



Office of the Special Coordinator  
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial  
pour le Liban

**UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan Kubis**  
**Remarks at Media Stakeout Following UN Security Council**  
**Consultations on Resolution 1701**  
UNHQ

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First of all, I am very glad that in my new capacity as the Special Coordinator for Lebanon, I had the opportunity to brief the Security Council about my activities but notably about the country, about Lebanon. I spoke about opportunities and some risks as well.

Opportunities, and I believe that it was recognized very clearly by members of the Security Council: The Government is there, the programme of the Government is there, a programme that is very solid, speaks about reforms, speaks about what to do and how to work. So, all of that was very much recognized and encouraged. It was one of the messages that I heard is a need to use the goodwill of the international community to support Lebanon and that was manifested in past days, past weeks through different visits as well and before that by different international conferences and to pursue the reform agenda. Deep reforms are needed for the benefit of the country and the people of the country because there were a lot of economic issues. That was one big block of opportunities and encouragement. I was very glad that a number of delegations also recognized, acknowledged the fact that there are four women in the Government, including the first Minister of Interior in the whole region, a woman and a very strong minister, I would say. I had a meeting with her and she has absolute clarity about what to do and how to do it and I am very much encouraged by that. Strong international support, as I said, is there. So all of that is on the side of opportunities.

I mentioned also certain risks, first again economy. Economic, social issues, it is obvious from my meetings in the past six weeks that this is very high in the agenda of the government . Hopefully soon the Government will adopt

the budget and the budget that hopefully will send a very strong signal that it is a reform budget.

Secondly, I briefed about all the discussions and disputes that are sometimes happening around the topic of return of Syrian refugees. It is a discussed topic and I mentioned this also because I registered that there is a national consensus even, political consensus among the major political parties, in favour of return of Syrian refugees back home. There is another big discussion about how to do it, if there is room to do it, how to cooperate and there is another topic about how to shape relations between Lebanon and Syria as such. And this is a divisive topic. There is basic unity that refugees must return. So that is the second area.

Of course, I mentioned regional developments that are affecting the situation in Lebanon. And from that perspective, of course I believe that the Security Council had a number of discussions about regional developments and will have a number of discussions. Even just now I saw His Excellency the Ambassador of Syria waiting for that. So no question that regional developments are very strongly on the agenda. And from that perspective, many of those that took the floor, members of the Security Council, were bringing to our attention, and through me most likely to the attention of the leadership of the country, the implementation of steps that would ensure increased control of weapons by the State and increased control of any supplies of arms and of course activities of different armed groups that are still outside the control of the State.

So that was happening, that was quite a discussion. All in all, I was happy to hear a message of support of the members, united support of the members of the Security Council for Lebanon.

**QUESTION:** Regarding the issue of Syrian refugees that you mentioned, the national consensus ...

**SCL Jan Kubis:** Political consensus.

**QUESTION:** People tend to agree that the refugees should go back. Are you worried that, now you are communicating with Mr. Pedersen and with UNHCR, because of that feeling in Lebanon that people might be pushed back into Syria where it is not safe for them to go?

**SCL Jan Kubis:** Let's put it like this, the position of the UN and I am also working on this although of course I leave the field to our humanitarian community and Humanitarian Coordinator, but you know that we cannot in any way differently, only to stress the principles of safe, voluntary and dignified return. You cannot expect from the UN, any side or any part of the UN, to do and think in any other different way. Yes, as I said, there is a discussion and a dispute and yes there might be some individuals tempted to maybe propose some other approach but I would say that at this point in time in practice everything is done according to the principles of safe, voluntary and dignified return. And I assume that this practice will be continued.

**QUESTION:** One final question on the other aspect you mentioned, the regional aspect. Given the situation in Gaza and given the US recognition of Golan, as you know in this region things tend to have unexpected consequences. How worried are you, given the fragility of Lebanon?

**SCL Jan Kubis:** I would say that by and large, there is a strong interest, and it is my assumption and assessment, not to go too far in destabilizing the situation. Everyone cares about stability of Lebanon, including the regional countries. This is what I heard also in Israel. So from that perspective, I am of course following this with certain concern, but I don't think we should expect any total instability.

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*For more information:*  
unscol.unmissions.org  
@UNJanKubis  
@UNSCOL