

Chairperson's Summary of the Inaugural Meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon, at United Nations Headquarters, 25 September 2013

1. The inaugural meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon was held on 25 September 2013 at United Nations Headquarters in New York and was chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Participants invited to the meeting were: the People's Republic of China, the Republic of France, the Republic of Lebanon, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the World Bank, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Group, the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, and the Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
2. Statements during the opening session were made by the Secretary-General, and H. E. Mr. Michel Sleiman, President of the Republic of Lebanon. Interventions were made during the meeting by H.E. Mr. Liu Jieyi, Permanent Representative of China; H.E. Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France; H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; H.E. Mr. William Hague, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom; H.E. Mr. John Kerry, Secretary of State of the United States of America; H.E. Ms. Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union; and H.E. Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. Presentations were also made by Mr. Antonio Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank.
3. Participants thanked the Secretary-General for convening the International Support Group. They noted that the United Nations' commitment to stability in Lebanon lies at the heart of resolution 1701 (2006) and other relevant resolutions. The formation of the International Support Group stems from that, and comes in response to the increasing impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. It builds upon the 10 July 2013 Presidential Statement of the Security Council (S/PRST/2013/9) which stressed "the need for strong, coordinated international support for Lebanon to help it continue to withstand the multiple current challenges to its security and stability." Participants undertook to work together to mobilise support for Lebanon's sovereignty and State institutions and to highlight and promote efforts to assist Lebanon where it is most affected by the Syrian crisis, including in respect of strengthening the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces; assistance to refugees and vulnerable communities affected by the crisis; and structural and financial support to the Government..
4. Participants expressed their appreciation for the leadership of President Sleiman in seeking to uphold Lebanon's sovereignty, unity and stability and the continuity of state institutions, to promote dialogue and to safeguard Lebanon from the impact of the Syrian crisis. They stressed the importance of continued commitment by all Lebanese parties to the Baabda Declaration of 12 June 2012 and Lebanon's policy of disassociation.
5. Participants joined in condemning the recent terrorist bombings in Lebanon and underscored the need for those responsible to be brought to justice. There should be no return to impunity in Lebanon.

6. Participants were encouraged by the calm that continues to prevail along the Blue Line. They acknowledged the important role played by UNIFIL in working to prevent escalation and take forward resolution 1701 (2006), and expressed appreciation for the commitment UNIFIL's troop contributing countries have demonstrated towards Lebanon.

7. Participants acknowledged the critical role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in working alongside UNIFIL to help maintain the calm on the Blue Line and in addressing the growing threats to security within Lebanon and along its borders as a result of the Syrian crisis. They noted the extraordinary pressures now placed on LAF capabilities. They welcomed the LAF's recently launched five-year capabilities development plan, of which the Strategic Dialogue plan agreed with UNIFIL is an important and discrete element. They welcomed the Lebanese Government's support for the plan and the international assistance already being given to the LAF, and encouraged others in the international community in a position to do so to follow suit. Participants encouraged UNSCOL and UNIFIL to work with the LAF to activate coordination mechanisms in support of the plan and the Strategic Dialogue.

8. Participants commended Lebanon's generosity in hosting nearly 800,000 refugees from Syria registered or awaiting registration, a figure which could reach more than one million by the end of the year if current trends continue. They recognised the huge burden the influx of refugees was placing on Lebanon, and highlighted the urgent need to increase and expedite assistance both to refugees and to vulnerable communities affected by the crisis within a coordinated humanitarian and development response. As a next step they looked forward to the UNHCR Executive Committee high-level segment on solidarity and burden sharing with countries hosting Syrian refugees to be held in Geneva on 30 September, at which further commitments in respect of financial assistance, enhanced resettlement and other support from the international community were expected.

9. Participants welcomed the assessment the World Bank has conducted in partnership with the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations on the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. The assessment demonstrates the severe negative impact the crisis, including the significant increase in the country's population resulting from the refugee influx, has had on economic activity in Lebanon, on government finances and on key sectors such as health and education and on infrastructure, as well as on vulnerable communities affected by the crisis. Participants welcomed discussions between the World Bank, the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations on establishing additional funding mechanisms, including possibly a multi-donor trust fund, to help address Lebanon's immediate and longer-term structural and development needs. They looked forward to the planned discussion of the results of the assessment and the response in the margins of the annual meeting of the World Bank in October.

10. Participants strongly underlined the urgency of formation of an empowered government in Lebanon. They stressed the importance of this if the many security, humanitarian and development challenges facing Lebanon are to be met effectively.

11. Participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss Lebanon at this critical time for the region. They looked forward to working together on an on-going basis as partners in the International Support Group for Lebanon. They welcomed the prospect of future Group meetings with broader participation and anticipated that the Group would meet at differing levels as needed.