



General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 March 2024

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-fourth session

11 September–13 October 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Next Century Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Finding a Way Forward for Lebanon

Future Governance in Lebanon

We issue this statement in view of the political stalemate and constitutional void facing Lebanon, where key positions in the state have remained vacant since the end of President Michel Aoun's term on October 31, 2022.

This vacuum continues to disrupt appointments to key positions, because of disputes among political parties that hinder the election of a president and the appointment of a new governor for the Central Bank of Lebanon, as well as leaders for security, military, and judicial agencies.

All of this is happening while the country is being ruled by a caretaker government, in an extremely challenging period where citizens are dealing with dire living conditions amid severe financial and economic crises.

Moreover, this vacuum poses a serious threat to Lebanon's security, as ongoing political tensions could lead to the destabilisation of Lebanon.

The Next Century Foundation, therefore, believes it should share the following ideas with the Lebanese general public, the Lebanese political establishment, and those in the international community interested in the fate of Lebanon and its people.

The ongoing crisis that Lebanon experiences every few years reflects the failure of the current system based on Political Sectarianism. The current political system of power-sharing among different sectarian parties hinders any reform process, as it is incapable of evolving and encourages corruption. Lebanon needs to undertake deep reforms in its political, financial, and judicial systems.

The President:

As a first step, it is imperative to elect a new president for Lebanon as soon as possible. Every effort should be made to facilitate this process by overcoming issues unrelated to this election. The members of the Lebanese Parliament should choose a figure committed to achieving reform, in collaboration with a new Prime Minister.

Dialogue:

The priority for reforms should be to encourage dialogue among the different constituents of political life in Lebanon in addition to the different communities in this deeply divided country. This national dialogue should analyze the reasons that lead the country to its multi-faceted crisis and take the necessary lessons from this exercise.

Bicameral Governance: The Next Century Foundation furthermore calls for the implementation of the bicameral system of governance envisioned in the Taif Agreement of 1989, in order to address the confessional deadlock that often paralyzes governance in Lebanon. This requires the creation of a Senate Council (Upper House) comprising all religious sects, with authority limited to critical issues, alongside a House of Parliament (Lower House) elected on a non-sectarian national basis.

We understand that this entails a major restructuring of Lebanon's governance system, which will take time to implement. However, fundamental change in the system is necessary for Lebanon's future.

Banking Restrictions:

The Next Century Foundation also asks for the lifting of the banking restrictions imposed on Lebanon by the United States of America, due to their negative impact on innocent Lebanese citizens, who are no longer able to access necessities like food and medicine. This is no longer just an economic crisis, but a human rights crisis, where the Lebanese are being punished solely for their nationality, left to suffer poverty and need in the face of a failing political system and a struggling economy.

The necessary reforms include reforming the banking system, through auditing all financial transactions of Lebanese banks, as well as those of the Central Bank of Lebanon. Accountability is the cornerstone of the reform process.

To rebuild Lebanon on solid foundations, everyone must be held accountable, which is a fundamental principle of citizenship. Citizenship is not just about belonging; it also entails accountability.

International Support:

We view with appreciation the recent efforts by France in engaging international and regional support from actors such as the United States of America, the Egypt, Qatar, and the Saudi Arabia, in assisting Lebanese political forces to agree on a reform program that starts with the election of a new president. Other countries interested in Lebanon's future could also be encouraged to participate in these efforts.

Yet, the Lebanese people and their consensus remain the fundamental factor in the success of any reform process.

The Next Century Foundation urges the international community to renew its interest in the ongoing Lebanese crisis, support relevant reforms, contribute to aid, and most importantly, stand in solidarity with Lebanon during these difficult times for the Lebanese people.
