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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
Statement for Press Encounter
Friday, 27 March 2009**

Statement After Meeting Mayor of Tyre

It is a great pleasure for me to visit this ancient city of Tyre and to meet its mayor, Mr. Abdel-Mohsen Hoseini, Dr. Farran and his other colleagues. Thank you for this very very warm welcome, not just for me but also for our team. This is greatly appreciated. And we will extend to the SG your kind invitation to visit Tyre in the future.

I came here today to better understand the situation in the city of Tyre. In the course of my work as the Special Coordinator for the United Nations, I visited other cities and towns in Lebanon: Sidon and Tripoli and later today we will visit Bint Jbeil and in a few weeks, we will visit also Marjayoun.

Although this is my first visit as Special Coordinator to Tyre, I have been many times before to southern Lebanon and came here just after the war in September 2006 with the Secretary-General and saw the extent of the destruction and havoc caused by the Israeli war.

I am pleased now that there has been so much reconstruction in the city and elsewhere in South Lebanon. But I am conscious too that there is still much more to be done. And I think that the United Nations needs to continue to work closely with the municipal authorities in Tyre and with the National Government to execute on this.

I also wanted to thank the mayor for the support that he and his colleagues give to the implementation of resolution 1701 and to UNIFIL, led by General Graziano. I met General Graziano only yesterday and I know how highly he esteems the cooperation that exists with you personally and with the authorities and the people of southern Lebanon.

We are pleased that since the adoption of resolution 1701, there has been a long period of calm and stability in south Lebanon. We were pleased also that last year the Lebanese prisoners in Israel were freed and returned home to Lebanon safely.

But we are acutely conscious that much more needs to be done. For example, the return of the village of Ghajar, the Shebaa Farms and perhaps above all a stop to the constant Israeli air intrusions and overflights over Lebanon and particularly south Lebanon.

We spoke too with Mr. the Mayor about the economic situation in Tyre and how we need to move forward from reconstruction to a process of sustainable development.

You and you colleague, Dr. Farran, also spoke movingly of the plight of the Palestinians in Lebanon and particularly in the Tyre region. This issue is always on our mind and we work with our colleagues in the United Nations family to do everything we can to meet both the immediate plight of the Palestinians but also not losing sight of the ultimate goal of the creation of a Palestinian State and the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homeland.

Thank you again for the wonderful welcome this morning and the support that you have given us in our work and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Statement During Meeting with Municipal Representatives and MPs in Bint Jbeil

I am very pleased to be here today in the city of Bint Jbeil. This is not my first visit.

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Statement During Tour of Reconstruction in Bint Jbeil Market

I just wanted to say how pleased I am to be back in Bint Jbeil. As my friend Ali Bazzi said, I was here two years ago, more than two years ago, in the days immediately after the war of 2006 when I accompanied Mr. Kofi Annan when we saw for ourselves the scale of wanton destruction in Bint Jbeil and also in neighbouring villages.

Your people suffered very much. There were also of course United Nations casualties in that war. It was in the village of Khiam that four UN peacekeepers died.

But I come back now more than two years later and Hassan Fadlallah I think used the word “resilience” for the people of Bint Jbeil and that is obvious when you walk around the streets and you see the scale of reconstruction that is going on. You have been assisted by the Government of Qatar and other Governments but so much of this work is your own work and it says so much about the spirit of the people of Bint Jbeil and about the spirit of the people of south Lebanon and I am confident in that context that even greater progress can be made in the coming months and years.

I thank the Mayor Afif Bazzi and I thank the MPs Ali Bazzi and Hassan Fadlallah for welcoming me, for presenting me with the issues and problems that face the people of Bint Jbeil and I am confident that we can move forward and overcome these problems.

