



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly
Statement Following Meeting with Christian Patriarchs of the East**

Bkerke, Lebanon

Wednesday, 27 August 2014

I would like to thank Patriarch El-Rai for inviting me and my colleagues to Bkerke to meet with him and the other Christian Patriarchs of the East. The Patriarchs shared with us their concerns about recent developments, particularly relating to Christian communities in Iraq and in the region. I myself and I believe my colleagues too were moved by what we heard and all of us emphasized in our different ways the importance of the Christian presence in the Middle East. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has repeatedly condemned the persecution of Christians and other minorities by ISIL in Iraq. Security Council members have spoken very clearly on the subject on 5 and 7 August and last week they unanimously adopted resolution 2170 which targets ISIL and other groups responsible for such atrocities. Security Council members have also called on the international community to do all it can to alleviate the suffering of the populations affected and the United Nations is now undertaking a massive relief operation in Iraq in addition to the assistance it is providing elsewhere in the region. The Patriarchs had other suggestions as well. This is not just a humanitarian issue and I know that I and my colleagues will all be reporting very carefully what they had to say.

I would also like to take this opportunity to underline, and it is relevant to this, just how important to all of us the coexistence and unity Lebanon presently enjoys is, and its importance for the rest of

the region, especially at this time. It will not surprise you to know in this context that we also briefly discussed the issue of the presidency and the presidential elections. We were here with His Beatitude some time ago and agreed that a prolonged vacuum in the presidency would be a matter of grave concern. That was two months ago since we met here. The urgency of this issue should I think be really obvious to everybody.

Thank you very much.
