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**Office of the
Special Coordinator
for Lebanon**

**Bureau du
Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban**

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Visit to South Lebanon (Marjayoun and Hasbaya)
Friday, 24 April 2009**

Statement After Meeting Mayor of Marjayoun

I am very pleased to be here in Marjayoun. Shortly I will also visit Hasbaya. It is a great pleasure to be here, to meet with the Mayor Wissam Hayek and his colleagues.

We had a very good discussion this morning. I am delighted to hear that there is such a good relationship between the people of the region and the United Nations, and in particular UNIFIL. I will report that to General Graziano.

This is not my first visit to the south. A few weeks ago, we visited Tyre and Bint Jbeil and talked with the Mayor then the MPs from that area.

The Mayor, Wissam Hayek, has been very generous in inviting me to return in the future to Marjayoun and we look forward to accepting the invitation.

We discussed this morning some of the economic problems in the region, some of the social problems and some of the political issues. We are conscious, for example, that one of the tragedies that affects southern Lebanon, including Marjayoun and Hasbaya, is the question of landmines and even worse, the danger of cluster bombs. We know there was a tragedy with a little boy only a few weeks ago and we are doing our best, in conjunction with the Lebanese authorities to tackle this issue so that this scourge is removed from the countryside.

I am confident that we can work together on some of these problems and difficulties in the coming months and years. There is great goodwill here I feel towards the United Nations and for that we are very very grateful and we will return to Marjayoun.

QUESTION: What about Ghajar?

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: About Ghajar, you know there have been talks with the former Israeli Government and earlier this week General Graziano paid a visit to Israel on

Tuesday, I believe, and this was to discuss the technical issues. I want to go back to Israel in the coming weeks, accompanied by General Graziano to move to a final solution of this issue, a solution which must mean an Israeli withdrawal from Ghajar.

QUESTION: What about the elections?

SCL MICHAEL WILLIAMS: I am looking forward to the elections. I think this is a very important opportunity for Lebanon to renew itself. June 7 will be a very important date in your political calendar. The United Nations is following the elections very closely. I discussed it yesterday with Prime Minister Siniora and with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. I will be meeting with other leaders in coming days including with Saad Hariri, General Aoun and Walid Jumblat. We are looking forward to these elections. I am confident that they will be conducted in a free and fair manner and I trust without any tensions or violence.

Statement After Meeting with MP Anwar Khalil in Hasbaya

Let me just say a few words of thanks to my host and my friend Anwar Khalil, the MP of Hasbaya. It is a great privilege and pleasure for me to visit Hasbaya for the first time and to be received here at the home of the MP Anwar Khalil.

This morning I also visited Marjayoun and now I am very pleased to visit Hasbaya. I thank MP Anwar Khalil for bringing together so many Mayors and officials from Hasbaya. I was also deeply privileged earlier to visit the most holy shrine of the Druze community, 'Khilwat El-Bayada'. That left a deep impression with me. It was a particular privilege.

The people of Lebanon and particularly the people of south Lebanon had many problems and difficulties to deal with. We have ourselves shed tears, indeed shed blood. As you know, some United Nations peacekeepers have been killed, for example in clearing mines and also at least one terrorist attack on our Spanish colleagues within UNIFIL. But we are not daunted by those losses nor by the challenges ahead.

H.E. Anwar Khalil referred to many of those challenges. For example the issue of cluster bombs and we were sad that only ten days ago a child of this district suffered a most grievous injury.

General Graziano, the Force Commander of UNIFIL, will accompany me in visiting Israel in the coming weeks to address two issues in particular: the question of the village of Ghajar, currently occupied by the Israeli army and also the question of the cluster bombs and the date maps that we believe the Israeli army has and which we have requested from them.

I hope that we can make real progress in addressing these issues. There are other issues in 1701 that we are very conscious of. Anwar Khalil spoke earlier about the question of the

Shebaa Farms. On this issue and the rest of the issues, we will have to work tirelessly for the comprehensive completion of the work on 1701.

I hope to return to Hasbaya. It is once again a privilege and pleasure to be with you here and your colleagues.
