Remarks at the Eighth Anniversary of the Cedar Revolution
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Thank you Ms. Rihani, for your kind introduction. Thank you to all the Lebanese-American groups for inviting me to speak this evening on behalf of the Obama Administration on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the Cedar Revolution – which I know some of you call your "Independence Revolution." It is an honor for me to be here with you, alongside so many distinguished Members of Congress, including Chairman Royce and Ranking Member Engel, valued colleagues, guests, and friends. Ambassador Chedid, it is good to be here with you this evening.

I bring greetings of support from Secretary of State Kerry, who reiterated our steadfast support for Lebanon is his statement on March 14.

Ladies and gentlemen, here, we are all friends – friends of Lebanon and of the Lebanese people. And I think I can speak for all of us here, particularly at a time of great challenge for Lebanon as it faces the enormous burden of the Syrian refugees and the detrimental effects of the fighting in Syria. It is more important than ever for America and for the United States Government to stand with Lebanon in defense of its sovereignty, security and independence. We will continue to do just that.

We mark this anniversary at an auspicious moment. Thirty years ago this month, the U.S. Embassy in Beirut was bombed by terrorists. I was the Lebanon desk officer then, and I remember it as if it was yesterday. No doubt Hizballah and other similar groups hoped this horrific act of terror would derail our strong relationship with the Lebanese people, and undermine our work with them for the stability and sovereignty of Lebanon. The United States' abiding relationship with Lebanon is evidence of the persistent failure of those who would see us apart instead of together, divided instead of united, despondent instead of defiant, principled and proud.

The day former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated was one of great sadness and tragedy. But, even as they mourned, the Lebanese people showed the world their resolve and fortitude. The Lebanon of 2005 foreshadowed a principle of the Arab Awakening six years later—that the dignity of the people cannot be denied. It was dignity that compelled hundreds of thousands of people from all confessions and all walks of life to pour into the streets on March 14, 2005. The Lebanese people demanded, peacefully, an end to political assassinations, an end to outside military occupation and an end to the full-scale theft perpetrated by the Asad regime and its local cohorts in crime against the people of Lebanon. All of us here tonight are only too well aware that political assassinations and attempted assassinations in Lebanon have not

stopped, but I am confident that this scourge will be ended and that those responsible will be brought to justice.

We thank the Lebanese people for standing up as they did eight years ago, and for their efforts since then. You showed the power of people to stand up to tyranny and you served as an example to the region. Today, it is the Syrian people who reject the Asad regime's campaigns of killing, degradation, and torture. Today, the opposition recognizes the threat al-Qaida and al-Qaida-linked extremists pose to their revolution, a revolution that otherwise stands for dignity and respect for human rights. They have been clear that foreign extremist ideology is incompatible with the democratic and inclusive vision for Syria for which many brave Syrians are fighting and dying.

The exponential surge in refugees arriving in Lebanon is the clearest sign of the dire situation in Syria. These refugees now make up over ten percent of the population of Lebanon. We applaud the enormous generosity of Lebanon and people who are hosting this growing influx. We count on all of Syria's neighbors to continue keep their borders open, as Lebanon does, so that those fleeing the conflict can find safety. We call on all countries to fulfill their commitments to the UN's Syria appeals and to consider what more they can do, as the UN prepares to launch a new appeal next month. The United States is providing over $409 million in humanitarian assistance to meet health, water, sanitation, and hygiene needs throughout the region, as well as food aid that will include enough wheat to provide a four-month supply of flour to over a million people. We have provided over $50 million for Lebanon in this effort and I can assure you that we will be providing additional funding soon.

The Cedar Revolution's aspiration for Lebanon to be a stable, sovereign, and independent state continues. To be free of Asad's manipulation, free of Iranian interference, free of the grip of any who would take away what the Cedar Revolution forged, must be a lasting endeavor. We stand with the legacy of the Cedar Revolution that you created; we stand with you. We support Lebanon's policy of disassociation with respect to the Syrian conflict and oppose Hizballah's support for the Asad regime's brutality against its own people.

U.S. security assistance to Lebanon is a critical component of the United States' efforts to promote Lebanon's stability, sovereignty and independence, and we appreciate the strong support of the U.S. Congress for these efforts. We want to bolster the Lebanese Armed Forces' capacity to maintain stability along the Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel, andto conduct actions against extremist and criminal organizations including al-Qaida affiliates. We are helping the LAF increase its capabilities to protect all its borders. In the past year, the LAF also has prevented lethal clashes in Tripoli and entered Beirut's Hizballah-controlled southern suburbs in September to arrest a number of kidnappers. We are continuing our programs to enhance Lebanon's Internal Security Forces capabilities to exert sovereign authority throughout Lebanese territory and to carry out the "serve and protect" mission of a police force for Lebanon's diverse population. Both the LAF and ISF are trusted U.S. partners and major contributors to stability in the region. Continuing our strong relationship with them is in the interests of the United States as well as Lebanon.

I know that Lebanon is enduring an uncertain political situation. Let me say, that there is no greater or more visible symbol of an open society than an election held in a timely manner and in accordance with legal and constitutional principles. I am confident your next election will validate the democratic principles that Lebanon has fought so hard to achieve. I believe that the results will reflect the aspirations of a diverse Lebanon, one that strengthens its stability, sovereignty and independence, while still meeting its international obligations.

As we celebrate the Cedar Revolution together, we must also remember those who were lost or wounded in the struggle, and celebrate the unity of Lebanon's diverse society. Tonight is an occasion to acknowledge all that Lebanon has accomplished and to recommit ourselves to all we can do to help the Lebanese people overcome the serious challenges they face and build a better future.

Thank you.