

**UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly**  
**Transcript of Press Stakeout after Security Council Briefing on resolution 1701**  
**UNHQ, New York**

Wednesday, 09 July 2014

Good morning. Thank you for your patience. I just briefed with Assistant Secretary-General (Edmond) Mullet Council members in informal consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701 over the past four months on the basis of the Secretary-General's report.

There are two focuses really, one is what is going on or what has or has not happened across the Blue Line in the south, and the other is on the issues which pertain to the security and stability of Lebanon as a whole. And both of those really are concerns under resolution 1701 which speaks to the totality of these issues although of course the situation has evolved in ways which could not have been predicted when the resolution was adopted.

An additional text for what we were doing and discussing was the presidential statement which was adopted precisely one year ago, or almost precisely on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July last year, which spoke very clearly and at great length about the Council support for Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, for the policy of dissociation from the Syrian crisis, and called for coordinated international support for Lebanon in the face of all these growing threats. I had to say that I came away from the Council with the sense that they are as united as they were then in the policy and approach with regard to Lebanon at this difficult line.

Firstly with regard to the Blue Line, over the past four months we have seen continuation of the calm essentially which prevails and which is particularly important if you think about the turmoil elsewhere in the region which is peaking just at this moment of course. There was one serious sequence of events, incidents on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. We discussed that as a matter of serious concern. As has happened in the past, UNIFIL was very active in responding, the liaison mechanisms worked well to contain and to avoid escalation. I take this opportunity actually to pay tribute not just to UNIFIL but to its outgoing commander Paolo Serra who has done an amazing job I think over the past two years and a half, more importantly Security Council members made the same point.

Otherwise, within Lebanon the security threats are very real. Pressures on the border still, there are still incidents around Aarsal and so on with bombing by Syrian aircraft taking place on several occasions during the reporting period, fighters just in the area between Syria and Lebanon. And of course we have seen a return after three months of relative calm across the country of what looks like a terrorist threat again. We saw that in the five days from 20 to 25 June.

But what I think came out of this also and out of the discussion and is clear is the determination of the Lebanese authorities, the Lebanese government, and the present Prime Minister Tamam Salam, and the security forces to prioritize this issue, and the strength of consensus across the political spectrum in support of them on this and we have seen real successes both in terms of bringing greater calm to Tripoli in particular which had seen 20 outbreaks of fighting in the previous six years, now the barricades are gone, and secondly successes on the part of the security forces in

addressing the terrorist threats that did emerge in that period in June. And of course the threat is still there and support for the security forces is a great priority in my office and in UNIFIL in the present moment. I was able to report real progress in terms of support particularly for the army, culminating in the meeting that was held in Rome last month.

There was discussion in the room about the refugees as well, where the figures now stand at 1.1 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Appreciation as you would expect for the Lebanese response to this. Concern on my part I have to say are that the programs to support both refugees and host-communities are underfunded, severely underfunded at this point in the year with all that means for potential suffering or loss of services for refugees and support for host-communities in the period ahead and advocacy for such assistance will be a priority for me and my office in the coming weeks and months.

Finally, I would just like to say that that is our the agenda, but equally it is very important and it was clear in the discussion in the informal meeting a moment ago that that is the view of all Council members too, that all of the institutions of government function effectively in Lebanon, Presidency, the Government, the Parliament. Of course we face in the present moment a vacancy in the presidency that's been going on for 46 days. The Security Council adopted a presidential statement on the subject on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May and the message is the same, essentially the urgency of this matter. That came very clearly from all Council members. It is important given the threats, the challenges that Lebanon faces that the institutions of government are all working. In the present situation of course all support for Prime Minister Salam but it's equally very important that Lebanon's leaders come together in order to agree on the election of a new president as soon as possible.

Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Have you detected any spillover from the situation in Gaza to Lebanon? Any noise in there about that?

**SCL DEREK PLUMBLY:** Not yet, I mean obviously this is something that must be watched. UNIFIL have to be alert to whatever the possibilities might be, but not at this moment.

**QUESTION:** Has the large influx refugees affected UNIFIL, and if so how? And security as a whole?

**SCL DEREK PLUMBLY:** It is an issue in UNIFIL's area of operation. I saw refugees myself in Shebaa only a few weeks ago. I can't say that immediately it's a security concern. All that it is a security concern across Lebanon. But there are tensions there, inevitably between host communities, many of them poor, and refugees, and this is one of many reasons really why we need to ensure effective burden sharing, and to ensure that both the refugees and the host-communities are strongly supported, which was one of my concerns when I went to Shebaa, I have to say.

**QUESTION:** What happened on this Maritime zone issue, and natural gas, has there been any developments either way? And also overflights by Israel, have there been more or less? How would you characterize?

**SCL DEREK PLUMBLY:** I would characterize it as an ongoing intensity really of overflights as a matter of concern and a violation. It was mentioned along with others in most of the presentations in the Council discussions and it was clearly highlighted in the Secretary General's report. I think that if the maritime issue, which affects a part of the economic exploitation zone between the two countries could be resolved it would make a really really significant contribution to broader understanding and calm and of course facilitate, as the secretary general's report says, economic development, but I cannot report to you or to your colleagues here progress at this point. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Going back to refugees, Lebanon has the largest Syrian refugee population, and it keeps growing enormously. Did the Security Council at all discuss the implications of this for destabilizing the country? And is this something that you yourself are concerned about and watching?

**SCL DEREK PLUMBLY:** I am concerned about the need, the availability of support for the refugees. I am concerned about the prospect over time, if the issue isn't effectively addressed and refugees are not able to go back in safety to their home that must be the case. This is a very large presence, indeed it is the highest per capital presence of refugees proportionately anywhere in the world. But I have to say that refugees are spread across the country, communities across the country. I spoke about already the possibility of tensions inevitably because of the economic friction. But I think what's remarkable about the story really actually if you dig deep into it is that there has been so little so far and that people have accorded a welcome to the refugees. And I think that Lebanon deserves every credit for that frankly. But it is becoming, looking, increasingly like a medium term issue. We hope it won't be, but it is and we need to have arrangements which recognize the interest and needs of both the hosts and the refugees to ensure that both benefit and are kept safe from the programs we have and that is our immediate focus on this thing. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** I want to ask about the role that Hizbullah is playing in Syria? How is that impacting the stability and the resolution 1701 in Lebanon? And do you believe that Tamam Salam cabinet is capable to do anything on that?

**SCL DEREK PLUMBLY:** Well the government has adopted a policy, the policy of disassociation and we believe that that is the right policy, and we believe that people from outside should not be fighting in Syria and the Secretary-General's report addresses very directly the point that you made about Hizbullah. But I think I would also add that whatever the impact of that, and clearly it has brought and brings pressures, additional pressures onto Lebanon, it is important at the present moment that across the political spectrum in Lebanon you do have consensus about the need to address the threats that presently exist inside Lebanon and the consensus on that point is being key basically I think to the successes of the security forces to date and it is important that that be sustained as well, and that is another priority I know for the Tamam Salam government and we support that. Thank you.