



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Statement Following Meeting with Foreign Minister Ali Shami
Beirut, Lebanon**

Friday, 09 July 2010

Good Morning, Bonjour,

I just had an excellent meeting with Foreign Minister, Ali Shami. We discussed the latest developments in Lebanon and the region, but particularly those related to Security Council Resolution 1701.

I briefed the Minister that I will be leaving tomorrow for New York and the Security Council will discuss the latest report of the Secretary-General next Wednesday, 14 July.

I raised with Minister Shami the recent incidents in south Lebanon involving UNIFIL. We all hope that the situation has now calmed down and that there will be no recurrence of such incidents. I also take this opportunity to welcome the announcement made by the Council of Ministers yesterday evening that it is reinforcing the presence of the LAF in south Lebanon. The Minister briefed me about this and I believe this is a very important element in moving forward with the implementation of 1701.

In my meeting with Minister Ali Shami, I stressed that UNIFIL's presence in south Lebanon had been a cornerstone of 1701 and of the stability that has prevailed in the region in the last four years. UNIFIL's freedom of movement is a critical element for it to discharge its mandate and it must be fully respected. This means, as Gen. Asarta and I stressed yesterday in our meeting with Prime Minister Hariri and as I also said in my meeting with Defense Minister Elias Murr the day before, coordination and information sharing, though not necessarily that activities can only be carried out jointly.

I think we all agree that the excellent cooperation between UNIFIL and the LAF has been the backbone of the stability that has prevailed in the south, and we must do all we can to maintain and to enhance it.

Thank you very much

QUESTION: The Security Council will be meeting tonight to discuss what happened in south Lebanon. What do you think of the press release that will come out of that meeting?

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: I don't know because that meeting has not taken place obviously but there was a lot of concern. I think the Government and Ministers, the Prime Minister himself realized this. So I think the Security Council will reflect on the events of last week but obviously they will be informed by the decisions of the Council of Ministers here in Beirut and I think this will certainly assist the Council in its discussions.

QUESTION: (inaudible)

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: I think the statement of the Council of Ministers and its decision is very definitely a positive development.

QUESTION: Do you think that the events in the south are going to affect the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate?

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: I certainly hope not and of course the renewal of the UNIFIL mandate is some way off, it's not until the end of August, so it's another six or seven weeks. But I think it is very important that there be no recurrence of events such as happened last week and it is important that UNIFIL maintain its freedom of movement.

Thank you very much.
