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**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Statement Following Meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid El-Muallem
Damascus, Syria**

Monday, 11 January 2009

IF ASKED

Good morning,

I just had a very positive meeting with H.E. Mr. Walid El-Muallem, the Foreign Minister of Syria.

My talks with the Foreign Minister touched on recent regional developments that have very important bearing on Lebanon and Syria. Despite continued challenges in the region, most notably the paralyzed peace process, there have been some extremely significant developments regarding regional reconciliation. I expressed to the Foreign Minister the UN's strong belief that reconciliation among regional parties is very important.

We also discussed issues that are directly related to resolution 1701, including the question of the Shab'a Farms. Mr. Muallem reiterated Syria's position that the Farms are Lebanese.

The Foreign Minister and I agreed to continue our close consultation over the coming period.

Thank you very much.
