



Security Council

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Seventeenth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

I. Background

1. The current report is my seventeenth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It reviews and assesses the process of the implementation of the resolution since my last report issued on 17 October 2012 (S/2012/773). It notes the absence of further tangible progress on key provisions of the resolution, and highlights concerns that continue to threaten Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, despite Lebanon's careful policy of disassociation from the Syrian crisis.

2. The last six months were marked by two major developments: the assassination of Internal Security Forces Branch Chief Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan on 19 October 2012, which cast further uncertainty over Lebanon's stability, and the resignation of Prime Minister Najib Mikati on 22 March 2013, which raised further questions regarding the electoral process. On 6 April, President Michel Sleiman appointed Tamam Salam as Prime Minister-designate, with the task of forming a new Government. During the period under review, the Security Council issued two press statements in which it reiterated the importance of preserving Lebanon's security, stability and independence (SC/10799, SC/10941).

3. Since my last report, the ongoing turmoil in the Syrian Arab Republic has further impacted Lebanon, as it increased political polarization and concern that the unrest in the Syrian Arab Republic could have negative consequences for Lebanon's stability. Several Lebanese citizens were killed by shots fired from the Syrian Arab Republic, and Syrian Government forces were responsible for further incidents of cross-border shelling and at least three reported airstrikes by Syrian helicopters in Lebanon. Lebanese members of a group of fighters supporting the Syrian opposition were reportedly killed by Syrian Government forces after they crossed into the Syrian Arab Republic near the Syrian town of Tal Kalakh on 30 November. There are further reports of the deaths of Hizbullah fighters in the Syrian Arab Republic.

4. The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to pose serious challenges to the security and the authority of the Lebanese State. In particular, domestic tensions have significantly increased across Lebanon between groups with diverging positions on the Syrian crisis, leading to armed clashes that have resulted in death and injury. Recurrent fighting in Tripoli during the reporting period resulted in a



number of further fatalities and injured, including Lebanese Armed Forces personnel. In addition, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of Syrian nationals fleeing to Lebanon from the violence in their country, amounting to 406,000 refugees as at 4 April, as well as a significant increase in the influx of Palestinian refugees who were based in the Syrian Arab Republic. Lebanon currently hosts the largest number of refugees among the Syrian Arab Republic's neighbours and is facing enormous humanitarian, socioeconomic and political challenges as a consequence.

5. The case against former Minister and Member of Parliament Michel Samaha for involvement in smuggling explosives from the Syrian Arab Republic has been expanded with two new arrest warrants, including the warrant of 4 February for Syrian General Ali Mamlouk, head of the Syrian National Security Bureau. On 20 February, a judge issued an indictment against the three suspects in the case.

6. On 19 October, Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan, the head of the information branch of the Internal Security Forces responsible for investigating domestic and external terrorism and espionage and ensuring the security of prominent political figures, was killed in a terrorist attack in Beirut. The assassination led to a limited number of incidents of violence and calls for the Government of Prime Minister Mikati to resign. Following the incident, the 14 March group maintained a boycott of the Government and of the National Dialogue, the latter of which did not meet during the reporting period. In a press statement issued on 19 October (SC/10799), the Security Council strongly condemned the attack and demanded an immediate end to the use of violence against political figures. I strongly condemned the bomb explosion and spoke with President Sleiman and Prime Minister Mikati to emphasize the strong commitment of the international community to the security and stability of Lebanon at this critical time.

7. On 22 March, Prime Minister Mikati announced his resignation, triggering the automatic resignation of the Government. His announcement immediately followed a session of the Council of Ministers that failed to establish the elections oversight body required for the elections called for 9 June 2013, and did not vote to extend in office the Director of the Internal Security Forces, General Ashraf Rifi. The resignation of the Prime Minister also followed a protracted period in which Lebanon's political leadership was unable to agree on an elections law for the parliamentary elections. In his resignation announcement, Prime Minister Mikati highlighted the failure of the Cabinet to agree on General Rifi's extension, and also underscored his hope that the door would be opened for dialogue on key outstanding issues. In the light of the political uncertainty and the continuing tensions throughout the country, I called on all parties to remain united behind the leadership of President Sleiman and to work together with the institutions of the State to maintain calm and stability and to respect Lebanon's policy of disassociation, consistent with their commitment in the National Dialogue's Baabda Declaration of June 2012.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

8. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented as highlighted in my previous reports. Presidential and parliamentary elections took place in a free and fair

manner. The Syrian Arab Republic withdrew its troops and military assets from Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic established full diplomatic relations in 2009.

9. President Sleiman and Prime Minister Mikati continued to affirm during the reporting period Lebanon's respect for all United Nations resolutions. However, the escalating crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and its impact on the political and security environment in Lebanon has contributed to the lack of concrete progress in the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) and other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon. Rising sectarian tensions and the political stalemate that characterized the reporting period made progress on resolution 1559 (2004) still more difficult, though more necessary than ever.

10. The delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006), has still not taken place. Moreover, the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to pose a threat to the stability of the country and the region, and highlight the need for the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to intensify their efforts to reach a full monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout Lebanon.

11. My representatives and I have remained in regular contact with all parties in Lebanon over the reporting period, as well as with relevant regional and international leaders. I met President Sleiman on 30 January in Kuwait City on the margins of the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, and with Prime Minister Mikati on 25 January in Davos, Switzerland, on the margins of the World Economic Forum. I also spoke to President Sleiman on 26 March, following the resignation of Prime Minister Mikati. On all occasions I reiterated the United Nations unwavering commitment to the stability and security of Lebanon during this difficult time, as well as the need for Lebanon to continue its efforts to meet all of its international obligations, in particular those under relevant Security Council resolutions.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

12. Resolution 1559 (2004) aims at strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in line with the Taif Agreement of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon committed themselves. This objective has remained the highest priority of my efforts to facilitate the implementation of all resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

13. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. I have continued to call upon the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. However, given the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, no tangible steps were taken by either side during the period towards the delineation and demarcation of the border between the two countries.

14. The delineation and demarcation of Lebanon's boundaries remain essential elements to guarantee national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They are also critical steps to facilitate proper border control. The complex security situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the current circumstances, including credible reports of cross-border fighting and movement of arms and people, further underlines the urgency of demarcating the border. While acknowledging the bilateral nature of border delineation, progress on this matter remains an obligation of the two countries under Security Council resolution 1680 (2006), derived from 1559 (2004).

15. From 17 October to 27 March, 21 cross-border shelling incidents were reported in northern Lebanon (at least 67 shells landed in Lebanon), causing at least two Lebanese deaths, two injuries and damage to 12 homes and two mosques. During the same period, at least three cross-border incursions were reported. On 18 March, Syrian helicopters were reported to have entered Lebanese airspace and fired rockets at two locations close to the north-eastern border town of Arsal without casualty. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic denied that the incident took place. On 21 March, there was a report of a further rocket fired by a Syrian helicopter and landing in the same area and a further incident involving a Syrian helicopter on 3 April. President Sleiman condemned the airstrikes as an unacceptable violation of Lebanese sovereignty. On 20 March, I expressed grave concern at the reported airstrikes, and called upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cease all violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

16. On 14 March, the Security Council adopted a press statement in which Council members underscored their grave concern over repeated incidents of cross-border fire that caused death and injury among the Lebanese population, incursions, abductions and arms trafficking across the Lebanese-Syrian border, as well as other border violations. They underlined the importance of full respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and the authority of the Lebanese State, in accordance with Security Council resolutions.

17. The continued occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line stands in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). My representatives and I have continued to engage closely with both parties with a view to facilitating the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area in implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

18. There has been no progress either in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. Neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has responded with regard to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

19. The Israel Defense Forces continued to make almost daily intrusions into Lebanese airspace, mainly by unmanned aerial vehicles, but also fighter jets and attack helicopters. In an incident on 28 November, at least six Israeli attack helicopters entered Lebanese airspace and flew at low altitude in the general vicinity of Tyre. All of these overflights are violations of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly protested these violations. I have deplored them and demanded that they cease immediately. Israeli authorities claim in turn that these overflights are carried out for security reasons.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

20. The Government of Lebanon has reiterated to the United Nations its intention to extend State authority over all Lebanese territory, as called for by the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces have played a crucial role in implementing this commitment, under difficult security circumstances. However, the ability of the Lebanese State to fully exercise its authority over all of its territory has remained curtailed and challenged, underlining the need for continued international support to the authorities and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

21. Several incidents have challenged domestic security, most of which linked directly or indirectly to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic that exacerbated sectarian tensions. The city of Tripoli has been the focus of repetitive grave tensions and incidents. The clashes in the city between 4 and 10 December reflected a worrying increase in the intensity of violence and the use of heavy-calibre weapons. Calm was restored after the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed heavily in the neighbourhoods affected. However, on 18 January there was a shooting incident in Tripoli involving a convoy carrying Faisal Karameh, the Minister for Youth and Sports, which left five people injured. Following a 17 March assault on four Sunni religious scholars in Beirut, fighting resumed in Tripoli, resulting in at least six people dead and 48 wounded. The Lebanese Armed Forces deployed to contain the situation.

22. There have also been security incidents elsewhere in Lebanon, in particular in Beirut, Sidon and in the Akkar region, which reflected yet again rising confessional tensions or challenges to the authority of the State. On 12 November, the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed to contain an outbreak of violence in Sidon after Hizbullah supporters and followers of Sheikh Ahmad el-Assir clashed, leaving three dead and at least four wounded. On 1 February, two Lebanese soldiers were killed following a raid to arrest a wanted militant in Aarsal. Their killing was broadly condemned. Efforts to secure the arrest of those responsible are ongoing.

23. In my last report on resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2012/773) I referred to several abductions and retaliatory hostage-taking in both Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such incidents continued, including most recently on 1 April, when an unconfirmed number of Syrian workers were abducted as they entered Lebanon. Nine of the pilgrims abducted on 22 May 2012 in the Syrian Arab Republic are still held hostage.

24. The above-mentioned occurrences confirm the widespread proliferation of weapons held by non-State actors and the significant threats it poses to domestic peace and security. In this context, there is an obvious need for the Lebanese authorities to do more to impose law and order throughout the country, which they have striven to do during the reporting period. In particular, they have sought to increase the capacities of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Following the Cabinet's approval of a broad, medium-term plan budgeted at US \$1.6 billion to increase the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Government committed to cover funding for the first year. The Lebanese authorities have indicated that they will be looking for assistance from the United Nations and donor support for this plan, which reflects the requirements and objectives of the strategic dialogue, a separate

but integral component of the overall capability development plan, as part of the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), which I have welcomed.

25. Over the reporting period, the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained generally stable. The explosion that occurred on 17 December in the vicinity of Tayr Harfa, approximately 2 kilometres from the Blue Line, is still under investigation. On two occasions, unidentified armed groups attempted to launch rockets from Lebanon into northern Israel, coinciding with the conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel from 14 to 21 November 2012. On some occasions, UNIFIL faced restrictions to its freedom of movement in its area of operations. Some of these endangered the safety and security of the United Nations peacekeepers. I condemned such restrictions on the freedom of movement of United Nations peacekeepers and reiterate that the primary responsibility for ensuring the security and the freedom of movement of UNIFIL in its area of operations lies with the Lebanese authorities. I have reported to the Security Council in more detail on these issues in my reports on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

26. With regard to Lebanon's border with the Syrian Arab Republic, there continue to be reports of arms trafficking taking place in both directions. Several Member States have continued to express deep concern over the illegal transfer of weapons across the land borders. Israeli officials have stated that they would act to prevent advanced or chemical weapons systems from being transferred to Hizbullah from the Syrian Arab Republic. Senior representatives of Hizbullah, for their part, maintained their position that they had no intention of acquiring chemical weapons. In this context, I noted with grave concern reports of an Israeli airstrike on a location near Damascus on 30 January and called on all concerned to strictly abide by international law, in particular in respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries in the region. The Lebanese authorities have indicated that the land border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic remains difficult to control, but that the Lebanese Armed Forces are deployed and have sought to tighten control along the border to the best of its ability by increasing the number of patrols and observation missions. While the United Nations has no independent means to verify reports of cross-border arms smuggling, I have repeatedly expressed my concerns about the risks to both countries.

27. In order to address ongoing cross-border incidents and in the context of reports of arms smuggling, there remains an urgent need to improve the management and control of Lebanon's land borders. This is also necessary to avoid armed groups and militias in Lebanon from expanding their weapons arsenal, which constitutes a threat to domestic and regional peace. Donor coordination with the authorities on integrated border management continues. I have urged all States to renew efforts to meet their obligations under Security Council resolutions to take the necessary measures to prevent the transfer of arms to groups outside the control of the Government of Lebanon.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

28. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. This key provision of the

resolution is yet to be implemented. It reflects and reaffirms a decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Agreement, which led at the time to Lebanese militias, with the exception of Hizbullah, giving up their weapons. Given the current domestic context of heightened sectarian tensions and the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, it is critical that this agreement be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among the Lebanese.

29. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continue to operate outside of the control of the Government in serious violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside Government control, the armed component of Hizbullah is the most significant and most heavily armed Lebanese militia in the country. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups poses a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In addition, a series of Palestinian armed groups continue to operate in the country inside and outside the refugee camps. Further, there have been unconfirmed reports in recent months of possible infiltration or presence of extremist elements in Lebanon, in particular Jabhat an-Nusra.

30. I have repeatedly expressed my deep concern to Lebanese leaders about the serious risks these militias pose to the stability of the country and the region. I have urged them to address this matter without further delay, as it is their obligation under Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). This requirement has become even more pressing as Parliamentary elections are due to take place in June 2013. In a democratic State, it is a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains its own militia. Nonetheless, Hizbullah has continued to acknowledge openly that it maintains and expands a substantial military capacity separate from that of the Lebanese State. It further claims that its arms serve as a deterrent against potential aggression from Israel. Meanwhile, Israeli officials have argued that, given the participation of Hizbullah in the Government of Lebanon, Israel would consider reacting to any Hizbullah attack on Israel with retaliation on the Lebanese State.

31. There have been yet again credible reports suggesting involvement of Hizbullah and other Lebanese political forces in support of parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. This has added a dangerous element to the situation in Lebanon. The Tal Kalakh incident, in which Lebanese fighters were killed in the Syrian Arab Republic by the Syrian Army, resulted in a significant rise in tensions within Lebanon, and was followed by serious fighting in Tripoli. For its part, Hizbullah publicly acknowledged the death of Lebanese fighters defending Shia villages in the Syrian Arab Republic near the border with Lebanon.

32. Over the reporting period, there was yet again no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). Since the adoption of that resolution in 2004, no concrete steps have been taken to address this crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and the political independence of Lebanon. Nonetheless, several Lebanese groups and individuals have continued to speak up against Hizbullah's maintenance of a military arsenal, which they consider is a destabilizing factor in the country and contradictory to democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued existence of such arms as an implicit threat for use within Lebanon for political reasons, bearing in mind in particular the violent events of May 2008.

33. I have long supported the National Dialogue, a Lebanese-led political process, as the best way to address the issue of arms and achieve the ultimate goal of no weapons or armed forces in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. President Sleiman remains strongly committed to the resumption of the National Dialogue. However, in the aftermath of the assassination of Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan on 19 October, it has proven impossible to reconvene sessions of the National Dialogue.

34. During the period under review, the security situation in the Palestinian camps remained tense. In the Ain el-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp there were heightened tensions on 23 January and again on 18 and 19 February between groups respectively loyal to the regime and the opposition in the Syrian Arab Republic. The clashes were relatively limited, and contained by the Palestinian security committee in the camp. On 11 and 12 March, fighting between Palestinian factions was fierce and caused one death and at least 13 injuries. On 22 January, the Government of Lebanon committed to fund the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee for three years. Leaders in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon have shown unity in working together, and with the Lebanese authorities, in order to maintain order against the backdrop of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

35. Humanitarian conditions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon remain dire, while the influx of almost 40,000 additional Palestinian refugees displaced from the Syrian Arab Republic into the already extremely cramped camps in Lebanon has imposed a heavy new burden on the inhabitants and on the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to assist them. Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic have been staging daily demonstrations in front of the UNRWA office in Beirut, demanding more assistance. The United Nations has continued to urge the Lebanese authorities to improve the conditions in which Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, notably by facilitating their access to the official labour market through the implementation of outstanding legislation. This should be done without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement in the region, and bearing in mind the detrimental effects of dismal living conditions on the wider security situation.

36. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continues to challenge the ability of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty over its territory. In spite of the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue, and confirmed in subsequent sessions, no progress was made with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)-General Command (GC) and Fatah al-Intifadah in the country. All but one of these bases are located along the Syrian-Lebanese border. Their presence continues to undermine Lebanese sovereignty and governmental authority and makes delineation of the border more difficult. It poses a serious challenge, given the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, to the effective control of the eastern border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. I have reiterated my calls upon the Lebanese authorities for the implementation of earlier decisions of the National Dialogue, specifically those related to the dismantling of PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases, and upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with these efforts in good faith.

III. Observations

37. I am disappointed at the lack of further tangible progress towards the implementation of the remaining provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). While I am aware that Lebanon is facing a particularly difficult moment and is being severely challenged by the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, I am concerned that continued stagnation in the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) could lead to the erosion of provisions already implemented and contribute to further deterioration in Lebanon's stability. I reiterate my firm conviction that it is in the best interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese to make progress towards the full implementation of the resolution for the long-term stability of the country and the region.

38. I remain concerned at the reports of deepening sectarian tensions in Lebanon and the continued impact of the Syrian crisis on the security and political dynamics in the country. Political polarization and lack of agreement on an elections law and security appointments have made Lebanon even more vulnerable and less able to address the challenges it now faces. Following the resignation of Prime Minister Mikati, it is imperative that all parties in Lebanon work urgently towards broad-based agreement on key outstanding issues. I note the appointment on 6 April of Tamam Salam as Prime Minister-designate and encourage all Lebanese political leaders to continue to engage with him positively to ensure the early formation of a Government in order to safeguard stability and facilitate the conduct of timely parliamentary elections, in accordance with the constitutional requirements. It is critical that Lebanon's leaders use this opportunity to strengthen national institutions and the confidence of all communities that they will act in a manner that protects Lebanon from the impact of the Syrian crisis and provides security and stability throughout the country. Consensus on the electoral process, in line with the Constitution, will be a key test of this, especially given the need for timely elections.

39. I condemn the repeated incidents in which civilians were reported to have been killed, injured or put at risk on the Lebanese side of the border owing to the actions of the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic. I call upon all parties, in particular the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). I am also concerned by the reported involvement of Lebanese elements in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, which is contrary to Lebanon's policy of disassociation and poses very real risks to national security and stability. Noting the statement of the Security Council of 14 March in this regard, I commend the efforts of President Sleiman to uphold Lebanon's policy of disassociation, which remains essential to preserving Lebanon from any further impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call upon all Lebanese political leaders to ensure full respect for such policy so that Lebanon will remain neutral with regard to external conflicts, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration of June 2012.

40. I have repeatedly cautioned that the widespread proliferation of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the continued existence of heavily armed militias, undermines the security of Lebanese citizens. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern, particularly as it creates an atmosphere of intimidation and represents a key challenge to the safety of Lebanese civilians and to the Government monopoly on the legitimate use of force. It also puts Lebanon in violation of its obligations under resolution 1559 (2004) and

constitutes a threat to regional peace and stability. I urge Hizbullah not to engage in any militant activity inside or outside of Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

41. I urge the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to take all the measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacities outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004). As Hizbullah maintains close ties with a number of regional States, in particular the Islamic Republic of Iran, I call upon these States to encourage the transformation of the armed group into a solely political party and its disarmament, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interest of Lebanon and regional peace and security.

42. It is my firm belief that the best way to address the disarmament of militias in Lebanon, particularly Hizbullah, is through a Lebanese-led cross-party political process. To this end, it is crucial that the National Dialogue, under the leadership of President Sleiman, resume. I also urge all parties to respect and implement earlier decisions of the National Dialogue, specifically those related to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases. The Syrian crisis should not be used as an excuse to ignore these responsibilities, but rather as a moment when disarming and disbanding militias is more necessary than ever. President Sleiman's national defence strategy, submitted at the 20 September session of the National Dialogue, remains an important initiative that should be built upon.

43. I am deeply concerned by the situation of Palestinian refugees in the camps and the additional strains that the Syrian crisis has placed on the camps in Lebanon. In this context, I welcome the unity shown by leaders in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon in working together, and with the Lebanese authorities, to maintain order against the backdrop of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. I urge as a matter of priority more substantive Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue to improve conditions and move towards the implementation of legislation to ease their employment. Such progress would not prejudice the eventual resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive regional peace agreement. I reiterate my call on donors to support UNRWA and its vital work in providing services to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

44. I regret the absence of any progress on the border delineation and demarcation with the Syrian Arab Republic, which has a significant impact on border control. I remain of the view that integrated border management will in the longer term contribute significantly to better control of Lebanon's international borders and help to prevent the illegal transfers of arms in both directions. This has become even more pressing in the context of events in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic. In this context, I welcome continued donor support for border management.

45. I deplore Israel's continued violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, most conspicuously the overflights of Lebanese territory by Israeli aircraft, including, in this reporting period, overflights by attack helicopters. I call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, and to cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which undermine the credibility of Lebanese security services and

generate anxiety among the civilian population. They also greatly increase the risk of unintended consequences in an already very tense region.

46. The recurrence of security incidents throughout Lebanon highlights the fragility of the domestic environment and the need for the Lebanese authorities to intensify efforts to prevent the illegal use of weapons in the country and impose law and order. These efforts are even more urgent, given the political uncertainty in Lebanon and the continuing effects of the Syrian crisis. I commend the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces, which have continued to perform robustly in addressing several security challenges over the reporting period. I am also encouraged by the continued efforts of Member States to equip and train the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces at a time when the security demands on Lebanon are heavy. I welcome the progress made on the five-year capacity development plan for the Lebanese Armed Forces and the efforts made to ensure that it includes the requirements and objectives of the strategic dialogue. I encourage all stakeholders, including the Government of Lebanon and international donors, to be forthcoming in their support for the plan when it is finalized.

47. Threats to the political leadership of Lebanon remain a serious concern to me. I reiterate the call of the Security Council for the perpetrators, the organizers, the financiers and the sponsors of the assassination of Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan to be brought to justice, as well as those involved in the attempted assassination of political figures last year. It is critical that steps be taken to assure Lebanon's political leaders that they should not fear for their lives. I also call upon the Lebanese authorities to take forward the judicial process for former Minister Michel Samaha in a fair and transparent way in order to bring all those implicated in the case to justice.

48. The multiple challenges faced by Lebanon at present, largely as a result of the Syrian crisis, are very real. Given the extraordinary diversity characterizing Lebanese society, it is necessary that the spirit of cooperation and respect for the principles of coexistence and security in Lebanon prevail, as must domestic peace without intimidation by armed groups, as set out in the Taif Agreement. Against the background of the current political uncertainty in Lebanon, I urge all Lebanese leaders to come to agreement on key issues such as the formation of a new government, an electoral law and security appointments. Unity within the Lebanese political leadership is vital to prevent the country from being drawn into regional turmoil.

49. I remain firmly committed to the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) for the sake of peace and security during a particularly difficult and challenging time in Lebanon. I, therefore, count on the continued commitment of the Government to its international obligations and call on all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I further call on Member States to renew efforts to support Lebanon in ensuring respect for meeting obligations under these resolutions, as the best way to advance the country's long-term prosperity and stability as a democratic State. I will continue my efforts towards the full implementation of these and all other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.