

UK remains a steadfast partner to Lebanon

Minister of State for the Middle East and International Development Dr Andrew Murrison ended a two-day visit to Lebanon, reiterating the UK's long-term commitment to supporting a strong and prosperous Lebanon and announcing over \$41 million towards Lebanese host communities and refugees alike.

Dr Murrison met with President Michel Aoun, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, MP's and senior business leaders. VIP also visited UK aid funded projects up and down the country supporting Lebanese host communities, with a focus on economy, education, demining, refugees and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

In the Bekaa, Minister Murrison visited an Informal Tented Settlement and saw how tech solutions (Iris scanning) are used to ensure UK aid only goes to those who need it the most to meet their most basic survival needs. He also met Syrian refugee families and heard from them about their living conditions and challenges they face in Lebanon, including how they view the prospect of returning to Syria.

In Tripoli, Minister Murrison met with host communities to see the positive impact UK aid is having on people's lives through the Lebanese Host Communities Support Programme (LHSP) in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNDP. He announced a new \$39 million to LHSP in support of delivering better public services, economic opportunities and promoting social stability to the most vulnerable Lebanese and refugees. He also met with MARCH NGO's youth group in Tripoli who have overcome barriers, transforming from two feuding neighbourhoods to partners working for a better future for their communities.

At the non-formal education centre run by UNICEF, Minister Murrison announced over \$2.5 million of UK aid funding to UNICEF's non-formal education programme. He saw how non formal schooling is delivered to out of school refugee and Lebanese children, and how the UK is working with the international community to ensure a generation of children do not miss out on education.

Continuing his northern visit, Minister Murrison visited the First Land Border Regiment along the Lebanese – Syrian border, which demonstrates the UK's strong support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, Lebanon's sole defenders, to train, mentor and equip the LAF's Land Border Regiments. And securing Lebanon.

Heading South to the village of Toul, he saw how UK aid support to the Global Mine Action programme is making safe over 1.1 million m2 of land, with over 6,500 men, women and children benefitting from mine risk education.

Minister Murrison also met with Syrian analysts to discuss the latest

situation of refugees in Lebanon and Syria.

Speaking at the end of his visit, Minister for the Middle East Andrew Murrison, said:

I am delighted to be on my first official visit to Lebanon as Minister for the Middle East, especially at a time when the UK and Lebanon's bilateral trade relations are growing stronger. The UK remains a steadfast partner of the Government of Lebanon, and supports the need for economic reforms so that Lebanon can fulfil its potential, including through increased trade and investment.

I reiterated the UK's recognition of Lebanon's generosity hosting people fleeing Syria, and got to see how UK aid is supporting both the host communities and refugees.

We have been clear: we want Syrians to return home safely, consistent with international law. The Syrian regime must immediately return to peace talks to end this senseless suffering.