

UNITED NATIONS



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**Office of the
Special Coordinator
for Lebanon**

**Bureau du
Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban**

**UN Special Coordinator Michael Williams
Statement on UN Day**

Beirut, 24 October 2008 -- following is the statement of UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams on the occasion of UN Day:

H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Shamseddine, Minister of State for Administrative Reform representing the President of the Republic, H.E. General Michel Sleiman

H.E. Mr. Michel Moussa, Member of Parliament, representing the President of the Parliament, H.E. Mr. Nabih Berry

H.E. Mr. Tarek Mitri, Minister of Information, representing the President of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Fouad Siniora

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure, and a privilege, to be in Lebanon at this time of hope and opportunity but also remaining challenges.

Lebanon is a country with a rich diversity, a lot of potential and much to be achieved. It is also one of the founding members of the United Nations and the United Nations has maintained a presence in the country almost since the Organization's founding over 60 years ago.

Since then, the work of the United Nations in Lebanon has expanded and become more diversified to meet the growing needs of the country. There is a 13,000-strong peacekeeping force that helps maintain peace and security in south Lebanon, a political presence to help Lebanon in its path towards full independence, sovereignty and stability, and over 21 UN entities focusing on development, humanitarian and socio-economic work.

We have recently seen Lebanon make important strides towards a return to normalcy since the Doha Accord in May, with the election of a President, the establishment of a national unity government and the revival of state institutions. The United Nations

strongly supports this process and the concerted efforts that have been exerted since then towards reconciliation at various levels, particularly the resumption of the national dialogue.

Many challenges naturally remain. The country is heading towards parliamentary elections next year that have to be organized and held in an atmosphere that will both build on your history but which will also take place in conditions of peace and security. Here too, the UN stands ready to help. There are security concerns and socio-economic challenges that are weighing on the everyday lives of the Lebanese that have to be resolved. The United Nations stands ready to assist in whatever it can to overcome all these challenges.

The UN Secretary-General, who has already visited Lebanon twice, has personally expressed his commitment to helping Lebanon resolve all its salient issues and implement UN resolutions, including resolution 1701.

The United Nations does not and cannot work alone. We are here to serve Lebanon and our strong cooperation with the Lebanese authorities remains the backbone of the Organization's work in Lebanon. Our work also depends on our partnerships that have been built with the segments of Lebanon's civil society, which has played an important role in developing the diverse and vibrant society that makes Lebanon special in its own way.

Finally, we hope that today's marking of the UN Day is a reminder of what the organization has stood for since its foundation in 1945 and the principles by which it operates. Peace and security, development and human rights are the four main pillars we work for and aspire to achieve.

Thank you.
