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## Editorial of Mr. Walid Yasmine

Chairman of WAYS



*Dear readers,*

It's no coincidence that Lebanon and Italy enjoy a privileged relationship.

The relationship between our two countries dates back hundreds of years, with our two peoples building cultural and geographic bridges that have spanned centuries.

Lebanon and Italy, two Mediterranean countries, lie along the same shining sea that served as a cradle for various cultures and civilizations.

Our ancestors, the Phoenicians, invented the alphabet, a tool for communication and understanding that they shared with the rest of humanity when they sailed the high seas and landed on faraway shores. Their invention revolutionized society, but so did the Phoenician customs and traditions that they disseminated across the Eastern Mediterranean.

Similarly, Roman civilization and a sprawling Roman Empire left a tremendous legacy in Lebanon: archeological sites that to this day remain major attractions for those yearning to learn more about history, culture and civilization.

Lebanon is proud to have, in its southern city of Tyre, ruins that represent the largest hippodrome ever built outside of Rome. Italy, much like Lebanon, is also a welcoming land, full of hospitality for visitors and expatriates.

The Emir Fakhreddine was welcomed in Florence and treated to a warm reception by the great dukes of Medici during his sojourns in Pisa, Messina, Rome and Palermo. The Emir Fakhreddine was so enchanted by his Italian journey that he brought back with him Florentine architects who created the traditional Lebanese red-tiled roofed home with two arcades (typical of Florentine architecture) and

three arcades (typical of Venetian architecture). Upon the Emir's request, Italian agricultural engineers also came to Beirut to create the city's first experimental botanical garden, at the very same spot where Martyr's Square currently stands.

Italy, the great arm of Europe that extends into the Mediterranean, asks Lebanon, gateway to the Middle East, to continue to serve as the link between East and West and as a model of coexistence between its 18 religious communities. Lebanon's message of peace - in spite of the country's many internal upheavals - should continue to radiate across the region and serve as an example to the entire Middle East.

We wish to maintain and develop this exchange at various levels and in many sectors between Lebanon and Italy, and we will continue to sway to the beat of the Mediterranean, that blue sea that's been a source of all our wealth and riches since antiquity.