



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams
Statement Following Meeting with Minister of Social Affairs
Mr. Salim Sayegh
Beirut, Lebanon**

Friday, 27 August 2010

I just had a very good meeting with H.E. Minister Salim Sayegh.

We discussed the political situation and recent developments in Lebanon, including the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701.

We also reflected on the violent incidents earlier this week in Beirut and I expressed my concern about those incidents and I welcomed the efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces and of Lebanon's leadership in restoring calm in the area and in the city of Beirut. The United Nations strongly encourages the call for dialogue, led by President Sleiman and Prime Minister Saad Hariri, to avoid any further tension and any similar incidents to those which occurred on Tuesday evening.

We also discussed I think the work of the Lebanese institutions in promoting stability and security in the country and in addressing the social and economic problems that need to be tackled. And I think Minister, your ministry plays a critical role in that. You briefed me on the role of your Ministry and I take this opportunity to commend you and your officials for the work they are doing to engage with and enhance Lebanese society.

Thank you very much indeed.

I just met Ambassador Michael Williams. We went over the different projects that the Ministry of Social Affairs is tackling, many of which are being undertaken with international organizations.

The important thing that happened is that we touched on the different political issues. I expressed the point of view of the Kataeb party, whether with regards to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, or the Palestinian issue and particularly the issue of the incidents that took place in Beirut, which we have proposed at Cabinet in that regard to have Beirut become an arms free city and under the control of the security forces and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

We touched on all the developments on the Lebanese scene. We also understood from Ambassador Williams the commitment of the United Nations to Lebanon's sovereignty, to the legitimate Government and all its decisions and the commitment of this Government to UN resolutions, particularly resolution 1701 for south Lebanon.

Some of what the United Nations is counting on is for Lebanon to have a capable and effective Government. They are looking to us very carefully and we have to really prove in front of the international community that we can govern ourselves.

QUESTION: Did the discussions touch on the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate in the south?

MINISTER SAYEGH: No the discussions did not touch on that issue. This issue is being raised with the relevant authorities in Lebanon, I don't want to go into that issue.

QUESTION: What is your position regarding what was decided in Cabinet following the incidents in Beirut and the proposal for making Beirut an arms free city?

MINISTER SAYEGH: This position which we have raised to the Cabinet is the same position on which the great majority of ministers agreed on. It is the same position which the Beirut Members of Parliament are now expressing. It is also the position that is being expressed by all citizens in Beirut. In the end, any criticism of this position is a criticism to the citizens of Beirut and to all the Lebanese people.

QUESTION: How do you view the visit of Al-Ahbash delegation to Syria and its meeting with the former head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon Gen. Rustom Ghazaleh?

MINISTER SAYEGH: They are allies visiting each other, explaining the positions to each other. We regret that every visit to Syria becomes outside that of the Lebanese authorities. This question could be raised to the Syrian Ambassador to Lebanon and to the Lebanese Ambassador to Syria.

Thank you very much

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