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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Reporting period from 25 June 2015 to 4 November 2015

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my previous report of 25 June 2015 ([S/2015/475](#)).

2. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and along the Blue Line remained generally calm, despite the tense regional context. The Lebanese and Israeli authorities continued to affirm their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and displayed resolve to maintain calm along the Blue Line, effectively engaging with UNIFIL through the established liaison and coordination mechanism and pursuing practical localized arrangements. There was no progress, however, on their outstanding obligations under the resolution and no movement towards a permanent ceasefire.

3. My Special Coordinator has worked to preserve the current calm in southern Lebanon through engagement with the Governments of Lebanon and Israel, and throughout the country through discussions with all Lebanese parties, and through regional and international consultations. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security forces have worked to preserve stability through the pursuit and arrest of people suspected of terrorist activities. There was a reduction in violence along areas bordering the Syrian Arab Republic and in the number of cross-border incidents. The situation remains volatile as Syrian armed groups, including the Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continue to maintain positions there.

4. Lebanon has now gone more than 500 days without a President of the Republic. Thirty parliamentary sessions to elect a president have been inquorate owing to the continued boycott by members of Hizbullah and the Free Patriotic Movement. Continued political paralysis has led to disagreement over the mechanism for decision-making in Cabinet, causing disruption to the regularity of Cabinet meetings and severely limiting the ability of the Government to function. Decisions for which the deadline could not be delayed further were taken by Cabinet and ministerial decrees.



5. On 30 September, I convened and chaired a ministerial meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon in New York, on the margins of the General Assembly, in the presence of Prime Minister Tammam Salam. The meeting focused on the political, security and stabilization challenges that Lebanon faces. Participants commended Prime Minister Salam for his leadership, but also expressed deep concern over the continued vacancy in the Presidency, calling for flexibility on the part of Lebanese leaders in order to urgently elect a President. The participants expressed their concern over the increasing difficulties faced by the Government and Parliament in taking important decisions, which limits the impact of international support to the country.

6. Lebanese citizens and civil society held a series of large-scale demonstrations demanding efficient services, transparency and more effective governance. The protests were mostly peaceful; however, some were infiltrated by violent elements who clashed with other demonstrators and the security forces. A number of protestors were detained, and there were casualties as well as material damage to public and private property. On 2 September, my Special Coordinator briefed the Security Council on those developments.

7. In the wake of the demonstrations, the first session of a parliamentary dialogue involving leaders of all political factions and co-chaired by Prime Minister Salam and Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri was held at the Speaker's initiative on 9 September. During the period, a total of four days of sessions of the dialogue met, focusing on the issue of the vacuum in the Presidency. Smaller groups of participants also met on the margins of the parliamentary dialogue to address other issues. The dialogue between the Future Movement and Hizbullah continued, and contributed to the calming of tensions between communities.

8. Syrians continued to seek shelter in Lebanon from the conflict in their country. As at 30 September, 1,078,338 Syrian refugees were registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon. This is a reduction of 93,000 from my previous report owing to a verification process conducted by the United Nations. Some 28,574 Lebanese returnees from the Syrian Arab Republic were also registered by the International Organization for Migration. The number of registered Syrian refugees in the UNIFIL area of operations remained at 55,833, unchanged since my previous report. The United Nations is closely monitoring the flow of refugees from Lebanon to Europe but no precise data is currently available.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

9. During the reporting period, most ground violations of the Blue Line were carried out by Lebanese shepherds and farmers, particularly in the Shab'a Farms area (Sector East) and near Rumaysh (Sector West), respectively, and by fishermen or swimmers in the Wazzani River (Sector East). Most ground violations were brief but, on occasion, shepherds with their flocks and farmers stayed south of the Blue Line for several hours, despite calls by UNIFIL to return north of the Blue Line.

10. On two occasions, the Israel Defense Forces violated the Blue Line. On 1 August, seven soldiers crossed the Blue Line in the area of Shab'a Farms by approximately 50 metres, despite UNIFIL personnel warning them that they had crossed the Blue Line. On 6 July, two Israel Defense Forces excavators crossed the Blue Line by five metres while clearing vegetation across from Alma ash Sha'b (Sector West), and pushed earth up to 15 metres north of the Blue Line along a 117-metre section. UNIFIL protested the violations to the Israel Defense Forces.

11. Israeli overflights of Lebanese airspace continued in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty, including almost daily unmanned aerial vehicles, fixed-winged aircraft and, on one occasion, a helicopter. UNIFIL protested all violations to the Israel Defense Forces, calling upon the authorities to cease them immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested the violations to UNIFIL.

12. Israel also continued to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. Israel has not responded to the proposal submitted by UNIFIL to both parties in 2011 concerning security arrangements aimed at facilitating the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the area. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL in July 2011 of their agreement to the proposal. During the reporting period, UNIFIL remained engaged with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces on security arrangements to enable the use by Lebanese civilians of the road lying north of the occupied area.

13. The Israel Defense Forces continued to allege that Hizbullah carried out military reconnaissance operations along the Blue Line and that it maintained military infrastructure and equipment in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL monitors the area of operations and the Blue Line and reports all violations of resolution 1701 (2006) it observes, including the presence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons. In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL does not proactively search for weapons in the south. UNIFIL cannot enter or search private property unless there is credible evidence of a violation of the resolution, including an imminent threat of hostile activity from that location. In situations in which specific information is received regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel, weapons or infrastructure inside its area of operations, UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has remained determined to act with all means available within its mandate and capabilities. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations.

14. UNIFIL frequently observed civilians with unauthorized weapons in the area of operations, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). In most cases, they were individuals carrying hunting weapons. However, on three occasions, civilians were observed firing other unauthorized weapons, two of which were part of vehicle convoys in connection with funeral processions in the area of operations. Firing of unauthorized weapons from a civilian vehicle convoy was also observed on a third occasion. UNIFIL informed the Lebanese Armed Forces of all violations. The Lebanese Armed Forces has primary responsibility for ensuring that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons, other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL.

15. UNIFIL continued generally to enjoy full freedom of movement throughout its area of operations. UNIFIL military personnel experienced a few isolated incidents

of obstruction of movement, including two occasions on grounds that they were not escorted by the Lebanese Armed Forces. In addition, there were four incidents of aggressive behaviour towards peacekeepers while they were conducting operational activities.

16. In the most serious incident, on 5 October, a civilian vehicle blocked the path of a UNIFIL vehicle in the vicinity of Kafr Dunin (Sector West). The UNIFIL vehicle managed to evade the civilian vehicle and drive on, at which point three gunshots were fired from the civilian vehicle at the UNIFIL vehicle, two of which hit the rear and the tyre of the vehicle. The civilian vehicle withdrew after the shooting, and another civilian vehicle followed the UNIFIL vehicle until it reached a United Nations position.

17. In other incidents, on 25 June, a group of 10 civilians in two vehicles stopped a UNIFIL patrol near Ayta Ash Sha'b (Sector West) and, during an ensuing confrontation between the peacekeepers and the civilians, UNIFIL equipment was stolen. On 26 July, four civilian vehicles and 10 civilians blocked a UNIFIL patrol in the vicinity of Yatar (Sector West). While the patrol was engaging the civilians in order to gain access to the planned route, one of them stole an optical device affixed to the patrol vehicle. On 1 October, some 60 civilians blocked a UNIFIL patrol in Yatar and tried to forcefully open the patrol vehicle to search for photographic equipment. In the course of the incident, the civilians took two UNIFIL maps.

18. UNIFIL strongly protested all incidents to the Lebanese Armed Forces, asking for full investigation and recovery of any stolen UNIFIL property. UNIFIL also requested the Lebanese Armed Forces to continue to convey to the local communities that UNIFIL is mandated to carry out patrols independently and, while it works in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces, is not required to operate only in their presence.

19. The Mission's relationship with the local population largely remained positive. UNIFIL, including the Head of Mission and Force Commander, carried out regular public outreach with local authorities, religious leaders and civil society, and received consistent reassurances from local interlocutors of their determination to cooperate with UNIFIL to keep the situation in the area of operations calm. UNIFIL also continued to implement quick impact projects with local communities and civil-military cooperation initiatives by its contingents.

20. In view of the high number of bush fires in the hot summer period, UNIFIL provided equipment to Lebanese Civil Defence and conducted training for a number of its personnel on the use of breathing apparatus in rescue operations. UNIFIL carried out for the first time a joint police training exercise with internal security forces personnel in Sector East and continued training of municipal police personnel in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), raising the number of trained personnel to 50. UNIFIL also supported the training of personnel from social development centres on the protection of vulnerable children, youth and women, in line with the National Plan to Safeguard Children and Women in Lebanon of the Ministry of Social Affairs. UNIFIL contingents continued to provide dental, medical and veterinary assistance to the local communities.

21. The UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander also regularly engaged with the Lebanese authorities to ensure a coordinated approach to the security challenges in the UNIFIL area of operations and facilitate increased involvement of

the Government of Lebanon, its ministries and security institutions in southern Lebanon.

22. The deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces south of the Litani river remained generally at the same level of approximately two brigades. In the light of the tense security situation along the eastern border with the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lebanese Armed Forces maintained a reinforced presence in the north-eastern part of the UNIFIL area of operations (Shab'a village and the Arkoub area). UNIFIL maintained an extensive presence throughout the area of operations, conducting on average 11,800 operational activities monthly, including patrols, checkpoints and observation tasks. The number of operational activities carried out in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces remained at the same level as in the previous period.

23. UNIFIL also continued to carry out joint exercises and training with the Lebanese Armed Forces, to further strengthen the tactical and operational capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces and to enhance operational coordination and the effectiveness of joint operations. As at 30 September, UNIFIL had conducted 367 joint exercises, workshops and courses with the Lebanese Armed Forces, including the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy.

24. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, in accordance with its mandate, carried out maritime interdiction activities and provided training for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy. During the reporting period, the Task Force hailed 2,209 ships and the Lebanese authorities inspected and declared clear 471 vessels, to ensure that no unauthorized weapons or related materiel were transferred into Lebanon.

25. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force conducted daily patrols in the UNIFIL area of maritime operations. Although UNIFIL has no mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which was unilaterally installed by Israel and is not recognized by the Government of Lebanon, the Task Force maintained a visible presence in the southern part of the UNIFIL area of maritime operations to prevent tensions in the vicinity of the disputed maritime border between Israel and Lebanon.

26. On 24 June, a UNIFIL vessel detected fire control radar emissions directed against it, which were assessed to originate from an Israeli vessel patrolling near the line of buoys. Short emissions were detected by the UNIFIL vessel on several occasions throughout the day from the same source. UNIFIL strongly protested this incident to the Israel Defense Forces.

27. During the reporting period, the Israel Defense Forces continued to carry out frequent maintenance activities at the line of buoys, lasting at times for days. On several occasions, Israel Defense Forces patrol boats positioned south of the line of buoys fired machine gun rounds and flares in a westerly direction and, on at least one occasion, launched an explosive device in the sea.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

28. The parties continued to engage with UNIFIL at all levels in a constructive and positive manner and utilized the Mission's liaison and coordination arrangements to safeguard the cessation of hostilities, ensure respect for the Blue Line and promote security and stability in southern Lebanon. There was no progress, however, towards the establishment of a UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv.

29. In particular, the liaison and coordination arrangements were effective in defusing tensions, following reports of rocket launchings against northern Israel and the occupied Golan on 20 August. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNIFIL promptly that the rockets had not been fired from the UNIFIL area of operations. UNIFIL, in turn, immediately conveyed this information to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

30. In the past, routine activities carried out by the parties along the Blue Line have led to an increase in tensions and occasionally have escalated into serious incidents. During the reporting period, UNIFIL facilitated a number of planned activities in sensitive areas close to the Blue Line through effective liaison and coordination with the parties. UNIFIL undertook seasonal clearance of the Wazzani riverbed along the Blue Line during the month of August, upon request of the Lebanese Armed Forces and in close coordination with both parties. UNIFIL liaised with the parties to ensure the smooth conduct of vegetation clearing works and repairs to the technical fence by the Israel Defense Forces, which took place in the vicinity of El Adeisse (Sector East) on 26 August. In close coordination with the parties, UNIFIL also undertook the cleaning of the drainage channels close to the Blue Line, aimed at preventing flooding of agricultural fields in the vicinity of Kafr Kela (Sector East).

31. UNIFIL encouraged the parties to further utilize the liaison and coordination arrangements as a preventive tool, by consistently sharing information through UNIFIL on all their planned activities close to the Blue Line.

32. UNIFIL continued to facilitate regular tripartite meetings, which remain the only forum in which the representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces meet to address security and military operational issues relating to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Since my previous report, there have been three tripartite meetings: on 7 July, 11 August and 8 October. Building on the calm situation on the ground and the absence of serious incidents, the meetings took place in a notably constructive atmosphere, absent the escalatory rhetoric reported in my last report, and the parties agreed to make further efforts to find practical localized solutions, in particular to prevent seasonal violations of the Blue Line. Other issues discussed included ground violations of the Blue Line, Israeli air violations and the lack of progress on the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from northern Ghajar. The Israel Defense Forces continued to allege Hezbollah presence and activities near the Blue Line.

33. UNIFIL further intensified its engagement with the parties bilaterally to assist them in finding mutually agreeable security arrangements and confidence-building measures to mitigate the scope for incidents in problematic areas along the Blue Line.

34. Of the high number of bush fires in the UNIFIL area of operations, several occurred in close proximity to the Blue Line. Two bush fires resulted in damage to United Nations positions: United Nations position 6-52 and United Nations position 4-28, the latter raising serious concerns about the safety of UNIFIL personnel owing to the severity of the fire, which triggered the explosion of a number of landmines in the area. UNIFIL intensively engaged with both parties on preventive measures, seeking also to mitigate the risks for the local population and Lebanese Armed Forces personnel and minimize the potential for any related tensions along the Blue Line.

35. UNIFIL continued to engage the parties in the process of visibly marking the Blue Line. As at 20 October, the number of Blue Line points agreed upon by the parties for marking remained 313 out of a total of 527. Of the agreed points, UNIFIL demining teams had cleared access to 312, of which 249 had been measured. Additional Blue Line markers were constructed by UNIFIL and verified by the parties during the period, bringing the overall number of markers to 237 constructed and 224 verified.

36. On 30 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces announced that an alleged Israeli surveillance device had been found in Bani Hayyan (Sector East) and that an investigation had been launched.

37. UNIFIL maintained its support to the Lebanese Armed Forces in the implementation of the strategic dialogue plan, which is an integral part of the Lebanese Armed Forces' capabilities development plan and complements the efforts of the International Support Group for Lebanon. In that context, UNIFIL promoted military assistance by international donors to the Lebanese Armed Forces in the UNIFIL area of operations, on the basis of the Lebanese Armed Forces' equipment needs for tasks mandated under resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL participated in the seventh meeting of the Lebanese Executive Military Commission on 19 September and the meeting of the coordination mechanisms co-chaired by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces on 22 September

C. Disarming armed groups

38. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the Lebanese State, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006) continues to restrict the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. During the reporting period, Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah again stated that Hizbullah possesses a substantial and sophisticated military capability, separate from that of the Lebanese State. In an interview on 25 September, he rejected the imposition of limits as to the types of weapons Hizbullah may obtain and expressed Hizbullah's intention to obtain sophisticated arms. There were no meetings of the National Dialogue during the reporting period and no other formal discussion of Hizbullah's arms.

39. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security services worked together to maintain security in the country and arrested a number of suspects alleged to have been involved in acts of terrorism or attacks against the Lebanese Armed Forces. On 15 August, the fugitive Ahmed Assir was arrested for his role in leading militants in the June 2013 attacks against the Lebanese Armed Forces in Sidon. The Lebanese Armed Forces also intervened to prevent terrorist attacks and successfully defused improvised explosive devices on 27 June and 7 September.

40. On 29 July, there was an explosion in the Bekaa valley at the Qusaya military base of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. There were reports of one fatality and at least five casualties in the explosion. During the reporting period, there was no progress in the dismantling of the Qusaya military base or any of the other military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command or Fatah al Intifada. In 2006, it was decided in the National Dialogue that the bases should be dismantled. The existence

of the bases continues to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to monitor and control effectively parts of the Lebanese border.

41. The situation in the Palestinian refugee camps was generally quiet during the reporting period, but there were a number of incidents in Ein el Helweh which caused serious tensions. The assassination of a Fatah commander, Talal al Balawenah, and his nephew on 25 July sparked a wave of violence in the camp. The subsequent clashes between Fatah and Jund ash Sham left at least three people dead and caused a number of injuries and material damage to homes and property. Armed groups occupied four United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools during the fighting, causing damage to the facilities. The clashes also displaced significant numbers of residents, forcing them to seek refuge in neighbouring areas. Calm was restored to the camp on 27 August, following a negotiated truce which allowed displaced families to return and UNRWA facilities to reopen. The joint security forces and others continue their efforts to maintain stability in the camp.

D. Arms embargo and border control

42. In resolution 1701 (2006) the Security Council decided that all States should take the necessary measures to prevent, by their nationals, or from their territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, the sale or the supply to any entity or individual in Lebanon of arms and related materiel. . The resolution also called upon the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders and other entry points to prevent the entry in Lebanon without its consent of arms and related materiel.

43. Representatives of the Government of Israel have consistently alleged that there are significant ongoing arms transfers to Hizbullah across the Lebanese-Syrian border, and that Hizbullah has now amassed an arsenal of over 100,000 missiles and rockets, much of which Israel claims is located in civilian residential areas. During the reporting period, Israeli officials alleged that Hizbullah had attempted to procure sophisticated weapons, including air defence systems and surface to sea missiles, and stated that Israel would act to prevent Hizbullah from obtaining such systems. The United Nations takes those allegations seriously but is not currently in a position to verify them independently.

44. Hizbullah remained engaged in fighting in the Qalamoun region of the Syrian Arab Republic, and acknowledged publicly its role in the battle for control of the Syrian border town of Zabadani. A number of funerals for members of Hizbullah killed in the fighting were held during the reporting period. Other Lebanese individuals were also reported to have joined groups that are fighting in the Syrian conflict, including the Nusra Front and ISIL. At least five Lebanese citizens were reported to have been killed fighting for ISIL in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq during the reporting period. On 5 October, an improvised explosive device exploded in the Lebanese town of Shtura next to a vehicle carrying Hizbullah fighters towards the Syrian Arab Republic. The blast caused an unknown number of casualties.

45. The situation along the Lebanese-Syrian border was more stable during the reporting period, although there were continued reports of the movement of fighters and arms trafficking between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 16 July and 15 August, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested individuals in possession of quantities of arms in the Bekaa Valley. The relative improvement in the situation was partly due to the expanded deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces along

border areas; there were also reports of Syrian militants moving away from the border deeper into the Syrian Arab Republic. The Lebanese Armed Forces reported that they had ambushed and killed five armed elements from the Nusra Front on 1 July. They also repulsed infiltration attempts and targeted militants around the town of Aarsal on 4 July and 2 August.

46. During the reporting period there was also a continuing decline in the number of incidents of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon. There were 78 incidents of shooting, five incidents of shelling and four air strikes by Syrian Government aircraft on Lebanese territory. The incidents caused two fatalities and at least 18 casualties. Efforts to release the 26 soldiers and security personnel taken hostage by the Nusra Front and ISIL in Aarsal in August 2014 continued but had not yet resulted in their release. The families of the hostages have held small protests and continue to mount a vigil calling for their release.

47. Bilateral support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and security forces continued during the reporting period. On 19 September, members of the international community met to share information and coordinate support to the Lebanese Armed Forces under the auspices of the Executive Military Commission established pursuant to the International Support Group for Lebanon. A meeting of the coordination mechanism, co-chaired by Jean Qahwaji, Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, and my Special Coordinator, took place on 22 September, when the Lebanese Armed Forces briefed the participants on their preparation of an updated capabilities development plan. The new plan is intended to reflect outstanding needs following the receipt of a grant of \$3 billion from Saudi Arabia and to project a holistic vision of military requirements for the 10-year period ahead. At the meeting of the International Support Group on 30 September, the Government of the United States of America announced a doubling of funding to the Lebanese Armed Forces, to over \$150 million by 2016.

48. The implementation of the security plans in Tripoli and the Bekaa continued to contribute to a general calm within Lebanon. There were, however, isolated incidents in the reporting period. On 1 July, dozens were reported to have been injured in fighting between different communities in Saadiyat. On 8 September, a Sheikh accused of recruiting Sunni men to fight for Hizbullah-affiliated resistance brigades was assaulted in Saadnayel. The proliferation of arms outside the control of the State led to at least 17 fatalities and a number of injuries during the reporting period. Illegally held arms were used in at least 11 personal disputes.

49. Conditions for refugees in Lebanon continued to deteriorate. Restrictive residency measures for Syrian nationals continued to prevent admission to Lebanon to all, other than in exceptional humanitarian circumstances. Approximately 70 per cent of refugees were living below the poverty line. Refugees remained at risk of eviction from their dwellings and faced increased challenges in residing legally in Lebanon, making them vulnerable to arrest. There continued to be reports of negative coping mechanisms including early and forced marriage, survival sex and growing concerns relating to child labour. The United Nations continued its dialogue with the Government of Lebanon on ways to facilitate the legal residency of refugees and access to livelihood opportunities in the country.

50. As at 22 October, \$839 million had so far been received against the \$1.97 billion required under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. New pledges were made during the month of September by a number of international partners for the

region. Despite the new pledges, funding to meet growing needs remains limited, particularly as the winter season approaches. Funding shortfalls caused a reduction of 50 per cent in food assistance to Syrian refugees.

51. On 21 September, the Ministry of Education, with the support of UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), international partners and donors, launched the "Back to School" campaign, providing free education to approximately 166,000 Lebanese and 200,000 Syrian refugee children in public schools. A similar programme provided free education for 100,000 Syrian students last year. Despite those efforts, at least 200,000 Syrian students will still be left out of school. The Ministry of Education, supported by the United Nations, and a number of international partners are designing alternative programmes to identify informal education opportunities and enrol the additional students in such programmes, with a view to bringing them into the formal education system in the future.

52. Very few Palestine refugees entered Lebanon from the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period, following the application of restrictions imposed on their entry by the Government of Lebanon in May 2014. The total number of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic recorded with the UNRWA in Lebanon decreased slightly, to 43,000, following the return of some refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic, with others reportedly leaving the country trying to reach Europe. They continue to face restrictions on renewing their legal status in Lebanon, which causes further humanitarian challenges. The suspension of monthly cash assistance for housing, which started in July, also increased the vulnerability of this group.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

53. Five manual mine clearance teams, one explosive ordnance disposal team and one mechanical mine clearance team from the UNIFIL troop-contributing countries were validated and deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. UNIFIL cleared more than 1,707 square metres of contaminated land to provide access to Blue Line points during the reporting period. One anti-personnel landmine was located and destroyed. The United Nations Mine Action Service conducted 16 quality assurance visits to operational and completed sites, ensuring compliance with International Mine Action Standards. The Service also conducted 25 safety monitoring visits to refurbishment sites and covered 19 coordination meetings, briefings and explosive hazard safety demonstrations. Bush fires in the UNIFIL area of operations caused the detonation of explosive remnants of war or landmines on five occasions. There were no reported injuries.

F. Delineation of borders

54. During the reporting period, no progress was made towards the delineation or demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border, including in areas where it is uncertain or disputed, as called for in Security Council resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). Extending the authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout all Lebanese territory and enabling the Lebanese security forces and Lebanese Armed Forces to secure borders to prevent the entry of arms or related materiel necessitates

the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic as soon as practicable.

55. There has also been no progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms. There has still been no reaction to the provisional definition of that area contained in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641) from either Israel or the Syrian Arab Republic.

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

56. UNIFIL continuously reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures in close coordination with the Lebanese authorities, while continuing to provide security awareness training to its personnel and their dependants. Force protection works to upgrade installations and assets are ongoing. Stringent security measures remain in force in a part of Sector East.

57. The Mission's movements along its main supply route to Beirut were impacted by armed clashes within the Palestinian refugee camp of Ein El Helweh during the month of August and by protests by civil society groups in relation to a proposed waste disposal site. Within the area of operations, the coastal road between Tyre and Naqoura was blocked by anti-Government protesters on 26 August, causing some limited disruption to the Mission's movements. UNIFIL closely liaised with the Lebanese authorities to address related security concerns.

58. UNIFIL continued to monitor proceedings at the Lebanese Military Court against individuals suspected of planning or perpetrating serious attacks against UNIFIL. In the case of a serious attack against UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent in 2007, an indictment against an arrested suspect was issued and the case was referred to the Permanent Military Court for trial. In the case of a serious attack perpetrated in 2008, a hearing at the Military Court of Appeal was conducted on 1 October; the next hearing is scheduled to take place on 25 November 2015. In three cases of serious attacks perpetrated in 2011, the investigation is ongoing. In a case of terror intent opened in January 2014, the hearing at the Permanent Military Court was conducted on 10 July 2015, and a new hearing is scheduled for 5 February 2016.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

59. As at 20 October 2015, the total military strength of UNIFIL was 10,727 military personnel from 39 troop-contributing countries, including 423 women. There were 257 international and 583 national civilian staff, including 76 and 148 women, respectively. In addition, 53 military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), including three women, were also part of UNIFIL. The Mission is working to increase the number of civilian and military women deployed, with a view to reducing gender imbalance in the Mission.

V. Observations

60. I welcome the prevailing calm and stability in the UNIFIL area of operations and along the Blue Line, which is due in large part to the commitment and efforts by the parties in close coordination with UNIFIL to maintain the cessation of hostilities and a climate of stability amidst the evolving regional security dynamics. The situation in southern Lebanon, however, is still fragile, and the risk for escalation and miscalculation remains. I therefore urge the Governments of Israel and Lebanon to work with my Special Coordinator and UNIFIL to consolidate the current calm for the sake of stability in Lebanon and the broader region.

61. I further welcome the commitment of the parties to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the UNIFIL presence, demonstrated by the continued cooperation with the Mission and the reliance by the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces on the Mission's liaison and coordination arrangements as a key element in preventing and defusing tensions along the Blue Line. I have taken note of the reduction in the tone of rhetoric by all concerned since my previous report and of the constructive approach adopted by both sides in the tripartite forum.

62. I encourage both parties to seize the window of opportunity presented by the prevailing calm in the UNIFIL area of operations and along the Blue Line to achieve concrete progress on the ground. To that end, UNIFIL has further intensified its engagement with the parties to facilitate agreement on localized security arrangements in areas along the Blue Line aimed at preventing conflict and building confidence, and I look forward to their implementation.

63. I encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to find points of agreement for the visible marking of the Blue Line through constructive engagement with UNIFIL, including in relation to those stretches of the Blue Line where marking is deemed contentious by the parties. I also recall that full respect for the Blue Line is a critical factor in maintaining calm and stability in the area and that any deliberate violation of the Blue Line is unacceptable.

64. I call on the parties to make every effort to fulfil their respective obligations in order to achieve further progress towards the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Localized arrangements on the ground facilitated by UNIFIL can help to strengthen the current calm and stability along the Blue Line, but local solutions cannot substitute for a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution to the conflict, as envisaged in resolution 1701 (2006).

65. The absence of progress on the Shab'a Farms area in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006) remains a source of regret. Developments on the ground have continued to show the potential for destabilization that comes from not addressing that issue. I reiterate my call on the Governments of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to submit their responses to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area that I provided in my report of 30 October 2007.

66. The occupation of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line by the Israel Defense Forces continues, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). I once more remind Israel that it has an obligation to withdraw its armed forces from the area, in accordance with the resolution. I urge the Israeli authorities to take steps to that end and encourage them to make further use of the Mission's presence and

liaison and coordination apparatus to facilitate a smooth and secure withdrawal from the area.

67. It remains of serious concern that Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace on an almost daily basis, in complete disregard of the sovereignty of Lebanon and the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). I once again call on the Government of Israel to cease all overflights of Lebanese territory and territorial waters.

68. I am concerned about the presence of unauthorized weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations, in particular small arms firing at funeral processions, as observed by UNIFIL. I call on the Lebanese authorities, who have the primary responsibility in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006), to take all actions to ensure that there are no unauthorized armed personnel, assets or weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations.

69. I welcome the Mission's successful efforts to cultivate a positive relationship with the local population, which facilitated smooth conduct of operations. I am nevertheless concerned about incidents, albeit few, between local individuals and UNIFIL, and in particular about the firing incident at a UNIFIL vehicle. I call on the Lebanese authorities to do their utmost to apprehend the perpetrators and to take all necessary measures to prevent any incidents of aggressive behaviour against UNIFIL.

70. It should be recalled that the Government of Lebanon has the primary responsibility to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel, and I urge the Lebanese authorities to continue to cooperate with UNIFIL to guarantee adequate protection to the peacekeepers.

71. I condemn the participation of Lebanese citizens in the Syrian conflict in breach of the policy of disassociation adopted by the Government of Lebanon and of the principles of the Baabda Declaration of June 2012, which was agreed by all political parties of Lebanon, and the importance of which was reaffirmed by the Security Council and the International Support Group for Lebanon. I call on all Lebanese parties to cease any involvement in the Syrian conflict, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration, and to recommit to the policy of disassociation.

72. I condemn the shelling, shooting and aerial incursions into Lebanese border areas from the Syrian Arab Republic and reiterate that the lack of a delineated, demarcated Lebanese-Syrian border is no justification for violations of Lebanese sovereignty by any party. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and groups fighting in Qalamoun to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. I also condemn the movement of armed fighters and war materiel between the two countries in breach of resolution 1701 (2006).

73. The role of the Lebanese Armed Forces in deploying to protect Lebanon's borders, and their work, together with the security forces, in combating terrorism should be commended. The Lebanese Armed Forces alone bear responsibility for protecting Lebanon from external and domestic threats and defending the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. I regret the loss of life they have incurred as they have undertaken those duties in the service of their country. The unity of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the independence of its leadership must be preserved away from domestic and regional political pressures. In that context, I note the

extension of the posts of the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces and other senior officers to ensure continuity at a time when Lebanon faces multiple security challenges. I again call on those holding Lebanese soldiers and security officers hostage to release them immediately.

74. I welcome the continued bilateral support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and the renewed engagement of the international community through the meetings of the Executive Military Commission and coordination mechanism that took place in September. I note the preparation by the Lebanese Armed Forces of the updated capabilities development plan and encourage partners to be forthcoming with assistance to support the implementation of the new plan, including the strategic dialogue plan. The United Nations stands ready to support production of the updated plan, including through the development of the civil-military cooperation and human rights components. Building the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces for tasks mandated under resolution 1701 (2006) in the UNIFIL area of operations remains a strategic priority and an important element towards the full implementation of the resolution. I encourage Member States to provide assistance to meet the needs of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the context of the strategic dialogue plan as an integral part of the Lebanese Armed Forces' capabilities development plan.

75. I remain deeply concerned at the vacuum in the Presidency, which is responsible for weakening the institutions of Lebanon and the country's ability to respond to the substantial challenges it faces. I welcome the dialogue aimed at resolving the issue of the Presidency and reiterate that the election of a President must be a Lebanese process free from foreign interference. I urge all Lebanese leaders to adhere to the Constitution of Lebanon and to the Taef agreement and the National Pact, and to rise above partisan politics and act in the national interests of Lebanon. I therefore call on Members of Parliament boycotting the parliamentary sessions on the presidency to convene urgently and elect a President without further delay. I commend the continued leadership of Prime Minister Salam under difficult circumstances and urge Lebanon's parties to work with him to enable the Government to function effectively and to deliver on the legitimate needs and expectations of the Lebanese people.

76. I thank the Member States participating in the International Support Group for Lebanon for their continued commitment and for attending the recent high-level meeting in New York. The Group plays a key role in ensuring the international community's commitment to stability and security in Lebanon.

77. I note the recent protests by members of civil society calling for basic services and the effective functioning of the Government. I condemn the violence that injured demonstrators and members of the security forces and underscore the importance of protecting the rights of citizens to peacefully express their demands. In that regard, I note that the municipal elections scheduled for 2016 are an opportunity for Lebanese citizens to participate actively as stakeholders in the future of Lebanon. Measures to ensure improved participation and representation of women in politics should be put in place.

78. Five years into the Syrian conflict, I am concerned by the rising poverty rates and increased vulnerability among refugees and host populations. I appreciate the generosity of the Lebanese people and their granting safety and assistance to those seeking it, in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement. I am also thankful for

the significant contributions made so far by international donors to Lebanon. Given the scale of the refugee crisis, I reiterate my call on donors to increase their support to Lebanon as a matter of urgency. I also underscore the need for international partners to put in place modalities for longer-term financing to ensure that the countries of the region hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees have access to structural support from international financial institutions. In that connection, I welcome the recent initiative launched in Lima by the World Bank jointly with the United Nations to explore innovative financing mechanisms to help lessen the economic and social burden of countries in the region hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, including Lebanon, notwithstanding the countries' middle-income country status. I also call for increased support to conflict prevention initiatives and for partners to consider financial assistance to Lebanon as investments in our collective security.

79. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the State continues to pose a serious threat to Lebanese sovereignty and stability, and contradicts the country's obligations under resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). Should these arms provoke conflict, the consequences for Lebanon are potentially very grave. It is therefore vital that once a President is elected, the National Dialogue reconvene to address issues of fundamental importance to Lebanon and of direct concern for the international community, including the arms held by Hizbullah and other groups. It remains important that earlier decisions of the National Dialogue be implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command and Fatah al Intifada.

80. I am concerned by the risk that radicalization poses to Lebanon's unity and multi-confessionalism. I encourage all Lebanese parties and regional and international stakeholders to work with my Special Coordinator on developing an effective approach for the prevention of violent extremism in Lebanon.

81. I note with concern the number of fatal incidents involving illegally held firearms during the reporting period. The proliferation of arms outside the control of the State is a serious threat to the personal security of all citizens and undermines the rule of law. I call on Member States to uphold their obligation under resolution 1701 (2006) to prevent the sale or supply of arms or related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon.

82. I welcome the continued commitment of the Palestinian leadership to disassociate the Palestinian camps in Lebanon from the violence in the region. The need to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, without prejudice to the resolution of the refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement, is ever more urgent. Palestine refugees displaced in Lebanon from the Syrian Arab Republic are becoming increasingly vulnerable. I welcome the donor contributions which averted the forced postponement of the start of the school year owing to a shortage of funding for UNRWA. I encourage donors to be forthcoming in their support of UNRWA to avert a similar funding crisis in 2016 and enable the agency to carry out its mandate to assist Palestine refugees effectively.

83. For both Lebanon and Israel, exploration and development of their respective offshore oil and gas resources are national priorities. I again encourage both

Lebanon and Israel to proceed with steps that would allow for resolution of the dispute over the exclusive economic zone, as no progress was made during the reporting period. The United Nations stands ready to assist if both parties so request.

84. The economic, humanitarian, social and security challenges facing Lebanon are considerable and mounting as each year of the Syrian conflict passes without resolution. The pressure on Lebanon is considerable and I urge further and expedited humanitarian and developmental assistance for Lebanon and greater burden-sharing by the international community. Such support must be paralleled by action by the leaders of Lebanon to resolve the political stalemate, and particularly through the election of a President. It is only by working together that we will be able to ensure peace, security and stability for the whole of Lebanon, in an environment that promotes and protects human rights for all. Progress on the implementation of outstanding Security Council resolutions will be central to longer-term solutions to end conflict in the region and to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

85. I wish to extend my appreciation to all countries contributing troops and equipment to UNIFIL and Observer Group Lebanon of UNTSO. I thank my Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Sigrid Kaag, and the staff of her office; the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Luciano Portolano; and the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL for their important roles in promoting stability and security in Lebanon and across the Blue Line at a critical time for the country and the region.
