

**STATEMENT BY UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ON BEHALF OF THE
INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP FOR LEBANON FOLLOWING MEETING
WITH PRIME MINISTER TAMAM SALAM**

Tuesday, 19 May 2015

1. Members of the International Support Group for Lebanon established by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in September 2013 met with Prime Minister Tamam Salam at the Serail, after which the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon issued the following statement on behalf of the Group:
2. The International Support Group for Lebanon welcomed the opportunity to discuss with Prime Minister Salam the current situation in Lebanon. They recalled the 10 July 2013 and the 19 March 2015 Presidential Statements of the Security Council which stressed “the need for strong, coordinated international support for Lebanon to help it continue to withstand the multiple challenges to its security and stability.” They noted that, going into the fifth year of the Syrian crisis and its impact on Lebanon, the situation required sustained, unified international support to preserve the country’s stability and security.
3. The Group expressed concern over the vacuum in the Presidency of the Republic as it continues to seriously undermine Lebanon’s ability to address the security, economic and social challenges facing the country. They commended Prime Minister Salam’s leadership in upholding the unity of Government but took particular note of his concern that the effective functioning of Government had grown progressively more difficult during the vacancy. The Group called on all Lebanese leaders to adhere to Lebanon's Constitution, and to the Taef Agreement and National Pact, to put Lebanon's stability and national interests ahead of partisan politics and to show the necessary leadership and flexibility to urgently resolve this issue. The presidential election must remain a Lebanese process, free from foreign interference. It is crucial that international support for Lebanon is paralleled by meaningful action by Lebanon’s political leaders. Members of Parliament should fulfill their obligation to uphold Lebanon's longstanding democratic tradition to elect a President without further delay.
4. The Group underscored that effective implementation of all provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) and other relevant resolutions remains central to ensuring stability and security in Lebanon, and they welcomed Prime Minister Salam’s renewed commitment in this regard. They expressed strong support to efforts to uphold Lebanon’s sovereignty, unity and stability and continuity of State institutions, and to safeguard Lebanon from the impact of the Syrian crisis. They stressed the importance for all Lebanese parties to recommit to and respect Lebanon’s policy of disassociation and step back from any involvement in the Syrian crisis, consistent with their commitment in the Ministerial Declaration of the present Government and in the Baabda Declaration of 12 June 2012.
5. The Group took note with concern of Prime Minister Salam’s briefing on the increasingly complex set of security challenges facing Lebanon, especially those resulting from the impact of the Syria conflict, including the threat of terrorism and extremism from ISIL and Jabhat al Nusra. They highlighted the ever more critical role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces [LAF] and security services in working to address significant and growing security threats, including through the deployment of new regiments along the Lebanon/Syria border and counter-terrorism operations, and in working with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon [UNIFIL] to help maintain calm along the Blue Line. They recalled the responsibility of all concerned to avoid any

recurrence of the recent incidents across the Blue Line and to ensure continued stability in Southern Lebanon. They warmly welcomed international assistance already being provided to strengthen the LAF in line with its five-year capabilities-development plan, including the more than \$1 billion in security assistance by the United States since 2006, and were encouraged that the joint Saudi/French offer of assistance, as well as ongoing support to the LAF and security services by the UK, EU, Italy and other member states, had materialized into tangible support. They urged Member States in a position to do so to offer additional assistance to the LAF and the security forces on an expedited and coordinated basis. Recognizing the increased terrorist threat to Lebanese civilians, the Group reiterated the need for a comprehensive counter-terrorism response, including via further international support to Lebanese security services. Respect for fundamental rights is crucial in the fight against terrorism.

6. The Group acknowledged the extraordinary pressures placed on Lebanon due to the Syria crisis in hosting 1.2 million registered refugees from Syria. They reiterated their concern at the severe challenges for Lebanese communities and key public institutions and services in Lebanon, including health, education, infrastructure and employment. The Group was encouraged by the pledges of USD 3.8 billion made at the Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria on 31 March, and they recognized that support already being provided by international partners and the UN to Lebanon constitutes the second-highest per capita level of international aid in the world. For the sustainability of international efforts and for the stability of Lebanon, expedited assistance to meet the immediate needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon must be accompanied by additional support to local communities and Government institutions. The Group expressed strong support for the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, developed jointly by the Government and the United Nations, and urged all Member States to look for ways to increase and expedite support to Lebanon at this time as a matter of priority, including through existing channels such as the World Bank-managed Multi-Donor Trust Fund [MDTF] on the basis of accelerated implementation by the Fund. They expressed willingness to look at possible new sources of concessional financing to supplement the grants made available by donors, and stressed the need for the Lebanese authorities to facilitate the use of funds already released for Lebanon by international partners.

7. The Group noted the continued implementation of the Government's policy with regard to addressing the refugee presence in Lebanon. They encouraged the Government and UNHCR to work closely with other UN counterparts to promote effective management of the refugee presence in line with international humanitarian and human rights law. The Group welcomed Prime Minister Salam's commitment to address all pending issues related to the refugee presence in Lebanon.

8. The Group underlined their united support for the stability and security of Lebanon as a unique model of co-existence in the region and their readiness to take all possible steps to assist the country at this difficult time. They welcomed the prospect of future Group meetings with different configurations and levels as needed.