The Delegation of
the European Union
in Lebanon: the
challenge of
reconstruction.

The introduction of Ms Veronique Ruggerillo outlined the function of the delegation in Lebanon and the action taken during the 33 days of war in July and August 2006. The main function is to put the Euro-Med partnership into operation along with the neighborhood policy (a plan of action for reform leading to integration in the internal market and a certain political participation). This policy implies a reciprocal engagement based on common values: the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, market economy and sustainable development.

During the 33 days of war, the delegation became La Maison de l’Europe in Lebanon. They opened a bureau for ECHO (the European Commission’s department for humanitarian aid), created a team mobilized by MICA (a monitoring information center) to answer urgent requests. The latter succeeded in bringing in the material and expertise to clean out four strategic locations hit by the oil spill. The delegation also helped coordinate donor members of the EU and informed the officials and delegations coming from Europe who visited during the crisis.

Cyprien Fabre, one of the directors of the ECHO bureau explained its functions in this crisis. ECHO comes to the aid of victims of natural disasters and armed conflict through collaboration with the UN, NGOs, the Red Cross, etc. and is funded by union members. In Lebanon it was in operation by July 20 with funds amounting to 20 million Euros. Operations consisted of distributing basic necessities (food and water) and now, clearing out the cluster bombs scattered in Israeli attacks. Supplemental funds of 30 million Euros have been given for aid; there can be no reconstruction as long as the cluster bombs still pose a threat.

Joseph Piazza D’Olmo, head of the program for local development and administrative reform cited three statements that sum up the problem of reconstruction: 1. not everything can be rebuilt; 2. reconstruction is not neutral and 3 the invisible is more difficult to rebuild than the visible. There are ravages of war that require long term healing. Also the influx of aid can disrupt the economic and social tissue of the country. The invisible touches on the indirect effects of the crisis that are difficult to evaluate. The lack of tourism during the crucial summer months has widespread repercussions. For the visible, precise evaluations and coordination are key to avoiding waste. The presentations were followed by discussion.