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**Work package 1: Discussion on a future vision, common values and political and economic reforms**

**رزمة العمل 1: نقاش نحو رؤية مستقبلية ، وحول القيم المشتركة، والإصلاحات السياسية والاقتصادية الممكنة**

## UPDATE 2

Track 1 of our multi-level dialogue project in Lebanon focuses on bringing together a group of experts and opinion leaders, in short GEOL, to discuss a future vision for Lebanon. So far, we had organised one meeting which was very cordial and more like a social event. The meeting focused on the desire by participants to get more details about this new initiative including who will be involved and what their roles will be.

In the second meeting, the participants went beyond their listening mode and took on a more aggressive route. The courteous start quickly gave way to what resembled a typical



Lebanese TV talk show, with participants showcasing their ideological positions and drawing their “lines in the sand” or delineating their “turf”, and trying to underscore the value of their opinions. The Berghof facilitator was trying to keep the decorum – until the topic of the EU funding was brought up, which caused quite an uproar amongst the participants. Some had concerns about potential underlying motives behind the EU funding this project, but the Berghof

facilitator was able to calm the participants’ concerns by addressing their concerns and questions and by providing transparent clarifications.

The other issue that was raised in the discussions was criticising Hizbollah and pushing for the “Hizbollah weapons” topic to be the first discussion point. Several individuals praised Dr. Abdul Halim Fadlallah’s (director of Hizbullah’s think tank) presence in the group as vital and unprecedented but coupled it with condemning his party. The meeting was not adjourned until the participants agreed on a list of topics they felt would be necessary to focus on as we proceed with the next steps.

In summary, the meeting exhibited all the expected behaviours of participants in early stage encounters where a “venting window” is normal. The challenge will be to move the members beyond sound bites and “preaching” positions, and to enable them to view their counterparts as sincere and logical individuals in their own right and not just as party standard-bearers.

For the next steps, preparations are being made for a retreat to be held on a date selected by the group: 22-20 Nov. Several participants have already expressed a lack of desire in convening for two nights and three days with others they disagree with, in addition to some being unable to leave their homes for an extended period of time. An option now is being considered to scale it down to a two-day/one-night event.