



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 Foreign Minister Ali Shami
Beirut, Lebanon**

Tuesday, 19 January 2009

Good morning,

I just had a very good meeting, my first meeting, with the Foreign Minister, H.E. Ali Shami. It was an opportunity to review the general situation in Lebanon and in the region and to discuss the rich cooperation between Lebanon and the United Nations in many fields.

I informed the Minister that the United Nations is very encouraged by Lebanon's political progress since the formation of a new government. We discussed today some of Lebanon's priorities in terms of political, social and economic development and I relayed to the Minister the readiness of the United Nations, through its many offices in Lebanon, to assist wherever necessary.

We also discussed today with the minister the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701. The Minister expressed his concerns about the daily Israeli air violations of Lebanese airspace but also the need for a complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. These are violations of Resolution 1701 and the United Nations continues to call on Israel to halt these violations in the strongest terms. Furthermore, the United Nations would like to see all sides concerned exert more efforts to ensure the full implementation of Resolution 1701 in 2010.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Do you believe Israel will withdraw soon from Ghajar?

SCL Michael Williams: Thank you for raising that question. As you know, the Israelis have been in illegal occupation of the northern part of the village of Ghajar ever since the war of 2006. It is very very clear from the Resolution 1701 that they should withdraw. That withdrawal is now more than three years overdue. We intend to redouble our efforts to try and seek their withdrawal as quickly as possible from Ghajar.

QUESTION: Israel has repeatedly promised it would withdraw but so far it did not do anything?

SCL Michael Williams: Exactly but we must see this implemented as quickly as possible. If it is implemented, my view is that that would allow then for far greater progress on all the other issues within 1701 but we must have withdrawal from Ghajar.

QUESTION: Other issues like what?

SCL Michael Williams: Many issues, you know the resolution I hope, such as the air violations.

QUESTION: Issues such as the arms of Hizbullah?

SCL Michael Williams: All these issues that are very clearly there, such as the question of arms, the air violations, the question also of the Shebaa Farms.

QUESTION: What about the Shebaa Farms?

SCL Michael Williams: This is why Ghajar is so important.

Question: Did you discuss with minister Shami some of the political priorities for the government. What did those include?

SCL Michael Williams: The minister said that he felt very confident about Lebanon's future because of the formation of a new government, because of a better regional atmosphere. He told me about his very important visit, for example, to Turkey last week and the promises and commitments that the Turkish Government has made towards Lebanon. He also emphasized, which we strongly support, as well as moving forward on 1701, Lebanon also must look at its internal problems and the need for development throughout the country. So it's a strong programme and one which we at the UN will do our very best to support.

QUESTION: Did you discuss the visit of US Envoy George Mitchell to Lebanon tonight?

SCL Michael Williams: Not in any detail.

Thank you very much.
