

**UNDP Administrator, Mrs. Helen Clark – New York**  
**UNDP - Office of Audit and Investigation – New York**  
**UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Philippe Lazzarini – Lebanon**  
**UNDP Country Director, Luca Renda – Lebanon**

**Beirut**, 22 September 2015

**Subject:** Request for clarifications, investigations and appropriate measures concerning the role of the UNDP and its staff in covering waste management corruption in Lebanon

To the competent authorities in the United Nations,

We hereby present a request for clarifications, investigations and appropriate measures regarding the role of the UNDP and its staff in covering waste management corruption in Lebanon, namely Mr. Edgard Chehab, Assistant Resident Representative and Former Program Manager of the UNDP Environment Program in Lebanon.

### **I. Background**

Considering that Lebanon has been facing a serious waste management crisis,

Considering that the Lebanese authorities have proven incapable of finding a solution to collect the garbage that has been piling up on the streets since 17 July 2015, and is being arbitrarily dumped in the valleys, rivers and forests, threatening the health and environmental security of Lebanese citizens, especially at the outset of the rain season,

Considering that this crisis is the direct consequence of the wide-scale waste management corruption that has been ongoing for more than 20 years,

Considering that since 1994, the consecutive Lebanese governments have been overstepping the jurisdiction of municipalities (local councils), first by taking over the waste management portfolio, and second by refraining from transferring their due financial income to the municipalities, thus keeping them from undertaking their local waste management functions as provided by law,

Considering that in 1994, the Lebanese government has illegally entered into overly expensive and inflated contracts with the Averda Group (Sukleen and Sukomi) outsourcing garbage collection, gathering, treatment and landfill, and these contracts have been constantly extended by the consecutive Lebanese governments until the last contract extension that took place in 2010,

Considering that Mr. Akram Shehayeb – current Minister of Agriculture, former Minister of Environment, and head of the *ad hoc* experts committee commissioned by the Council of Ministers to propose a solution to the current waste management crisis – has admitted the existence of this constant corruption in the statement issued by the committee on 13 September 2015 and stating that *“the experts committee headed by the Minister of Agriculture Akram Shehayeb considers that it has laid down the first stone for fighting the*

*corruption that has reigned on this portfolio along two decades, by abolishing contracts that turned out not to be implemented and to have a high cost. The committee considers that the road of anti-corruption, monitoring and accountability, needs to be continued.”*

## **II. The Role of Mr. Chehab in covering the 2010 contract extension**

Considering that the term of the operating group contracts was supposed to end on 17/1/2011, the Council of Ministers dedicated a series of sessions from March to October 2010 to finding an alternative to be adopted after this date. These sessions included debates and contentions between two options: first, imposing a condition of renegotiation towards reducing the costs in order to renew the contracts of the operators, and second, launching a bidding process for a different mode of operation and according to a different treatment mechanism respectful to the environment. This led to a wide political and media debate and a series of decisions, the content of which some Ministers claimed was misrepresented in the minutes of sessions of the Council of Ministers. This ended in the series of sessions that took place between September 1st and October 2010.

Considering that Mr. Edgard Chehab has played a pivotal role in covering and providing grounds of justification for this corruption,

Considering that Mr. Chehab, in his capacity as UNDP expert, gave a presentation before the Council of Ministers convened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2010, providing options for the treatment of municipal solid waste in Lebanon,

Considering that Mr. Chehab claimed that the European Union and the United States have taken compulsory measures forbidding all waste sorting and treatment operations and adopting the pyrolysis technique.

Considering that a number of ministers objected to this claim and accused him of forging facts, but the majority of ministerial votes went towards the adoption of the municipal solid waste management plan through pyrolysis,

Considering that, despite further objections, the majority then agreed that the pyrolysis plan would take many years to implement, and on this basis voted in favour of the Prime Minister's proposal to extend the Averda contracts for another four years, without allowing the objecting ministers to obtain any copies of the said contracts,

## **III. The Role of Mr. Chehab and other UNDP experts in the 2015 waste management committee**

Considering that Mr. Edgard Chehab was appointed in his capacity of UNDP Environmental Expert, along with a team of UNDP experts, in the current *ad hoc* experts committee commissioned by the Council of Ministers to find a sustainable waste management solution and headed by Minister of Agriculture Akram Shehayeb,

Considering that Mr. Edgard Chehab, along with the team of UNDP experts, have developed and have been promoting the waste management plan comprising two phases, on the basis that the second phase would require more time to implement:

- The first transitional phase relies on landfill without sorting or treatment as a temporary 18-month solution, in addition to:

- the extension of the current Averda contract for garbage collection and transportation,
  - the reopening of the Nehmeh landfill for seven additional days to receive the additional 100,000 Tons of waste that have been piling up since it was shut down on 17 July 2015 (given that this landfill was proven to pose a tremendous health threat for the residents of the region)
  - the creation of new landfills in Akkar,
  - the reopening of the Bourj Hammoud landfill with the suggestion of land reclamation from sea surface filling by using excavated material from the landfill, which is in contradiction with the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution,
- The second permanent phase relies, although vaguely, on the principle of restoring the waste management portfolio to the municipalities (local councils) and creating sorting and treatment centers, without any reference to pyrolysis, in contradiction with Mr. Edgard Chehab's position on the "best" choices for waste management in 2010.

Considering that only the first temporary phase was adopted in the Council of Ministers on 9 September 2015,

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Considering that the role and positions of Mr. Edgard Chehab, in his capacity of Program Manager of the UNDP Environment Program during the mandate of three consecutive Ministers of Environment, have been full of contradictions and therefore make him subject to suspicion and affect the role and credibility of the UNDP in Lebanon, by covering corruption in the waste management portfolio and providing allegedly "scientific" evidence supporting the extension of illegal contracts for a group of companies that were commissioned to take over the budget and jurisdiction of municipalities (local councils), and adopting a waste management approach with poor consequences on the environment and the public health based on a non-sustainable solution that led us especially to the current crisis, and rejecting the demands of the current people's movement demanding a legal and ecological waste management solution,

Considering that the UNDP Environment Program, under the management of Mr. Chehab, resorted almost exclusively to the external expertise of a company that provides studies in line with the wishes of political authorities, which sheds doubt on the relationship with this company and calls for investigation,

Considering that it is unacceptable for any individuals to use their capacity as UNDP staff or UNDP experts to misrepresent or even forge scientific evidence, to cover corruption, to cover the misuse of public money, and to cover illegal measures that have dangerous consequences on public health and the environment, and finally go back to endorsing proposals that are in contradiction with their earlier advice,

We hereby request the following:

1. The conduct of investigations and the adoption of appropriate measures in regards to the involvement of Mr. Edgard Chehab and the UNDP Environment Program in Lebanon, in covering waste management corruption in Lebanon in his capacity as UNDP expert;

2. The clarification of the role of the UNDP in allowing Mr. Edgard Chehab and other UNDP staff to take such liberties in their capacity as UNDP experts without any accountability.


We respectfully await your clarifications and the adoption of the measures you deem appropriate to tend to this matter.

**Appendices:**

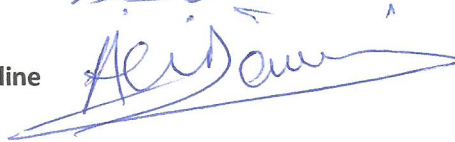
- 1- *Ad hoc* experts committee's statement issued on 13 September 2015.
- 2- Official minutes of the Council of Ministers decision of 1/9/2010.
- 3- Official minutes of the Council of Ministers decision of 9/9/2015.

**Signatories:**

Bassel Abdallah, Lawyer



Dr. Ali Darwish, Greenline



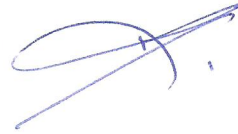
Hanna Gharib, Head of the Independent Syndical Movement



Dr. Naji Kodeih, Environmental expert



Dr. Charbel Nahas, Former minister from 9/11/2009 till 12/2/2012



Nizar Saghiyeh, Lawyer



Yaacoub el Sarraf, Former minister of environment from 19/6/2005 till 11/11/2006

