



Security Council

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

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in response to the request of the Security Council, in its statement by the President of 12 December 2006 (S/PRST/2006/52), to report on a quarterly basis on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), notably on further progress made towards the achievement of a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution. This is the third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of that resolution, and it follows the letter of 1 December 2006, which was a factual update on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/933), in particular on the operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and other relevant United Nations activities. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the steps taken to implement resolution 1701 (2006).

2. I am pleased to report that the overall commitment by the Government of Israel and the Government of Lebanon to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) remains strong. I am also encouraged by the major strategic changes that have been made in the area south of the Litani River, including the near full deployment of a strengthened UNIFIL and the deployment of the Lebanese Army. I am also encouraged by the absence of any positions other than those of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL along the Blue Line. However, the present report is submitted against the background of an acute and continuing political crisis in Lebanon and mounting Israeli concerns about the unauthorized transfer of arms across the Lebanese-Syrian border. I am concerned that there has not been greater progress on key issues that are vital to the achievement of a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution, such as the captured Israeli soldiers and the Lebanese prisoners, the Shab'a Farms and the halting of Israeli overflights. I am also distressed by the continuing danger posed to Lebanese citizens in the south of Lebanon owing to the use of cluster bombs by the Israeli Defense Force during the 2006 conflict.



II. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Respect for the Blue Line

3. Since the letter of the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/933), the military and security situation in the UNIFIL area of operations has been generally stable. However, the cessation of hostilities was breached by a serious incident along the Blue Line on 7 February 2007.

4. On 7 February, the Israeli Defense Force informed UNIFIL of its intention to cross the Israeli technical fence that night, near the Lebanese village of Maroun Al-Ras, to clear a number of suspected mines identified north of the fence on Israeli territory. The Lebanese Armed Forces pointed out through UNIFIL that, should the Israeli Defense Force cross the technical fence during the night, it would be difficult to ensure that no violation of the Blue Line would occur. The Lebanese Armed Forces stressed that they would not accept the planned Israeli night-time operation and would open fire should it be conducted. They proposed the action be suspended until the following day. The UNIFIL Force Commander urged restraint and emphasized to the Lebanese Armed Forces that such an action would constitute a breach of the cessation of hostilities and a violation of resolution 1701 (2006). While acknowledging the security concerns of Israel, the Force Commander also urged the Israeli Defense Force to suspend its action and to resolve the matter by relaying its concerns through UNIFIL liaison channels and the holding of an urgent tripartite meeting. In the meantime, UNIFIL deployed two platoons to the area to establish a buffer zone between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israeli Defense Force, and later increased its strength to a company of mechanized infantry, reinforced by a tank platoon and supported by artillery, with another mechanized infantry company in reserve close by.

5. Despite the Force Commander's appeals, the Israeli Defense Force proceeded with the operation that night. The Lebanese Armed Forces at first fired warning shots after the Israeli Defense Force had made an opening in the fence, and then intensified fire, thus breaching the cessation of hostilities agreement, towards the bulldozer of the Israeli Defense Force, which had passed through the fence but was still on the Israeli side of the Blue Line. The Israeli Defense Force responded by firing a round. While the UNIFIL Force Commander, through his contacts with the parties, was able to negotiate a ceasefire, the bulldozer and accompanying excavator subsequently violated the Blue Line when carrying out earthworks to clear the suspected mines.

6. The Force Commander convened a tripartite meeting with senior representatives of the Israeli Defense Force and the Lebanese Armed Forces on 12 February and presented them with a report on the incident by UNIFIL. The report concluded that both parties had violated resolution 1701 (2006) by their actions that night. It recommended that the Blue Line be visibly marked in sensitive areas, that the agreed coordination and liaison arrangements be brought into force, and called on the parties to make use of the tripartite coordination mechanism in order to avoid similar incidents in the future.

7. That serious violation of resolution 1701 (2006) came only two days after the Israeli Defense Force had taken unilateral action to destroy other suspected improvised explosive devices detected near the Blue Line at the same location. On

that occasion, the Israeli Defense Force informed UNIFIL of the devices but, before UNIFIL and Lebanese armed forces patrols could arrive at the scene, the Israeli Defense Force opened fire, detonating one device and causing two others to burn out. Subsequently, a UNIFIL team established that the devices were located some metres north of the Blue Line and that Israeli rounds had therefore violated the line and entered Lebanese territory. As a result of that action, evidence was destroyed and it was not possible to determine whether the devices were new.

8. Subsequent to the two incidents described above, UNIFIL reported an increased level of tension along the Blue Line. There have been several reports that Israeli and Lebanese soldiers on either side of the line have aimed weapons at each other in the area of Fatima Gate. Most recently, on 2 March, a Lebanese youth approached the Blue Line next to United Nations position 8-33 and, despite warnings from UNIFIL, started digging in the ground on the Lebanese side adjacent to the Blue Line. After warning the boy several times, the Israeli Defense Force fired one warning shot and, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006), forced the boy at gunpoint to cross the Blue Line into Israel, where he was taken into custody. He was released to UNIFIL personnel later in the day.

9. I am concerned by all violations of the Blue Line, which also constitute violations of resolution 1701 (2006). Throughout the period under review, UNIFIL continued to report Israeli air violations of the Blue Line by overflights of jets and unmanned aerial vehicles. Incursions into Lebanese airspace continue on an almost daily basis. UNIFIL reported a significant increase in Israeli air violations in February and at the beginning of March; on some days, more than 10 Israeli overflights were reported in its area of operations. The Government of Lebanon continues to protest the overflights as a serious violation of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006), while the Government of Israel continues to maintain that the overflights are a necessary security measure that will continue until the two abducted Israeli soldiers are released and the measures established in paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1701 (2006) are implemented. On 21 February, UNIFIL reported 10 Israeli overflights in its area of operations. On the same day, the Lebanese Armed Forces opened anti-aircraft fire near Tyre.

10. On a number of occasions, UNIFIL also reported the presence of hunters with rifles, as well as a number of minor ground violations of the Blue Line from the Lebanese side, mainly by local shepherds. I would remind the parties that any crossing of the Blue Line, whether planned or inadvertent, endangers the precarious calm that prevails in southern Lebanon.

11. I am pleased to report that both parties have now agreed to the UNIFIL proposal to visibly mark the Blue Line in sensitive areas, particularly in locations where there is a significant distance between the line and the Israeli technical fence. UNIFIL is engaged with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israeli Defense Force to initiate the process of erecting markers at selected points, in close coordination with both parties, in order to prevent inadvertent violations. Regular Lebanese patrols along the Blue Line have also contributed to providing better security and preventing violations by civilians on a number of occasions. The Lebanese Armed Forces have also enhanced control of Lebanese territorial waters south of Naqoura to prevent violations of the buoy-line by local fishermen.

B. Security arrangements

12. The Israeli Defense Force continues to maintain a presence north of the Blue Line inside Lebanese territory through its control of the northern part of Ghajar village. UNIFIL has been engaged with the Israeli Defense Force and the Lebanese Armed Forces in order to finalize temporary security arrangements for northern Ghajar, which would facilitate the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the area. While the arrangements have been approved by the Government of Israel, the Government of Lebanon has suggested an amendment to the text, which is under consideration.

13. There have been no significant changes in the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces inside the UNIFIL area of operations since the letter of the Secretary-General of 1 December to the President of the Security Council. There are three Lebanese brigades (two light infantry and one heavy infantry) deployed along the Blue Line, and another brigade in the area of Tyre. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintain a total of 142 positions in the UNIFIL area of operations, of which 45 are along the Blue Line. A total of 114 of the Lebanese positions are checkpoints. On 5 December 2006, a UNIFIL patrol came across a significant number of mortar shells and rockets in the general area of Kafr Shuba and informed the Lebanese Armed Forces. The following day, a UNIFIL patrol revisited the area and discovered five booby-trapped or mined obstacles, apparently newly laid, in the same location. UNIFIL dismantled the obstacles and the Lebanese Armed Forces confiscated the ammunition.

14. UNIFIL continues to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in ensuring that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is free of any armed personnel, assets or weapons other than those of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL. The mission received no reports of unauthorized armed personnel in the area during the period under review, except for local hunters and Palestinian armed elements, who are largely confined to the refugee camps. On a number of occasions, however, UNIFIL came across abandoned unauthorized arms, ammunition or related material in its area of operations south of the Litani River. On all such occasions, UNIFIL informed the Lebanese Armed Forces, which took action to confiscate or to destroy the material. The Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL carried out coordinated operations in the Kafr Shuba area and in Wadi Zibquin with the aim of locating and clearing unauthorized arms, ammunition and mines. The Lebanese Armed Forces continue to monitor and control entry points into the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line through permanent checkpoints and patrols. Joint efforts by the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL have not detected illegal transfers of arms to the area south of the Litani River.

15. However, in public pronouncements, Hizbullah has claimed that it is strengthening its capacity and rebuilding its armed presence. On 16 February 2007, the Secretary-General of the organization, Sayyed Nasrallah, declared that Hizbullah fighters were present in southern Lebanon, although UNIFIL had no evidence of the presence of Hizbullah armed elements south of the Litani River. He further claimed that not only did Hizbullah have plenty of weapons, but that it also had the right to transport its arms within the country in order to combat Israel. On a number of occasions, Hizbullah also publicly criticized the Lebanese authorities for seizing a truckload of its rockets, rocket launchers and mortars on 8 February on the outskirts of Beirut, and demanded that the Lebanese army hand back the weapons, which it

described as “arms of the resistance”. Such statements are an open admission of activities that constitute a direct violation of provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) that were accepted by Hizbullah last year.

16. During the reporting period, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force hailed and confirmed the identity of over 2,000 ships, bringing the total number to over 3,000 since the Task Force was established. It detected 10 suspicious vessels, which were inspected by Lebanese naval or customs officials on arrival in port. No illegal arms were discovered. The Task Force also assisted two vessels in distress, and participated in search and rescue operations that saved the lives of 18 seamen. Effective arrangements have been put in place between the Task Force and the Lebanese Navy with regard to access to Lebanese territorial waters, the conduct of boarding and inspections, communications and reporting procedures.

17. The UNIFIL liaison and coordination mechanism with both the Israeli and Lebanese armed forces has been generally effective in addressing all military and security issues. The Force Commander holds regular tripartite meetings with senior representatives of both parties. As witnessed following the incident of 7 February, the mechanism has become instrumental in addressing critical security matters and is now a key element in the mission’s efforts to foster stability in southern Lebanon.

18. The Lebanese Armed Forces, which are estimated to total some 55,000 military personnel, have, according to resolution 1701 (2006), a significant number of essential tasks to carry out, including the maintenance of peace and security in southern Lebanon in cooperation with UNIFIL, and helping to secure the country’s land and maritime borders. However, the country’s ongoing political crisis has also required the Lebanese Armed Forces to deploy in Beirut and in other areas of the country to ensure internal security. These additional tasks have put considerable strain on the Forces, whose entire army corps is currently deployed, and have sometimes limited their ability to carry out the tasks required under resolution 1701 (2006).

19. It has become clear in recent weeks that the Lebanese Armed Forces are facing considerable capacity problems, which have had an impact on their ability to respond quickly to some UNIFIL requests, including coordinated search operations. UNIFIL has received a number of requests for equipment from the Lebanese Armed Forces, including, for example, night-vision goggles, which the mission is not currently able to provide. Representatives of both the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations have been approaching potential donors on this issue. I note that several interested partners have already made some contributions and I would urge others to come forward and assist the Lebanese Armed Forces to carry out their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006).

20. While acknowledging the capacity problems of the Lebanese Armed Forces, I have also noted that on some recent occasions their units have shown a certain reluctance to respond to requests from UNIFIL, including when conducting coordinated search operations. In each case, however, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces were able to agree on a tactical approach that allowed joint operations to go forward. The Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence and the Lebanese Armed Forces Commander have reassured the UNIFIL Force Commander that the Lebanese forces are determined to work closely with UNIFIL and, given the good cooperation that the mission has received since 2006, I am confident that the

Lebanese Armed Forces are committed to carrying out their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006).

21. It should also be noted that there have been a number of incidents when UNIFIL patrols have faced stone throwing, mainly by local youths. The Lebanese Armed Forces have taken action to prevent such isolated incidents and in some cases have detained the perpetrators. Municipal authorities in a small number of towns and villages raised concerns about some UNIFIL activities in their areas, in particular patrolling with heavy vehicles. However, in general, local authorities and residents have been well disposed to the mission, which endeavours to carry out its mandated tasks with sensitivity and minimum disruption to the local community. I welcome the public statements that leaders from all political factions have made promoting good relations between the local residents and UNIFIL.

22. While coordination and liaison between UNIFIL and the Israeli Defense Force have been generally good, the UNIFIL Force Commander was unable to establish direct contact with senior Israeli Defense Force representatives for much of the time during the incidents along the Blue Line in February 2007, contravening agreed arrangements. It is of critical importance that the Israeli Defense Force ensures that an officer, of appropriate rank and authority, can be contacted at all times by the UNIFIL Force Commander, so that any future incidents arising along the Blue Line can be quickly resolved before they escalate.

C. Disarming armed groups

23. Given the considerable military presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the United Nations Force south of the Litani River, senior commanders of both forces believe it would be very difficult for unauthorized armed personnel to establish any new military capacity in that area. At the same time, unarmed personnel, suspected of being affiliated to Hizbullah, have been observed monitoring UNIFIL activities at various points throughout its area of operations, at times taking photographs and filming.

24. There have, however, been a number of reports of activities conducted by armed elements north of the Litani River, outside the UNIFIL area of operations. The reports have not been denied by either the Government of Lebanon or Hizbullah. Armed elements, suspected of being members of Hizbullah, have been observed constructing new facilities in the Bourrhoz region, just north of the Litani River. With regard to activities outside the UNIFIL area of operations, it should be noted that the Lebanese authorities and armed forces have primary responsibility for preventing any hostile or armed action being launched from within Lebanese territory.

25. However, the stated position of the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces is that the forces apply the same rules in adjacent areas north of the Litani River as in the area to its south, and that they would prevent any armed actions from being carried out by unauthorized armed elements in either region.

26. A further update on the status of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias will be provided in my fifth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), due in April 2007. It should be noted that, with reference to paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006) and the issue of disarmament, I have already

proposed, in my report of 12 September 2006 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/730), that the disarming of Hizbullah and other militia should take place through a political process that would lead to the full authority of the Government of Lebanon so that there would be no weapons or authority than its own. I am still waiting for the Government of Lebanon, further to its decision to adopt the Seven-Point Plan, to define such a political process.

D. Arms embargo

27. Over the past few weeks, the Government of Israel has provided a series of detailed intelligence briefings to senior United Nations representatives that indicate serious breaches of the arms embargo across the Lebanese-Syrian border. The briefings included a specific example of a reported arms shipment to Hizbullah early in January across the Lebanese-Syrian border. The date, exact times and names of places of the incident were reported to United Nations officials.

28. Israel claims that hundreds of such shipments, including short- and longer-range rockets, anti-tank and anti-aircraft defence systems, have crossed the Lebanese-Syrian border since the end of the 2006 conflict.

29. With regard to Israeli charges of weapon smuggling across the Lebanese-Syrian border, Lebanese authorities have requested that evidence be provided to allow experts to verify the allegations. Some senior Lebanese officials have denied the Israeli allegations.

30. While the Lebanese authorities, in their workplan to control all the country's borders, acknowledge that much remains to be done to strengthen their border-control capacity and modernize their current systems, they also point out the progress that has already been achieved in this regard and the plans and projects under way to further improve that capacity. A joint security committee, headed by the Director-General of General Security, and comprising representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Customs Authorities, Internal Security and General Security, has been established to monitor and control all Lebanese international borders, liaise with international partners providing assistance and implement applicable laws and regulations.

31. The Syrian Arab Republic has indicated, most recently in the letter of its Permanent Representative dated 1 March 2007, that it has taken all measures required on its borders to prevent smuggling between its territory and Lebanon. Its Permanent Representative has also informed senior United Nations representatives that, since the commitment to deploy an additional battalion and take other measures made by President Assad to the Secretary-General in September 2006, the Syrian Arab Republic has doubled its border guards and increased its patrols along its border with Lebanon. The Syrian Arab Republic also alleges that Israel is sending weapons to some Lebanese groups in order to affect the situation in Lebanon negatively. It has not however provided any evidence in support of that allegation.

32. Further to the request contained in the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 12 December 2006 (S/PRST/2006/52) inviting me to pursue further a technical and independent assessment of the situation along the Lebanese-Syrian border, a United Nations team of border police experts made a second visit to

Lebanon late in the reporting period. The team sought feedback from relevant Lebanese authorities on the report provided to the Government concerning the findings of the first assessment mission, and to evaluate progress made since the visit conducted in September 2006.

33. The team was encouraged by the commitment of representatives of the relevant border security agencies to fully implement its findings. There has been some effort to improve cooperation and coordination between headquarters and field levels in all four agencies concerned. However, the lack of critical equipment and basic training for Customs and other officials continues to hamper efforts to properly secure the Lebanese land border with the Syrian Arab Republic. On the maritime border, the recent donation of 10 small patrol boats by the United Arab Emirates should also be welcomed. While they alone will be insufficient to fully monitor and patrol Lebanese territorial waters, the boats will provide an important new capacity to the Lebanese Navy once they are fully operational.

34. The Lebanese authorities informed the team that they accepted the findings of the report with regard to equipment, methods, capacity and training. The next phase is for the border security agencies to fully implement the enhancements while seeking the necessary bilateral assistance. Bilateral assistance to the Government of Lebanon to help enhance those capabilities will continue to be critical. I welcome and am encouraged by the work of a team from Germany that has been working closely with relevant Lebanese officials to launch a pilot project on the northern part of the Lebanese-Syrian border, as well as devising training programmes and delivering equipment. I would like to thank the Government of Germany, the Government of the United Arab Emirates and other donor countries for their crucial ongoing assistance in this regard.

35. The team has suggested a follow-up mission in four to six months to allow the Government of Lebanon adequate time to implement the improvements.

E. Land mines and cluster bombs

36. The extent of contamination from unexploded ordnance, namely from cluster bomblets and sub-munitions, has become clearer since the letter of the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council (S/2007/933). The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre, in conjunction with the Lebanese national demining office, has identified an additional 32 individual cluster strike locations. As at 27 February 2007, a total of 854 cluster bomblet strike locations had been recorded. The contamination covers more than 34 million square metres, some of which had been cleared from mines and unexploded ordnance prior to the 2006 conflict.

37. Each strike location contains hundreds of individual bomblets or sub-munitions. As at 22 February, the humanitarian toll of these explosive remnants of war on civilians amounted to 22 deaths and 159 injuries. In the past two months, UNIFIL battalions experienced five accidents, in which five members of the ordnance removal team — four from the Belgian battalion and one from the China battalion — were injured in a series of unfortunate demining and cluster bomb incidents.

38. While the above numbers are alarming, there has been a decrease in the number of victims per day, which can be attributed to the joint efforts of the clearance capacities contracted and bilaterally funded by the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL and the United Nations. As at 25 January 2007, approximately 10 per cent of the contaminated area had been cleared, through the location and destruction of 103,010 unexploded cluster munitions. In addition to cluster munitions, unexploded bombs, rockets, mortars and other ordnance also litter the south and areas to the north and east of Lebanon.

39. Despite repeated United Nations efforts to receive detailed information from the Israeli Defense Force regarding the exact location, quantity and type of cluster munitions utilized during the conflict, I regret to report that Israel has not yet provided UNIFIL with these data. While I acknowledge receipt of Israeli maps of mines laid until the withdrawal of the Israeli Defense Force from southern Lebanon in 2000, I reiterate my request, as contained in my previous reports, for Israel to provide detailed data on its use of cluster munitions to the United Nations as soon as possible.

F. Captured soldiers and prisoners

40. The return of the two Israeli soldiers abducted by Hizbullah on 12 July 2006 and a solution of the question of Lebanese citizens detained in Israel have been the focus of further intense efforts made by the facilitator appointed by my predecessor to handle these issues.

41. Hizbullah publicly rejected the concept of an immediate and unconditional release of the two Israeli soldiers at an early stage, insisting instead on the release of large numbers of detainees in Israel beyond the framework of resolution 1701 (2006). There were also prohibitive demands with regard to proof that the two Israeli soldiers were alive.

42. On the Israeli side, I note that the Lebanese citizens captured by the Israeli Defense Force during the 2006 conflict have all been visited by the International Committee of the Red Cross and have been able to write letters to their families. I also note the readiness to solve the very few Lebanese cases, on condition that Hizbullah honours its obligations.

43. More recently, a conceptual framework has been developed which should lead the way to an agreement on an exchange of information and several gestures of humanitarian significance. Against that background, I hope Hizbullah will allow the facilitator to see the two abducted Israeli soldiers very soon.

44. In his contacts with Hizbullah, the facilitator has emphasized my firm expectation that a solution for the release of the two soldiers will be found soon, on the basis of restraint in demands, moderation and compassion for the victims of the recent conflict. Not least in view of the international standing of Lebanon, I have urged Hizbullah leaders to avoid disproportionate demands and protracted bargaining that cannot be considered adequate in the face of the humanitarian urgency of the cases and the clear message of resolution 1701 (2006).

45. I will inform the Security Council immediately in the event of any major developments in this area.

G. Delineation of borders

46. A permanent solution to the issue of the delineation of borders remains contingent upon the delineation of the border between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, in fulfilment of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). In this regard, the Secretary-General has noted the repeated statements of representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic made over the past year that the Shab'a Farms area is Lebanese. Such statements constitute a new legal reality, as outlined in more detail in the third and fourth semi-annual reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004). At the same time, I note in particular the alternative path suggested by the Government of Lebanon in its Seven-Point Plan, namely placing the Shab'a Farms under United Nations jurisdiction until a border is permanently delineated and Lebanese sovereignty over them is settled.

47. In December 2006, I noted in my letter to the President of the Council that a senior cartographer had been engaged to examine the geographical definition of the Shab'a Farms area. Over the past months, the cartographer has been reviewing all available material.

48. The Government of Lebanon has submitted a comprehensive collection of papers in support of its claim to the Shab'a Farms area, including over 150 property deeds, cadastral maps of two villages, a general administrative map and a map on which a "proposed State limit" is depicted. Summary assessments included with the papers, covering the period from the end of Ottoman rule to the present time, cite decrees, settlements of land-use disputes, legal opinions, and the proceedings of joint Lebanese-Syrian boundary committees. Furthermore, they also take account of documents and sketch maps recently found in the diplomatic archives located in Nantes, France, which attest to the long history of the Lebanese identity of the Shab'a Farms. The Government of Lebanon contends that the 1920 intra-mandate line that defined the boundary between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in this region was drawn with scant knowledge of the geographical realities; the resulting status has been perpetuated ever since.

49. In the recent attempts to define the Shab'a Farms area, it should be noted that many of the documents being examined, including the above-mentioned diplomatic correspondence, were not previously available.

50. The cartographer is in the process of classifying and analysing the documentation verifying and recompiling information that could be considered evidence of a boundary in the Shab'a Farms area. While good progress has been made, some papers have not been translated. In addition, further amplification has been requested of Lebanon, and a similar call for any relevant material has been made to the Syrian Arab Republic. I also look forward to cooperation with Israel.

III. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

51. In response to the decision by the Council in its resolution 1701 (2006) to supplement and enhance the numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operations of UNIFIL, the mission continued its phased deployment during the reporting

period. With the second phase of deployment complete, as at 20 February, the total number of military personnel had reached 12,431, from 29 contributing countries. A current total of 10,479 ground troops operate in two established sectors: Sector West, based in Tibnin, and Sector East, based in Marjayoun. The total UNIFIL naval personnel now number 1,772. It is with regret that I report that, on 7 March, a UNIFIL armoured personnel carrier carrying four Belgian soldiers had an accident in the Kafr Hammam area. Two of the peacekeepers died immediately and a third one died later in hospital. The fourth sustained serious injuries and has been repatriated.

52. The mission continues to recruit civilian staff. As at 8 February, staff strength totalled 473 (163 international and 310 national staff) of an authorized maximum of 1,078 staff (390 international and 688 national staff). The increased staff strength is reflected across all civilian functions of the mission, particularly in the critical area of mission support.

53. The Office of Political Affairs, which now comprises civil affairs, public information, and an office for joint planning and coordination, was also augmented during the period under review. Civil affairs teams have been deployed in both sectors of the mission: the Sector East team, co-located with the civil-military cooperation cell in Marjayoun, and the Sector West team, currently operating from UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura. Civil affairs is working closely with the civil-military cooperation cells; activities focus on relations with local communities and confidence-building measures. The military public information cell is now fully integrated into the public information office, and the office for joint planning and coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence and other relevant authorities, is now fully operational in Beirut. At the same time, a number of UNIFIL staff officers are also based with the Israeli Defense Force at Northern Command headquarters, and the mission is seeking an agreement with the Government of Israel to establish a small office in Tel Aviv.

54. On 2 February 2007, Major General Claudio Graziano (Italy) took over the command of UNIFIL from Major General Alain Pellegrini (France). I would like to commend General Pellegrini for his outstanding contribution to the work of UNIFIL, and especially for his exemplary performance during the hostilities of summer 2006 and his subsequent role in overseeing the recent augmentation of the mission.

IV. Observations

55. I note and welcome the continued commitment by both the Government of Israel and the Government of Lebanon to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). I also note the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to the implementation of the resolution, as stated in its identical letters to me and the President of the Security Council dated 1 March 2007.

56. In Israel, there is growing criticism that resolution 1701 (2006) has not addressed the issues of most concern to Israelis, namely the return of its captured soldiers and reported arms movements to and within Lebanon. I would urge the Government of Israel to continue to work to implement all aspects of the resolution, without selectivity. I call on the Government of Israel, once again, to review its policy of flights over Lebanese airspace, which are a continuing violation of

resolution 1701 (2006), and most urgently to provide the United Nations with all information on cluster munitions fired during the 2006 conflict.

57. The Prime Minister of Lebanon has expressed his country's frustration with the continuing Israeli overflights, the rising civilian toll caused by Israeli cluster bombs and the slow progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms. In Lebanon, I welcome the support to UNIFIL and to resolution 1701 (2006) that has been expressed publicly by all Lebanese parties. However, the persistent political crisis in the country is now overshadowing the implementation of the resolution. I call on all Lebanese parties to recommit themselves to the principles of the Seven-Point Plan of the Government of Lebanon. An understanding which incorporates the principles of no rearmament of unauthorized groups, and no movement of arms other than with the consent of the Lebanese Armed Forces, should also be encouraged, especially in the current volatile security environment in the country. Such an understanding would reflect a broad-based Lebanese determination to both the letter and the spirit of resolution 1701 (2006).

58. The Lebanese Armed Forces have made significant and commendable strides towards fulfilling their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006), and I have been greatly encouraged by the cooperation and assistance provided by their highest-ranking leaders. Recognizing that the armed forces face considerable capacity problems and shortages of manpower and equipment, I call on the international community to provide relevant, timely and necessary bilateral assistance to the Government of Lebanon, to support the Lebanese Armed Forces working with UNIFIL to carry out its mandated tasks. In this regard, it should be noted that the Lebanese Armed Forces are the peacekeeping partner of UNIFIL, and the success of UNIFIL is tied to the capacities and capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

59. While the Government of Lebanon and its armed forces have provided crucial support to UNIFIL, and the Government of Israel and its armed forces have helped to facilitate the mission's new mandated tasks, both parties can do more to ensure the successful implementation of this aspect of resolution 1701 (2006). I urge both parties to commit themselves fully to furthering close liaison and coordination arrangements with UNIFIL, especially through full participation and information-sharing at tripartite meetings.

60. I welcome the efforts made by the Government of Lebanon to extend its authority over its territory through its own legitimate armed forces, and encourage the Lebanese Armed Forces to continue to provide full and timely assistance to UNIFIL. In order to facilitate the swift withdrawal of remaining Israeli Defense Force personnel from Lebanese territory, I call on both parties to approve the temporary security arrangements for northern Ghajar.

61. The incidents along the Blue Line early in February were regrettable and could have been avoided. In the current atmosphere of fragile peace, both parties have a responsibility to avoid provocative actions likely to cause tension to escalate along the Blue Line. I am also concerned by the reported activities of unauthorized armed elements outside of the UNIFIL area of operations. I recall that the successful implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) depends upon the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon.

62. The information provided by Israeli military sources to senior United Nations representatives on alleged breaches of the arms embargo across the Lebanese-Syrian border was more detailed than that previously shown to the United Nations. While the information was substantial, its authentication requires independent military assessment.

63. Confidence-building measures to strengthen the Lebanese-Syrian border regime are highly recommended and urgently needed. The ongoing bilateral assistance provided by the Government of Germany is a welcome step in helping the Government of Lebanon to enhance its border security capacities. Technical assistance, training and equipment to improve Lebanese border security, other than that provided by Germany, has been slow to arrive.

64. I am encouraged that Lebanese authorities continue to commit themselves to full cooperation with the United Nations team of border police experts and to bilateral assistance programmes. It will clearly take some time for this initiative to progress. I call upon Member States and relevant regional organizations to redouble their efforts in support of the Government of Lebanon in this regard. In considering further steps to ensure the full implementation of paragraph 15 of resolution 1701 (2006), including the arms embargo, the Council may wish to consider supporting an independent assessment mission to monitor the border.

65. I would also strongly urge all Member States, in particular the Syrian Arab Republic, other regional States and the Islamic Republic of Iran to do all they can to ensure that the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) are fully respected. In this regard, in August 2006, I noted the measures that the Syrian Arab Republic committed itself to taking on its side of the border with Lebanon and further measures of which it has informed me.

66. The Shab'a Farms area remains a key issue in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). There is no alternative but to move forward on the issue with due diligence. The full cooperation of Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel in particular is required in assisting the senior cartographer to review relevant material and develop an accurate territorial definition of the Shab'a Farms area. I am pleased by the good progress that has been made by the senior cartographer and intend to report more fully in the next report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), due in June, when I expect the technical work to be completed. In the meantime, I wish to reiterate the urgent call on the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to take the necessary steps to delineate their common border, in fulfilment of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

67. I am concerned by a growing threat to the presence of the United Nations in Lebanon from extremist Islamist groups, which have reportedly found safe haven in Palestinian refugee camps. This presence in Palestinian camps has been reportedly strengthened in the period under review. In order to meet this threat, assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces and other relevant security forces is urgently required.

68. We need to be fully aware that challenging work remains ahead for the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Both parties could do more to further its implementation. Maintaining the momentum is the responsibility of the Lebanese, the Government of Israel, regional countries and other Member States. If there is no progress on core issues such as the prisoners, the Shab'a Farms area, Israeli overflights and enforcement of the arms embargo, progress on resolution 1701 (2006) will be severely tested in the months to come.