



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Statement During Meeting with Akkar Members of Parliament and Local Authorities
in Kobeyat
Kobeyat, Akkar, North Lebanon**

Tuesday, 18 May 2010

Let me say what a real pleasure it is for myself and for my colleagues to be here today in this wonderful region and this particular area of great beauty.

It is very important for me as the representative of the Secretary General and as the head of the United Nations in Lebanon to have a conception and a view of Lebanon, which is not confined to Beirut. So from time to time we have gone out to visit some of your other cities: Tripoli, Saida, Tyre, to Nabatieh, to Zahleh and so on. But this is our first visit to Akkar and I very much hope that you will invite us again when the weather is even better. The weather today reminds me of my home country. This is like England in Summer. So I feel a little at home even with the weather.

You have a unique region and you have your own problems, social, economic. I need to have a better understanding of those problems to see what it is that the United Nations can do to assist the Government with regard to this region. But I think that more needs to be done. That is why I want to hear the mayor's view, hear your views as Members of Parliament because that would be very important in informing me and framing my judgments and views for the weeks and months to come of my work here in Lebanon.

I have been struck already in some of my meetings today -- for example my first meeting with the Mufti and then later with the Bishop, the Orthodox Bishop -- how here in Akkar you already seem to be a model for the wider Lebanon because I sense a real coexistence between the peoples of the two great faiths, Islam and Christianity here and also a sense that when there have been problems in the past elsewhere in Lebanon, you have managed to remain relatively immune from those problems. I think that is a great strength.

I also know that this morning when we met with the mayor in Halba and with the Qaemaqam, the office was very very busy because you are preparing for municipal elections here on May 30. Frankly that was a real pleasure to see. On Thursday this week I will chair a meeting in Beirut of Ambassadors and the Minister of the Interior Ziad Baroud will come and now I will feel much better informed of what the elections are like here at a local region level. I am very sure that here, as elsewhere in Lebanon, they will be a great success.

Once again, thank you very much for hosting me and my colleagues today. It is a real pleasure. We hope to come back in the not too distant future.

Shoukran.
