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**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
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Statement After Meeting with Mayor of Zahleh, Assaad Zougheib

Let me say how happy I am to be here in the city of Zahleh. It is a real pleasure to visit, for the first time, and I want to thank you so much for your hospitality and for your welcome on what I hope will be the first of several visits. We really appreciate it.

You live in one of the most beautiful parts of Lebanon and Zahleh is the central city in the Bekaa Valley. I visited in the past several months ago a number of other important cities of Lebanon. I've been to Sidon, Tripoli, also to the south including Marjayoun, Bint Jbeil. Now, I come here to Zahleh and after the meeting with you and your colleagues, I have a much better understanding of the city and the challenges you and your people face here.

I come three weeks before the national elections on June 7 and I wish the people of Zahleh well in the important choices that they have to make in the coming weeks and I am very confident, knowing this, that they will vote in a way which reflects their needs and protects their values and which will contribute to a better outcome, I hope, for the people and city of Zahleh.

Thank you very much.

Statement After Meeting MP Nkula Fattoush

Let me say I am delighted to be here in Zahleh. We just had a very good meeting with MP Nkula Fattoush and we are very pleased also that his brother Pierre Fattoush could join our discussions.

This is a very important visit to me. Zahleh is the centre of the Bekaa Valley and an important centre for the Christians, not only in Lebanon but also I think in the wider Middle East.

We will watch the elections on June 7 very closely and in particular the results here in Zahleh. We think that it is very important that all Lebanese vote on June 7. Voting is a protection for Zahleh and for Lebanon itself.

I thank you very much indeed.

Statement After Meeting Minister of Agriculture, Elie Skaff

I just wanted to say a few words to say how pleased and delighted I am to be here in Zahleh. It is my first visit to the city and I'm impressed at the vitality of the city and how beautiful it is.

We just had a very good meeting with Minister Elie Skaff. We had a long discussion about the city and also about the prospects for the coming elections, which are only three weeks away now. And I wish Minister Skaff all the best in the elections. I hope that all candidates will approach these elections in a thoroughly professional way, in a very honest and transparent way, and try to avoid raising the political temperature. That is always difficult in an elections because an election, by definition, is a period of intense politics but it is important that those politics are conducted in as professional and as tempered a manner as possible.

Minister we will be watching you and your fellow candidates here in Zahleh, whether they are March 8 or March 14 or independent or whatever, very closely because this is an important constituency, it is an important district. You are in many ways a microcosm of Lebanon. We are conscious of your traditions, we know of your history, an independent Republic here even before the State of Lebanon and we are conscious too of the public service that your family has made over many generations and we think this important.

We look for good results and a good future for the people, not just of Zahleh, but of Lebanon as a whole. So Minister we thank you once again for receiving us today and for allowing us to meet with your colleagues and for your generosity and hospitality.

Thank you very much.

Statement After Meeting with Candidate for Zahleh, Magda Breidi

Firstly, let me say how delighted I am to visit Zahleh today. We've had a long day, meeting the Mayor, meeting the existing deputies and the many candidates for the forthcoming elections on June 7.

This has been a very important visit for me. Zahleh is a very important city in Lebanon. We are conscious that in many ways, Zahleh is a microcosm of Lebanon. And we wish the people of Lebanon and the people of Zahleh in particular all the very best in the elections in June 7 and in the months following.

It is very important for me, representing the United Nations, to end my day in Zahleh here in your house Magda. If I may, I salute your efforts as a candidate. There are two great blocs in Lebanon: March 8 and March 14 with many personalities, much to contribute. Not many independent candidates and worst of all, not many women candidates.

Lebanon is a wonderful country. It was a founding member of the United Nations in 1945. We have one regret about Lebanon that there are not enough women in politics. My humble view is that Lebanon will be a much better place if there were more women in parliament. And therefore, we will follow the candidacy of Magda Breidi very closely.

We wish you luck. We wish all the candidates luck but for sure I think Lebanon would be a better place with more women in parliament. So we wish you all the very best.
