



## Official visit of EP President Hans-Gert Pöttering to Syria and Lebanon

**The President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, will pay an official visit to Lebanon and Syria from 6 to 12 August 2008.**

Before leaving for his visit, Hans-Gert Pöttering, who is President as well of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA- Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean), said:

"I wish that this visit will reaffirm the political commitment of the European Parliament to peace in the Middle East and to the realisation of a comprehensive peace agreement, involving all the countries of the region. The European Union is a reliable partner and can play a role as a facilitator. The current re-launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, most notably with the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean in Paris mid-July, is to be seen as a window of opportunity in that respect."

### Lebanon

In Beirut (6-9 August), the President of the European Parliament will meet the President of the Republic, Michel Suleiman, the President of the National Assembly, Nabih Berry, the Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faouzi Saloukh and several other Ministers, and parliamentary representatives of the majority and the opposition. President Pöttering will also meet the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir as well as representatives of the Lebanese civil society.

It is furthermore planned to visit Southern Lebanon to meet the UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) troops on the ground.

### Syria

In Damascus (9-12 August) President Pöttering will hold political talks with the President of the Republic, Dr Bashar Hafez Al Assad, with the Vice-President, Mr Farouk Al Sharaa, with the Vice Prime Minister, Mr Abdallah Dardari, and with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Walid Muhi Eddine Moallem. He will visit the Syrian People's Assembly, where he will meet parliamentarians and the Speaker, Dr Mahmood Aref Al Abrash.

After paying a visit to Maaloula, Hans-Gert Pöttering will also meet the Grand Mufti of Syria, Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun together with other religious dignitaries.

This visit to the Middle East is the second one of President Pöttering to the region. In May 2007 Hans-Gert Pöttering visited Israel, the Palestinian Territories and Jordan.

After this visit Hans-Gert Pöttering will travel to Latvia from 19 - 21 August 2008.

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