

Press Release

**Fransabank & Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce:
Successful Cooperation for China's Exposure from Lebanon
to the Middle East and North Africa Region**

Under the patronage of H.E. President of the Council of Ministers in Lebanon Mr. Saad Al Hariri, Messrs. Adnan and Adel Kassar, Fransabank Group Chairman and Vice Chairman, organized a joint conference with the Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce on the 6th of April, 2017 in Adnan Kassar Edifice for Arab Economy, Jnah in the presence of Mr. Nael Kabariti, Chairman of the General Union of Arab Chambers, Mr. Lu Jianzhong, Chairman of the Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce, Mr. Jemal Inaishvili, Honorary Chairman SRCIC and President of the Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The conference was also attended by representatives of Chinese and Lebanese public and private sector entities and the Lebanese and Chinese media.

Kassar expressed that holding this conference in Lebanon consolidates its strategic role on the visionary one belt one road strategy launched by his Excellency Chinese president Xi Jinping, assuring of his "unwavering support to this strategy which shall transform our modern economic world."

Kassar stated: "We, at Fransabank Group, a leading Banking and Finance Group present in 12 countries, and the first Arab bank with a China Desk dedicated to serving the business, trade, cultural, tourism ties with China, are delighted to host, with the Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce, this important conference."

Kassar invited the Chinese investors and businessmen to Lebanon "to benefit from Lebanon's strategic location given china's ongoing and anticipated role in the reconstruction of Syria and Iraq. Chinese companies will benefit from partnerships with Lebanese companies, and Lebanon has much to offer in terms of friendly regulations, free transfer of funds and movement, a talented multilingual population and a beautiful country that we are happy to claim as the safest in our region today," extending his thanks to the Lebanese security apparatus and army.

Kassar mentioned also the cooperation to promote Lebanon's tourism to China and to work together to prompt joint the launching of commercial, industrial and trade hubs in Lebanon. "We are thankful for accepting our invitation to launch, from Lebanon, your expansion to the Arab world."

Kassar concluded: "We hope to see a new chapter of China Lebanon relations based on a principle we learned many decades ago in China - the mutual benefit principle.

Later, an Award Signing Ceremony took place in which HE Mr. Adnan Kassar received an *Award certificate as an Honorary Chairman of Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce* which has been established to promote business and cultural cooperation amongst the Silk Road countries, supported by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade -CCPIT and the International Chamber of Commerce -ICC.

In his turn, HE Mr. Saad Al Hariri gave a speech in which he highlighted the strategic importance of launching The Silk Road Project in Lebanon. He said: "Lebanon has always been a crossroad between East and West in culture, civilization, religion, and trade," adding that relations between Lebanon and China have developed through the years, with the continuous growth of transport and communications." "Our predecessors established the Silk Road because they realized its economic and social importance, and today this importance has become more vivid with the aim to enhance economic growth and combat poverty and unemployment," he said. Hariri continued: "This importance becomes immeasurable when we take into consideration the convergence of civilizations, cultures and religions. In other words, it is the only way to fight racism and maintain global stability and peace. "

Hariri thanked the joint efforts of the private and public sectors in Lebanon and China for the success of this project, stressing that Lebanon is a model of coexistence, dialogue and hope.

Mr. Lu Jianzhong mentioned in his address that "Lebanon has an increased importance in the construction of the new Silk Road. My delegation comes to Lebanon to introduce our cooperative mechanism and platforms established by SRCIC members for Silk Road countries and commercial chambers, including www.eSilkRoad and Silk Road International Development Fund."

The conference witnessed also three award signing ceremonies and four Round Tables confirming Lebanon on the **One Belt One Road** map, and strengthening its position as a major hub for China's exposure to the Middle East and North Africa region in business, trade, finance, infrastructure, culture and tourism.

The signing ceremonies went as follows:

- Signature of Lebanese Federation of Chambers with Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce
- Signature of General Union of Arab Chambers with Silk Road Chamber of International Commerce
- Signature of Beirut Municipal Council with UN Continental Maritime Silk Road Cities Alliances

Afterwards, four Round Tables were held to shed light on means and ways of advancing joint cooperation, moderated by Fransabank Group:

- "Infrastructure and investment projects cooperation"
- "Banking and Finance Collaboration to Support One Belt & One Road Strategy"
- "Tourism, Education and Cultural Exchanges Partnerships"
- "Reciprocal Trade and Joint Ventures in Exports"

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For Further Information, Kindly Contact:
Corporate Communications & Advertising Department | Tel: 01-340180 ext. 1817 - 1875
Fax: 01-344251 | Email: marketing@fransabank.com | Website : www.fransabank.com