

“Strengthening the Strategy Development of Dar al-Fatwa Institutions to Enhance Stability and Religious Tolerance in Lebanon”

In the name of Allah the most merciful

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and prayers and peace upon all messengers and prophets of Allah and upon our prophet Muhammad, the last messenger of Allah, and upon his family and companions

Revered Statesmen, your Excellencies, Your Eminences, Gentlemen of the audience,

Greetings to the audience this afternoon in the premises of Dar Al Fatwa. I welcome in particular the German Ambassador, the Head of the Berghof Foundation, and the Representative of the European Union. I have also taken it upon myself to invite the revered Muftis, members of the Legislative Council, Heads of Administration at Dar Al Fatwa, Islamic figures who provide counsel at the Dar and who are its most prominent decision makers and guides.

We intended for this event to be a large gathering involving various sectors so we have invited our brothers and colleagues, the prominent statesmen and religious figures, whose presence is always a pleasure to us. I would also like to express my thanks to the media outlets which have accepted our invitation.

The occasion to which I have extended the invitation to you today is the signing of a cooperation agreement with the German Berghof Foundation on development and training, capacity building, and enhancing the efficiency of our institutions to better face changes and to spread the culture of moderation and tolerance.

Following my election to the Mufti position, and announcing my program for religious and institutional reform, I have received invitations from a number of Arab and European religious and political bodies. From those European countries, I have chosen to go to Germany because the invitation came from a foundation that was proven to have no political or religious orientation. Berghof is known for its social and cultural work for the purpose of development and capacity building and forming partnerships with foundations aimed at establishing reform, growth and effectiveness. And over the course of three days, in addition to meetings with officials from the President's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and religious institutions and Islamic associations, we have engaged in a number of meetings with officials of the Berghof Foundation. Chairman Professor Giessmann was not present at the time. I therefore reiterate my thanks and pleasure to meet him, as he has come with the sole purpose to sign the agreement with us.

The important thing and in meetings with foundation officials, in which we presented our

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developmental needs and they demonstrated their expertise, capacities and willingness, is that they establish a partnership with us with the aim of reforming, enhancing, training, and supporting the institutions of Dar Al Fatwa.

We have signed an initial protocol, where I was joined by Mr. Muhammad Al-Sammak and Dr. Radwan Al-Sayyed. Then the Berghof Foundation sent delegates, among them Mr. Feras Kheirallah and Ms. Sonia and I welcome them today.

We have cooperated over the past few months and studied all details and areas of cooperation as well as mechanisms of implementation and agreed on the text which Mr. Muhammad Al-Sammak has read to you. Following is an overview of its content and mechanisms:

We need massive and long lasting work centered around strengthening our preaching, educational, media, social, and relief institutions for purposes of development, enabling, moderation, and effectiveness. And as mentioned previously, the Berghof Foundation possesses vast expertise in the fields of development and training. For this reason, we have agreed on this partnership and we hope that through two years of joined efforts we obtain tangible results in all areas of our work. In the event of a successful endeavor, we shall set up partnerships with other Arab and European bodies for the same purpose.

I am very thankful for your presence and interest and I welcome again Professor Giessmann and congratulate him and myself on the signing of the agreement and I invite you gentlemen to attend the lunch set up in his honor in the hall next door.

Looking forward to more agreements.