



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Statement Following Meeting with Minister of Social Affairs
Mr. Salim Sayegh
Beirut, Lebanon**

Thursday, 16 December 2010

I just had an excellent meeting with H.E. the Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Salim Sayegh. I am very grateful to him that he could receive me today. We discussed many issues, first of all the work of his ministry, the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is such an important department in this Government, in Lebanon, but also in any country. And they do very important work on some of the most vulnerable sections of the community, for example the disabled and those wounded by cluster bombs and mines.

We also talked about the political situation in country, some of the recent tensions. We reviewed some of the issues at the heart of this. It is obvious that these tensions affect the Government. I hope not too much because my personal belief is that the people of Lebanon want to advance on many fronts and tackle the problems that they face in their every day lives. That requires cooperation and dialogue between ministers and ministries, even when there are tensions. So I hope that the work that Minister Sayegh is doing can perhaps be an example to some of the other ministries on how to move forward, even in difficult circumstances.

We also touched on the question of the Security Council Resolution 1701 and the Minister asked me where things stood with regard to the village of Ghajar. I briefed him on the situation there and the possibility that the Israelis will withdraw from the Lebanese part of the village, will withdraw their soldiers, in the coming weeks. We hope that this will become a certainty. But of course even if this happens, there is still much more to be done and it does not mean that Israel will have finally met its obligations under Resolution 1701.

So once again, I am very grateful for the Minister for being so generous with his time today.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Some parties in Lebanon will refuse the indictment when it is issue. How will your react?

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: this is an issue not for me to decide. That's an issue for the Tribunal. And of course, even though you can never be satisfied, let's see what the parties do when...

QUESTION: Some of them said that they are refusing totally this decision?

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: In Politics, like the rest of life, nothing is permanent.

QUESTION: What are the procedures that the UN will take to protect itself facing the indictment of the STL?

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: The STL is independent from the UN and I think the UN independent from the Tribunal. I think that is known and respected by all parties in Lebanon. As is well known, in my work I speak with representatives of all political parties without exception. So I don't believe there are issues with the UN itself.

QUESTION: I am reporter from Voice of Lebanon Radio. On the occasion of the holidays, what do you want to say to the Lebanese via this radio.

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: First of all to wish all Lebanese of all faiths very best wishes for the coming holidays and the new year 2011. I hope that Lebanon, despite the problems and tensions, and you have vast experience in problems and tensions, that you – that you can overcome these as you have done in the past and try and move forward and tackle some of the real social and economic problems of the disabled, of environment, of energy and water. These are the things in mind that politics should be about.
