

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**Office of the
Special Coordinator
for Lebanon**

**Bureau du
Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban**

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Statement After Meeting with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri
Ain El-Tineh, Lebanon
Friday, 20 March 2009**

Thank you very much. I just wanted to say a few words on my meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Nabih Berri. We had very a good discussion on the general situation in Lebanon and the developments in the broader region.

One of the issues we discussed was the question of electoral reforms. I congratulated Speaker Berri on the adoption by the Lebanese Parliament yesterday of a bill that lowers the voting age in Lebanon from the age of 21 to the age of 18. This is very important and falls in line with what is practiced in most democracies around the world and I think it will encourage greater participation of the youth of Lebanon in the political process. This is a very significant development which I warmly welcomed.

I also spoke with Speaker Berri about the UN's strong support for the National Dialogue and for the commitment in the National Dialogue to the promotion of a non-violent environment during the election period. This will contribute to ensuring that the elections are held in a free, fair, transparent and democratic manner.

I will meet shortly with Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and we will also discuss these issues with him. Earlier this morning I had a very good meeting with the Minister of Labor Mohammad Fneish and yesterday with Dr. Samir Geagea and earlier this week with Saad Hariri and with Walid Jumblat.

Last week, as you may know, I was in New York for discussions with the Security Council on the situation in Lebanon and in particularly on the implementation of Resolution 1701. We also briefed the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who expressed great satisfaction with the process of the National Dialogue here.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Is there something new about the borders between Lebanon and Syria?

MICHAEL WILLIAMS: Nothing new at the moment. We are very pleased by the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria. I think this is very very helpful. We were very pleased and congratulate the Lebanese people and Government on the official opening of their embassy in Damascus a few days ago. And I know that between the armies of the two countries, Lebanon and Syria, there is now greater cooperation on border issues. We would like to see further progress and I hope very much that this will take place in the next two months.

Thank you.