



Office of the Special Coordinator  
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial  
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael C Williams  
Statement Following Security Council Session on Resolution 1701**

Thursday, 21 July 2011  
UNHQ, New York

Thank you very much and it's very good to be back here in New York and to see quite a number of familiar faces, it's good to see. This morning, as you know, I presented the report on 1701 to the Security Council. I think this was the ninth report I presented in my capacity as Special Coordinator for Lebanon, and earlier when I was Special Advisor on the Middle East for Mr. Kofi Annan, I presented at least two if not three reports. So there is a lot of ground there.

I started today by reflecting on the fact that last week, July 12, was the fifth anniversary of the war in 2006. A war which, as you know, brought many casualties on both sides, but especially on the Lebanese side, but which led to the establishment of Security Council resolution 1701. Now remarkably, despite tensions and despite some incidents, that resolution has held very well. And it has held very well when you compare it with what happened between Israel and Lebanon in the previous 20 to 30 years. The former Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert often reflected in conversation: look this is the quietest it has been for us since, going back to the 1980's, and even earlier. And, this fact was brought out in a number of newspaper reports. There was a lead article in Haaretz, one of the, as you know, the main Israeli newspapers, and also an article in The Daily Star in Lebanon, both of which found a lot of commonality, the quiet and the stability on the Blue Line, and a recognition that both sides had made a contribution towards that.

But there was also the recognition that while the cessation of hostilities has held well, there has been little or no movement towards a cease fire. In recent months, that's become even more difficult because of course there was a prolonged period, about six months, when there was no government in Lebanon. Now we have a government, a government that was approved by Parliament, led by Prime Minister Mikati and approved by parliament on July 7.

I welcome the commitment of Prime Minister Mikati to 1701 and to all resolutions, Security Council resolutions that apply to Lebanon. I also welcome some concrete acts that he's already engaged in in the first days of office, including the first ever visit by a Lebanese Prime Minister to UNIFIL and to its headquarters in Naqoura and I accompanied him on that visit last Saturday.

I think it's imperative in the coming period that the Lebanese government, but also Israel, try and move forward on some of the issues that have proven thorny in 1701. One is the question of this remarkable Middle East eccentricity, this village of Ghajar, with half in Israel and half in Lebanon and the people of Syrian Alawite stock. I hope we can move forward to the position we did have in 2000, when the Israelis did withdraw militarily from that village. This would be an important first step. Of course it would not lead to immediate assertion of Lebanese authority and sovereignty, but we do envisage a separate process, where the United Nations would mediate and hold talks between Israel and Lebanon on a final solution, which would include the people of that village.

I think it is also important within Lebanon to look again at the question of arms. In this respect, we have strongly supported President Sleiman, who was anxious to reconvene the National Dialogue. Now I know that many in the March 14 political movement have hesitations and reservations about that, but I trust that in the coming weeks a way can be found round their objections. I do believe that it is very important, the national dialogue is the Lebanese process, and the Secretary General has always been insistent that it should be a Lebanese process that addresses the question of arms, and here we are not talking, of course, just about the arms of Hizbullah, but also about the arms of others, some of the Palestinian groups, the PFLP-General Command and the Fatah El-Intifada. Indeed, in that respect, decisions were taken some time ago, in 2006, by the dialogue that these armed groups should be disarmed. So I hope that can go forward.

There is, I think, a need for both parties, Lebanon and Israel, to recommit to 1701 against a background, which frankly may be more difficult in the coming months. If not difficult, certainly challenging. I am thinking in particular of the absence of a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, what might happen here, in this very building in New York in September, in Palestine. That should not be seen as simply a diplomatic game as it were. What happens either way will have, I suspect, an immense impact on the ground, not just in Palestine, but in the wider Arab region.

Of course the other issue that we are all very more conscious of, particularly in Lebanon but again in the wider region, is the profound political crisis in Syria, and the impact this has on Lebanon. We already see some consequences. As you know, there have been some refugees. Several thousands that entered in the north about four or five weeks ago. Some of those have returned to Syria, some have remained. But the consequences of what unfolds in Syria in the coming weeks and months, and I think that's the sort of period we are talking about, will have extraordinary influence above all for Lebanon, but not just for Lebanon. Just looking at the map, you can see the pivotal role that Syria plays for Lebanon, for Iraq, for Israel and perhaps for Jordan. We all hope that this will evolve in a positive manner, and in a way which will certainly reinforce and not retract from regional stability. We need that if we want to see progress on so many issues and I think above all those that I tried to address in the context of 1701.

Thank you very much.

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