

## **Members of the International Support Group meet Prime Minister Saad Hariri**

**22 October 2019**

Prime Minister Saad Hariri received today at Grand Serail the members of the International Support Group (ISG). Ambassadors representing France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the European Union, the League of Arab States and the United Nations adopted the following statement:

Prime Minister Hariri informed the Ambassadors about the series of long-overdue measures taken yesterday by the Government, be it as a part of the draft 2020 budget to be adopted within the constitutional deadline or outside the budget.

Prime Minister Hariri reiterated that these and other envisaged measures are just first steps. He credited the consensus in government around them to the men and women that have in the past days protested for their national dignity, restoring national identity and putting it above the sectarian or confessional identity. He reconfirmed that these measures are not meant to ask the protesters to stop the protest, to stop expressing anger, as that is a decision that only they can take. If early parliamentary elections are their demand, it is only their voice to decide. He also confirmed that the Government will not allow anyone to threaten the protesters and that the state has the duty to protect the peaceful expression of legitimate demands.

Members of the International Support Group expressed its support for the reform objectives Prime Minister Hariri has outlined, and the decisions endorsed by the Cabinet, which are in line with aspirations of the Lebanese people. We applaud the democratic expression of the Lebanese people, and their calls for just, socially responsible, and acceptable deep reforms and changes that should substantially reduce corruption and waste and move away from sectarianism, ensure good governance and full accountability, and lead to sustainable development and stability. Their grievances must be addressed.

Members of the International Support Group welcome the largely responsible behavior of the security forces and the Lebanese Armed Forces that notably since Saturday have respected the people's right to peaceful protests. It takes note of Prime Minister Hariri's commitment that the Government and its legitimate security forces will continue providing protection to peaceful demonstrating civilians while taking firm action against possible instigators of violence, in protection of public and private property and institutions and right of people to peacefully express their opinion and demands.

Members of the International Support Group urge the leaders and political actors of Lebanon to hear the voice of the people, to work with them on solutions and their implementation and to refrain from rhetoric and action that could inflame tensions and incite confrontation and violence.

Members of the International Support Group reiterate its strong support for Lebanon and its people, for its territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence.