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pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Op-Ed on the Occasion of the Third Anniversary of Resolution 1701
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No Miracles - But a Clear Path Towards Stability

Three years ago this week, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1701, which ended 33 days of warfare between Israel and Lebanon. The resolution not only brought a cessation of violence that halted the bloodshed, destruction and suffering, but has in fact since ushered in the longest period of stability along the Lebanese-Israeli border in a quarter of a century. It has also helped Lebanon take important measures to reassert its sovereignty and authority throughout its territory, such as the unprecedented deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the south of the country.

Lebanon is rightly proud of this achievement, and of the excellent cooperation that continues to characterise the joint efforts of the LAF and UNIFIL. There have been other important areas of progress. The Blue Line is being demarcated visibly on the ground, and Lebanon has begun work to impose tighter control along its borders. In March this year, following repeated requests from the United Nations, Israel handed over the strike data for the cluster munitions it dropped over Lebanon at the end of the 2006 war. This will help avoid further casualties among the civilian population of south Lebanon. And last year, an exchange of prisoners and remains was completed between Hizbullah and Israel.

These are all significant measures of progress. But the overall objectives of resolution 1701 – a permanent ceasefire and lasting solution – are yet to be achieved. The situation in the south and along the Blue Line remains, though largely calm and stable, fragile. Israeli overflights continue, and the northern part of Ghajar remains under occupation. There has been limited progress towards resolving the issue of the Sheb'a Farms area. A number of recent incidents, including the explosion in an arms cache in Khirbet Silim last month and subsequent reactions, were a stark reminder of how quickly and dangerously the situation in the South and along the Blue Line can deteriorate.

The incidents demonstrated that respect for Resolution 1701 is the only guarantee for long-term security and stability for both countries. The marks of destruction remain all too visible. The people of Lebanon, who are seeking to live a dignified life in their homes and on their land, want peace. In Israel, residents feel insecure that renewed violence would shake up their lives again. They also want to live in peace and dignity. For the sake of the affected populations, we must not tire in our effort to fully implement resolution 1701 and work towards the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region.

Both Lebanon and Israel have assured the United Nations that they remain committed to Resolution 1701. In my regular meetings with Lebanese authorities and different political leaders, I have received pledges of commitment to its full implementation. I have received similar pledges during my frequent consultations with Israeli officials. This fills me with hope that we can achieve our goal.

Much has been accomplished, but more needs to be done. After a long history of violence and mistrust, both sides have fears and want assurances. This is understandable, but it cannot justify the selective implementation of Resolution 1701. Israel must end its over-flights and terminate its occupation of northern Ghajar and adjacent areas. We must also find a solution for the Sheb'a Farms. Meanwhile, Lebanese leaders must accelerate their efforts to control their borders and make tangible progress on the question of a national defence strategy and disarmament of armed groups.

Addressing these issues will help ensure continued stability for Lebanon and northern Israel. Resolution 1701 may not create miracles, but it does chart a clear path towards lasting stability and security for all concerned in the area. What is needed is the good will and efforts of Lebanon, Israel and their neighbours. The United Nations stands ready to work with them towards our shared goal of stability, security, and lasting peace.

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