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Office of the
Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du
Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**UN Special Coordination for Lebanon Michael Williams
Security Council consultations on resolution 1701**

UNHQ, Friday 12 March 2009

Good afternoon,

As you know, I just briefed the Security Council on the twelfth report on the implementation of Resolution 1701. I would like to say a few words on the implementation of that resolution.

At the outset of my briefing, I welcomed Lebanon's membership for a two-year term at the Security Council, which started on 1 January 2010. Ambassador Nawaf Salam, who ably represents Lebanon on the Council, and I had the chance to speak earlier this week, and I wish Ambassador Salam, and Lebanon, continued success for the remainder of Lebanon's term on the Council.

On the ground, the situation between Lebanon and Israel during the reporting period has remained by and large calm. It is one of the key achievements of the resolution that, since its adoption, the situation between the parties across the Blue Line has been at its calmest for decades, and this has been to the benefit of the people of both sides of the Blue Line.

My briefing today focused on the recent rise in rhetoric and public threats between Israel and Lebanon and in the wider region, which have generated concerns of a renewed confrontation. This rhetoric and brinkmanship contravenes the very spirit of resolution 1701 and is utterly unhelpful. I told the Council that during my private meetings with Israeli and Lebanese officials, and in contrast to some of their public pronouncements, both sides continue to express their commitment to the cessation of hostilities and the implementation of 1701. I believe that it is these private statements, rather than the public rhetoric, that convey their true intentions, and I have called and still call on *all* relevant parties to desist from inflammatory statements.

Although the cessation of hostilities has held well, key aspects of resolution 1701 remain to be implemented, and this renders the situation fragile. The parties need to make progress on their respective obligations and move towards a permanent ceasefire, as called for by the resolution.

I expressed to the Council our serious concern regarding continued violations of Lebanese air space by Israel, which have continued unabated and which must stop immediately. These violations raise tensions and may trigger an incident that, I remain convinced, the parties do not want.

Israel has also still to withdraw from the northern part of the village of Ghajar. Despite the continuing negotiations between Israel and the United Nations, an agreement has been elusive. We hope this withdrawal will take place as soon as possible.

The Government of Lebanon, for its part, must pursue its efforts to address one of the main concerns under resolution 1701, namely potential violations of the arms embargo across its borders. In response to the recommendations of LIBAT in these two LIBAT reports, Lebanon has started taking measures to improve the management of its borders. I welcome Prime Minister Saad Hariri's commitment to develop a comprehensive border strategy for Lebanon and the recent appointment of a Minister, Mr. Jean Ogassapian, who will oversee this process. This commitment is in line with UN recommendations and with the requirements of donors. I also welcome the efforts already deployed on the ground, notably along the northern part of the border. The United Nations hopes that the improvement in the relationship between Lebanon and Syria in the recent period will also contribute to an effective management of the border.

Another key concern remains the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon, so that there be no weapons outside the control of the State. The United Nations reiterates its position that this issue should be tackled through a Lebanese-led political process. In this context, we welcome the resumption of the National Dialogue, under the chairmanship of Lebanese President Sleiman, which met on Tuesday this week. We will follow this process very closely and hope that clear mechanisms, benchmarks and timelines will be established, so that progress can be assessed.

Finally, let me underscore in closing that the people of the region and above all the people of both Lebanon and Israel want peace and stability in their lives. The implementation of Resolution 1701 can guarantee this stability for Lebanon, Israel and the region and we encourage the parties to continue working towards its full implementation.

Thank you