



Security Council

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Letter dated 14 August 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my latest report to the Security Council concerning the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2012/502), I hereby request the Security Council to consider the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which is due to expire on 31 August 2012. In a letter dated 21 July 2012 addressed to me, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon requested that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of one year, without amendment.

I refer to Security Council resolution 2004 (2011), in which the Council requested me to conduct a strategic review of UNIFIL, and my letter to the President of the Security Council conveying the main conclusions of the review (S/2012/151). UNIFIL is in the process of implementing the recommendations of the strategic review. Mechanisms are being developed to enable the three identified strategic priorities, namely to establish a comprehensive approach to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) that integrates the efforts of UNIFIL, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the United Nations country team; to further involve the Government of Lebanon in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and increase its involvement in southern Lebanon; and to further the strategic dialogue and increase the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The latter is intended to facilitate the gradual assumption by the Lebanese Armed Forces of effective and sustainable security control of the UNIFIL area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters, as a key element in supporting moves towards a permanent ceasefire.

UNIFIL continues to play a crucial role in ensuring peace and stability in southern Lebanon, as well as full respect for the Blue Line by both parties. In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL continues to monitor the cessation of hostilities and assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in taking steps towards the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of any unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. UNIFIL remains engaged with the parties on the outstanding issue of northern Ghajar, and continues to focus on all violations of the resolution, including ground and air violations. UNIFIL also takes all necessary action within its capabilities to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind.

Cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continues to be essential for the implementation of the Force's mandate. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continue to conduct a substantial number of coordinated operational



activities. The recent temporary redeployments of some units of Lebanese Armed Forces from the South Litani Sector to elsewhere in the country have not affected overall security control in the UNIFIL area of operations because UNIFIL has increased its operational activities. The current strength of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the UNIFIL area of operations stands at approximately two brigades and one battalion. The Lebanese Armed Forces leadership has committed itself to restoring the strength of the Lebanese Armed Forces to three brigades in the South Litani Sector as soon as the situation allows it. In line with the strategic review, UNIFIL continues to work closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces through the strategic dialogue in support of the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL is exploring with donors, including troop-contributing countries and other Member States, and the Office of the Special Coordinator the possibility of creating a coordination mechanism to ensure a comprehensive approach and support to the strategic dialogue process.

The Force's liaison and coordination arrangements with the parties, including the tripartite mechanism, have facilitated a number of recent constructive and pragmatic measures. UNIFIL continues to build on its efforts in promoting practical arrangements on the ground and understandings between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces, which would serve to further stabilize the situation along the Blue Line, remove pretexts and possible points of friction, and prevent future incidents, as well as build trust.

The process of visibly marking the Blue Line is proceeding with the marking of non-contentious points. The parties are continuing to give their full support to Blue Line marking as an essential confidence-building measure.

The Force has continued to ensure that the tripartite mechanism is as flexible as possible and able to discuss a wider range of issues at the request of the parties. In this regard, the parties have agreed to discuss maritime security issues through the tripartite mechanism.

There has been no progress in the establishment of a UNIFIL office in Tel Aviv.

The overall attitude of the local population towards UNIFIL remains positive. This notwithstanding, incidents of unfriendly behaviour towards UNIFIL patrols and personnel, and freedom of movement restrictions, continue to occur. Some of these incidents involved stone-throwing and the taking of United Nations property, such as cameras, geographic information systems, communication equipment and maps, from UNIFIL personnel by local civilians. UNIFIL strongly protested about the incidents to the Lebanese Armed Forces. The UNIFIL Force Commander has instructed UNIFIL troops to apply the rules of engagement in defence of themselves and their property while maintaining a non-confrontational posture. UNIFIL will continue to work closely with the Lebanese authorities, with the aim of minimizing the occurrence of such incidents. In addition, and in line with the recommendations of the strategic review, UNIFIL is developing a sustainable, long-term strategy, which includes reinforcement of the UNIFIL civil affairs capacity, particularly its national staff component, and strengthening its coordination of public outreach activities.

The Force's freedom of movement and the security and safety of its personnel is integral to the effective execution of its tasks. The Security Council in resolution 1773 (2007) urged all parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations and

UNIFIL, and to abide scrupulously by their obligation to respect the safety of UNIFIL and other United Nations personnel, including by avoiding any course of action which endangers United Nations personnel and by ensuring that UNIFIL is accorded full freedom of movement within its area of operations. The primary responsibility for ensuring freedom of movement to UNIFIL personnel in the area of operations lies with the Lebanese authorities.

The total number of military personnel, as at 15 July 2012, stands at 11,467. That number includes 10,043 UNIFIL ground troops deployed in two sectors, and 997 personnel serving in the Maritime Task Force. The UNIFIL civilian component numbers 346 international and 658 national staff. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations continues to work closely with the UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission to validate the observations and recommendations of the military capability study and ensure that the capability of UNIFIL to implement its mandated tasks is in no way curtailed and is consistent with the priorities of the strategic review.

I am grateful to the 38 troop-contributing countries that make up UNIFIL for their ongoing commitment. This commitment, coupled with the development of a strategic partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has made possible the successful implementation of several key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). As the UNIFIL mandate approaches its expiration date, it is clear that more work remains to be done, however.

I would like to express my appreciation to the UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission, Major General Paolo Serra, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL, for the work they are carrying out in southern Lebanon in the service of peace.

Regarding the financial aspects of UNIFIL, by its resolution 66/277, the General Assembly appropriated to the Special Account for UNIFIL the amount of US\$ 524 million gross for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of the mission beyond 31 August 2012, the cost of maintaining it will be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly.

As at 17 July 2012, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNIFIL Special Account amounted to \$100.4 million. At present, money owed to the Member States that contribute the troops who make up UNIFIL totals \$12.8 million. Reimbursements of troop and contingent-owned equipment costs have been made for the periods up to 31 May 2012 and 31 March 2012, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule. I appeal to all Member States to pay their assessments promptly and in full to clear all remaining arrears.

With the above information in mind, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of 12 months, until 31 August 2013.

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **BAN** Ki-moon