

## **Ministerial meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon**

**Paris, 8 December 2017**

**- Joint Statement -**

A meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG), chaired by the United Nations and France and attended by the Prime Minister of Lebanon, was held in Paris on 8 December. China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the World Bank also took part in the meeting.

The participants reaffirm their commitment to the stability, security and sovereignty of Lebanon and their support for the ongoing efforts of the Lebanese authorities to restore normal functioning of institutions and prepare the holding of legislative elections by May 2018 and in accordance with international standards. The Group recalls the need to protect Lebanon from the crises that are destabilizing the Middle East and calls upon all regional States and organisations to work for the political, social, economic, and financial stability and security of Lebanon, in full respect of its sovereignty and integrity.

The Group expresses satisfaction for the return to Beirut of Prime Minister Saad Hariri, a key partner for safeguarding the unity and the stability of Lebanon. It welcomes his decision, made in agreement with the President of the Lebanese Republic, Michel Aoun, to continue his term at the head of the Government. The Group notes the resumption of the Council of Ministers on 5 December 2017 and its decision on disassociation from any regional conflicts and wars and from internal affairs of Arab countries. It will pay close attention to the implementation of the Council's decision by all Lebanese parties in the spirit of national concord and compromise. In particular, it calls upon all Lebanese parties to implement this tangible policy of disassociation from and non interference in external conflicts, as an important priority, as spelled out in previous declarations, in particular the 2012 Baabda Declaration.

The Group reiterates the need for full implementation and full respect of all UN Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). It commends the role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in maintaining calm along the Blue Line and its cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) with the aim of extending and consolidating the authority of the Lebanese State across the whole of the national territory. It expresses its deep concern at all violations in connection with resolution 1701 (2006) in particular the incidents detailed in the reports of the Secretary General to the Council on the implementation of resolution 1701. It calls upon the LAF and UNIFIL to step up their cooperation, with the goal of speeding up the effective and durable deployment of the LAF in southern Lebanon and the territorial waters of Lebanon, in accordance with resolution 2373 (2017), and encourages the LAF to continue the initial steps it has taken in this regard.

Given the security challenges faced by Lebanon, particularly the terrorist threat, and recalling the importance of implementing the previous commitments that require there will be no weapons

other than that of the Lebanese State, the Group calls on all Lebanese parties to resume discussions towards a consensus on a National Defense Strategy and welcomes the President of the Lebanese Republic's statement in this regard. The Group commends the role played by the LAF and by all State security institutions in protecting the country, its borders and its population. It recalls that the LAF are the only legitimate armed forces of Lebanon, as enshrined in the Lebanese constitution and in the Taif agreement. The Group calls upon the international community to continue, coordinate and step up its support to these institutions, which are crucial to cement Lebanon's sovereignty and unity. In this context and in order to support Lebanese efforts in this endeavour, the Group welcomes the holding of the "Rome II" meeting to be hosted by Italy.

The Group commends the generous efforts made by the Lebanese people and the Lebanese authorities to host Syrian refugees. It recalls the importance, when conditions allow, of a safe, dignified and non-coercive UN-facilitated return of refugees, in accordance with international law and humanitarian principles, including the principle of non-refoulement. It calls upon the international community to increase its support for Lebanese host communities and refugees in Lebanon, and looks forward, to this end, to the holding of the "Supporting the future of Syria and the region" Conference, at the invitation of the European Union.

The Group calls upon the government of Lebanon, and in liaison with all Lebanese institutions and parties, to further accelerate its programme of reforms in order to enable all Lebanon's institutions, economic players and citizens to ensure political and economic stability built on a functional, transparent and democratic State. In the light of the difficulties faced by the Lebanese economy, and in particular the economic consequences of the Syrian crisis, the Group calls upon private sector players and all regional and international actors to support Lebanon. It welcomes the holding of an international investors conference in support of the Lebanese Government's reforms and investment plan aimed at jumpstarting growth, creating job opportunities and renovating infrastructures. It calls upon private and public players to contribute to these efforts. The group commends the important role played by the Lebanese Central Bank in maintaining financial stability in the country.

The Group welcomes the prospect of future meetings with different configurations and levels as needed, and reaffirms its commitment to support all efforts to overcome pressing challenges.