



## **A NEW VISION FOR THE REPUBLIC**

Tracy Chamoun's speech for the 2022 presidential elections

*August 29, 2020, Beirut - Lebanon.*

### **My fellow Lebanese women and men**

I come to you today because Lebanon is at a critical crossroads. I do not need to remind you of the series of misfortunes that have befallen us during the past years, because of internal strife and narrow political agendas. We have all been the victims of political decisions that worsened our problems and failed to provide solutions to the current crisis in the country.

Experience proved that the lack of positive interaction between the President of the Republic and the two presidents of Parliament and the Council of Ministers, only led to obstruction and opened the door to political delays that we paid for economically and socially, and which prevented us from carrying out many reforms and any new development projects.

Consensus does not imply relinquishing powers and rights, rather, it lies in finding constructive common ground, wherein, to lay out a promising future. We can only rebuild the country by adhering to our highest principles and by restoring the values of honesty, tolerance, and mutual respect as guidelines for interactions and dialogue between us. We must stop looking for mistakes in others and deferring blame.

The role of the President of the Republic is to embody these values and to ensure the peaceful coexistence among all the country's constituents.

After the criminal and bloody explosion that occurs at the port of Beirut on August 4th, 2020, I submitted my resignation from my position as the ambassador of Lebanon to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, refusing to be a silent witness. The truth must be exposed, and those responsible for this crime against humanity must be held accountable, and the Judiciary needs to be shielded from political interference.

This tragedy brought me back in solidarity with the victims and their families, with my people, and with Lebanon. I chose to place my fate alongside my compatriots, and this coincided with the worst and deepest economic collapse that we have witnessed.

Therefore, it is out of my passion for Lebanon and the Lebanese people, without any discrimination, including children, the young and the old, from every region in Lebanon, bearing a political legacy characterized by openness to all confessions, love for the homeland and martyrdom, that I come humbly, to dedicate myself to your service and to the service of Lebanon, and to announce, to the people and to the 128 parliamentary representatives of the nation, my candidacy to the upcoming Lebanese presidential elections.



Why am I running? Because it is a noble mission that I will want to share with the various political forces, notwithstanding their contradictions and divisions. I will start by searching for common ground and points of convergence that we can build on, with the aim of shielding Lebanon from external conflicts and the Lebanese people from sterile internal quarrels.

Why am I running? I will say it frankly, if it is God's will, that I will be a President for all Lebanese, and will not accept that any Lebanese feel wronged because of their sectarian affiliation, and their rights must not be targeted but protected by the Constitution and the Conventions.

Why am I running? Because I have a new vision for the Republic; a vision capable of providing solutions to the economic, social, and political problems that burden the country.

This new vision for the Republic will require that several steps be taken in full cooperation with the next Government and will include the improvement of Lebanon's relationship with the Arab countries, and especially with the Gulf states.

Lebanon cannot be ruled by anyone! Lebanon is governed by the Lebanese through its constitutional institutions, through a democratically elected parliament with a fair electoral law, with an army and security forces, as the only guarantors of stability and national security, and, with an independent, honest, and effective judiciary that guarantees people fair trials by Judges, whose autonomy must be unchallenged and who must not be subject to any interference by any party in their work, to avoid political favoritism and sectarian pressures.

Today, Lebanon is witnessing both political and economic confusion. The roadmap for a solution must start with political stability, leading to a prosperous sustainable economy. Here, it must be emphasized that Lebanon cannot exist without defending its sovereignty and independence nor without developing a clearly defined "Strategy for Defense". These cannot empty words, but rather it is a necessity. Just as Lebanon cannot be ruled by one party, the declaration of war and peace, must be confined to official institutions. Furthermore, this matter needs to be dealt with rationally and not with defiance, nor bullying, nor especially, by betting on external factors.

In the political sphere, the issue of the displaced Syrians needs to be addressed as a priority. Neglecting this matter has resulted in a negative impact on our economy. In light of the very severe financial deterioration that Lebanon is experiencing today, the presence of the displaced Syrians has become a burden on the Lebanese, and a solution must be found to ensure their safe and timely return to their country, and this will be one of my priorities.



As for the Palestinian refugees living on Lebanese territory, while we need to preserve their right to return to their homeland, but we also need to find sustainable humanitarian solutions to their situation, as the matter has not been addressed for decades, and this has left a negative impact on them and on Lebanon's safety. In addition, the presence of armed militants in the Palestinian camps which are Lebanese territory, needs to be addressed along with the unhindered access of our security forces to all these areas.

### **My fellow Lebanese women and men**

From the first moment of the formation of the Government, a major priority will be to restore confidence in Lebanon's economy for the sake of all Lebanese and for the countries that wish to help Lebanon to overcome its multiple crises.

My aim is to build a productive economy by virtue of its agriculture, industry, and services through a knowledge-based economy, and this will contribute to improving the purchasing power in proportion to the country's overall productivity.

All of this will require the recovery of public finances, which will begin with stopping waste and halting corruption before any new unjust taxes or fees are imposed.

The fiscal balance between revenues and expenditures is a necessary condition to reduce inflation, which I consider to be a burden for Lebanese living on a fixed income.

We will need to focus on reviving the public sector, starting with the ministries, and extending to all state institutions. With this aim, we will need to approve an updated national budget, because without a budget one cannot run a country efficiently and productively.

I will advocate that the budget be constructed over three years with a view of developing projects and devising long term strategies that can be re-evaluated when needed. This will allow for a more scientific approach to the adoption of a wages compensation program, that will take into consideration the needs of public sectors workers and put an end to the dilapidation of their purchasing power, along with the implementation of the required reforms in this sector.

The modernization of the economy requires an efficient and developed electrical network, and for this we must provide oversight and accountability by completing the appointment of officials to the National Regulatory Authority of the Electricity Sector, and once and for all, we must shield this file from the political bazaar, so that, it can be dealt with technically and with the help of friendly countries, provide comprehensive and integrated solutions with the possible involvement of the private sector.



Also moving forward in the field of energy, the management of «water» as a natural resource is essential. Therefore, I will call for the establishment of an independent Ministry of Water to manage this vital resource and undertake the construction of environmentally safe dams, which will prioritize the protection of the environment to restore nature to its former beauty and cleanliness.

As for the problem of waste management, this will be treated through the implementation of a national strategy of recycling from the source and will include productive ways to convert waste to energy, to preserve the environment and ensure public health and safety.

Also, among the priorities of the next stage is the completion of the demarcation of our land and maritime borders, to allow for the exploration of oil and gas as the advancement of the Lebanese economy depends upon this. We must become self-sufficient in the oil and gas sector by progressing at a rapid pace.

Therefore, the next government will be asked to expedite the legal and logistical measures to proceed with the extraction from the remaining blocks located within the non-disputed areas, internationally. But most importantly, as the world moves away from fossil fuels, we need to shift steadily and increasingly towards developing alternative clean energy solutions, with the objective of reaching the target of 50% in sustainable energy production by 2030.

For the Lebanese economy to stop resembling a “leaky boat”, any action, no matter how great will remain incomplete without the implementation of practical steps that include accountability and transparency and the carrying out of the required reforms, such as activating the Anti-Corruption Commission, especially for the public sector.

In this context, I will seek to launch a digital government that will be an essential tool in the battle against clientelism and corruption in the public sector. This feature will promote good governance and will enable citizens equal access to information and services in an easy, transparent, and cost-effective manner.

I will also strive to promote a balanced cultural, social, and economic development of the different regions as stipulated in the preamble to the Constitution, with the objective of implementing the most appropriate decentralization project. This will allow for the growth of local economies based on the respective characteristics and needs of each district.

On a societal level, efforts must be focused on finding thoughtful solutions to provide justice for depositors, as well as a social safety, especially for the elderly, the sick, and children, and we must search for ways to compensate retirees for their losses caused by the recent financial collapse.



We must maintain the quality of our education in Lebanon. This was a source of pride for us. We must limit its deterioration and shoulder the responsibility of developing and maintaining our advanced standards of education so that Lebanon may once again become a beacon of learning in the Middle East.

Another sector that has been greatly affected by the economic collapse is the healthcare sector, which has recently lost a very large number of competent professionals including doctors and nurses who can no longer afford to live in Lebanon.

I believe that if we follow the program of revitalizing every sector, this will restore confidence in this country, and we will attract many professionals back to Lebanon to continue providing the best healthcare and hospital services that we excelled in, in the past.

As for tourism, Lebanon's eternal asset, we will work on launching plans to develop this sector and its services so that Lebanon can once again welcome back tourists from every country in an atmosphere of security and stability.

### **My fellow Lebanese women and men,**

If the honorable Parliament bestows upon me its confidence, I will be the first Arab woman to reach this position, and Lebanon, as we have entrusted it and as we would like it to be, will be a pioneer and a forerunner in promoting the presence of women in political life, as a function of their experience, competence and will. This is also something to which I will dedicate myself.

I will strive to restore our confidence in our country especially when it comes to our youth, so that emigration will no longer be a dream for many, but rather they will be able to find opportunities in their homeland, realize their aspirations here and return to their families' fold.

I am putting myself in the service of Lebanon, with your participation I will not spare any effort or forfeit any endeavor to service this new vision for the republic which is the summary of your dreams, your visions, and your proposals.

### **Dear compatriots,**

It was seventy years ago exactly, that my grandfather Camille Chamoun was elected President of the Republic, and his mandate witnessed such prosperity that even after seven decades we reminisce upon the institutions and projects that were established during his time with mercy as, many today, have become disrupted or paralyzed.



Seventy years later, I am not speaking from a standpoint of heredity, but rather from the rooted belief, generation after generation, in this country, which cradles the remains of my grandfather and grandmother, and for which my father Danny and my two brothers perished as martyrs, and where my father insisted to live, die, and be buried.

I aspire today, and many people share this feeling with me, to get out from under this state of poverty and move into a state of affluence. Is this task impossible? Not at all. Is this task difficult? Certainly! However, my will is strong, my determination is great and my hope springs eternal.

I wish to thank everyone who will support me in this election, not out of ambition for a position but as a shared message of love for Lebanon and for the mission to save it.

I thank everyone who will help me, and everyone who has stood by me and will be standing by me, and I also thank all those present today including friends, the press, and the media, in the hope that all the Lebanese will stand side by side together to chant with one voice and one heart: **Long live Lebanon!**

**May God bless Lebanon and its people, long life, and long live Lebanon.**