equipped to face environmental problem and secure adequate solution.
  - \* Significant disparities in the allocated floor area of industrial establishments between those in industrial zones and those outside.

### Number of Industrial Units versus Floor Area inside and outside Industrial Zones

Category	Nb of Industrial Establishments	Floor Area (square meters)	Average Floor Area per Industrial Establishment (m2)
Outside Industrial Zones	17'980	2'085'155	116
Within Industrial Zones	4'043	2'424'435	600
<b>Total</b>	<b>22'023</b>	<b>4'509'590</b>	<b>205</b>

Source : ECODIT

- Important lack of information, orientation and guidelines
- Lack of interest and awareness from the concerned establishment themselves (only 20 respondents received of 350 questionnaires (5%) sent to industrial establishments working in the agro-industry, the textile industry and the hotel industry).
- Only 81 industrial establishments have so far acquired ISO certification.

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### Number of ISO-Certified Establishments

Year	ISO 9000	ISO 14000	Total
1994	12	0	12
1995	0	0	0
1996	4	1	5
1997	10	0	10
1998	8	0	8
1999	43	3	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>81</b>

Source : ECODIT

As a matter of fact, productivity improvements in the industry result not only from measures implemented by the government, but also from the sustained efforts made by those same enterprises, small and medium in particular, as well as professional associations.

The new strategy should consist in the implementing and development of a global set of programs and the setting-up of institutions aiming to fully develop the existing industry's potential.