

Ministerial Meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon

UN Headquarters, 30 September 2015

– Chairman Summary –

A ministerial-level meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon was chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon on 30 September 2015 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In addition to Lebanon, participants invited to the meeting were: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany, Italy, the European Union, and the League of Arab States.

Participants recalled the 10 July 2013 and 19 March 2015 Presidential Statements of the Security Council (S/PRST/2013/9 and S/PRST/2015/7), the Chairperson's Summary issued after the 25 September 2013 inaugural meeting of the International Support Group (SG/2198) and subsequent statements of the Group. They noted that the United Nations' commitment to stability in Lebanon lies at the heart of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and other relevant resolutions, and further recalled the continuing importance for Lebanon's stability and security of the commitment by all Lebanese parties to the Baabda Declaration and Lebanon's policy of disassociation from the conflict in Syria.

The Group expressed deep concern over the 16-month vacancy in the Presidency of the Republic which seriously impairs Lebanon's ability to address the security, economic, social and humanitarian challenges facing the country. They commended Prime Minister Salam's leadership in this challenging context, while noting their concern over the growing political polarization in recent months and the increasing difficulties of Government and Parliament to take key decisions. These conditions impede the ability of the State to respond to the legitimate needs of Lebanese citizens, and calls by civil society for greater accountability, transparency and effectiveness in Government. The Group expressed concern that the status quo undermines the stability of Lebanon and limits the amount and impact of international support to the country. The Group welcomed the initiatives recently launched to support dialogue between the parties and to lead to the election of a President, and reaffirmed their determination to continue support to such efforts. The Group called on all Lebanese leaders to adhere to Lebanon's Constitution and to the Taef Agreement and National Pact, to put Lebanon's stability and national interests ahead of partisan politics and act responsibly and with leadership and flexibility to urgently convene a parliamentary session and proceed to the election of a President.

The Group took note of the complex set of security challenges facing Lebanon resulting from the impact of the Syrian conflict, including the threat of extremist and terrorist groups. Its members highlighted the ever more critical role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces [LAF] and security forces in working to address threats, including through the deployment of new, better-equipped regiments along the Lebanon/Syria border and counter-terrorism operations, in extending and sustaining the authority of the State. They commended the role played by the LAF in working with UNIFIL to help maintain calm along the Blue Line in implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). They warmly welcomed international assistance already being provided to strengthen the LAF in line with its five-year capabilities-development plan and were encouraged that significant

tangible support had materialized, particularly with regard to strengthening Lebanon's border management capacities and military training activities. They underscored a strong international commitment to help Lebanese state institutions defend Lebanon's borders and safeguard its people. Underlining Lebanon's outstanding and long-term security requirements, they urged Member States in a position to do so to offer additional assistance where the LAF and the security forces are most critically in need on an expedited and coordinated basis. Recognizing the increased terrorist threat to Lebanese civilians, the Group reiterated the need for a comprehensive counter-terrorism response, including via further international support to Lebanese security services.

The Group expressed strong, united support for Lebanese co-existence, and underlined their commitment to take all possible steps to assist the country. They acknowledged the extraordinary effort Lebanon continues to undertake in hosting 1.1 million registered refugees from Syria, more refugees in proportion to its national population than any other country. They reiterated their concern at the severe challenges for Lebanese communities and key public institutions and services in Lebanon, including health, education, infrastructure and employment. The Group encouraged expedited assistance for refugees and Lebanese vulnerable communities, as well as greater burden-sharing by the international community, noting the importance of such steps for the common security interests of all stakeholders. They welcomed efforts already undertaken by Member States in this regard and called for their enhancement. They underlined their intention to hold future meetings on promoting greater international assistance to Lebanon in relation to the refugee situation and socio-economic stabilization initiatives.

The Group stressed, however, that if strong international support is to contribute effectively to sustained stability, it must be paralleled by determined action by Lebanon's leaders to resolve the political stalemate through the election of a president without further delay, to restore a fully functioning government, and to respond to citizens' needs through the provision of effective state services. The Group welcomed the prospect of future meetings with different configurations and levels as needed, and reaffirmed its commitment to support to all efforts to overcome pressing challenges.