



UN Staff run in Beirut marathon for International Year of Youth

Around 40 staff members from the UN family in Lebanon gathered in Beirut on 7 November 2010 under a clear blue sky to join thousands of runners in the Beirut International Marathon, one of the biggest events in the Lebanese sporting calendar. Lebanon's prime Minister Saad Hariri kicked off the race and, together with senior Lebanese officials, ran with the large crowd.



This year, UN staff participated in the marathon to promote the **International Year of Youth 2010-2011**, which commenced on 16 August under the theme: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding.

The **United Nations Information Center in Lebanon** (UNIC Beirut) partnered with the Beirut Marathon Association in October to promote the International Year of Youth as part of the Center's efforts to highlight youth contributions to development, promote mutual understanding, and underline the benefits and significance of active youth participation in all aspects of society, including sports.

Staff from various agencies, including ESCWA, UNIC, ILO, UNSCOL, UNHCR and UNIFIL, wore custom-made T-shirts and caps with the UN emblem and the logo of the International Year of Youth and ran in the 10 km race of the Marathon, mostly along the Mediterranean shore of the Lebanese capital.

UNIC Beirut Director Bahaa Elkoussy, who took part in the race, told Lebanese TV station Tele Liban that the UN's participation in this popular event was also meant to emphasize the important role that sports have historically played in all societies and that the world organization is actively promoting sports as an agent of development and a driving force for good health and well-being. He commended the spirit of dedication among UN Marathon runners and urged more UN staff to participate in next year's race to promote UN messages and priorities.



UNIC Beirut's partnership with the Beirut Marathon Association also involved the launch of a special program for youth called "Youth Elite Athlete Program" (YEAP) on 23 October. The Marathon Association implemented the program along with UNIC and UNIFIL as part of activities to promote the International Year of Youth. YEAP entailed one-day races for youth in various Lebanese regions with the aim of selecting top runners and supporting Lebanon's participation in the Olympic Games.