

**Special Coordinator Michael Williams**  
**Statement After Meeting with President Michel Suleiman**  
**Baabda Palace, Lebanon**  
Wednesday, 15 October 2008

I am pleased to be here in Lebanon, to be back. I have been for many years a visitor to this country either acting as a UN envoy or acting in my national capacity as a British envoy. Now I have come to stay for 12 months, to begin with, as the representative of the Secretary-General and as Special Coordinator for the United Nations in Lebanon.

I have just met with President Suleiman. We had a very good meeting. We discussed several issues, the process of national dialogue and reconciliation in Lebanon itself, the efforts that the President has been making regionally and internationally, tireless efforts, to position Lebanon again regionally and in the world. I meet with him in between his visits to Saudi Arabia and his visit to Canada for the important meeting of the Francophonie.

We also discussed the question of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon. We are very pleased to hear about the announcement yesterday of the decree by President Assad of Syria and the visit today of Minister Salloukh to Damas. And I met also yesterday with Minister Salloukh yesterday before his departure and he briefed me on this very important and significant development which has been called for, as you know, by UN resolutions for some time. I think this is a very important moment for bilateral relations between the two countries, Lebanon and Syria, but it is also a very important moment regionally.

I also want to say that one of my priorities in the coming months will be to advance the progress of the Resolution 1701. Tomorrow [Friday], I will be visiting UNIFIL, southern Lebanon and meeting with Gen. Graziano and his officers and touring the area, including the village of Ghajar. The UN Security Council, the Secretary-General want to see progress on 1701 and this is a priority for all of us in the coming months and I am confident that we can achieve progress.

Thank you