



# Security Council

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## United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 8 of its resolution [2485 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct and provide the Council, no later than 1 June 2020, with an assessment of the continued relevance of the resources of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and options for improving the efficiency and effectiveness between UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, taking into consideration the troop ceiling and the civilian component of UNIFIL.

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Department of Peace Operations launched the assessment in consultation with relevant stakeholders at Headquarters, including political consultations with Member States, and the development of terms of reference and a methodology. Within that process, UNIFIL created a working group that conducted an internal review of the mission, in close coordination with Headquarters, with a view to exploring options for the enhanced effectiveness of UNIFIL to better address future challenges to mandate implementation. The Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific led an interdisciplinary assessment mission from various departments and offices of the Secretariat to Lebanon from 29 February to 7 March 2020. The assessment team reviewed and developed the preparatory work conducted by UNIFIL, held consultations with leaders of the Government of Lebanon and met with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon on the question of efficiencies and effectiveness between the two missions. The assessment team met the Speaker of Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, the Chief of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces South Litani Sector. A planned visit to Israel could not proceed owing to travel restrictions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In addition to consultations at Headquarters in New York, Israel communicated its views on the assessment in writing.

3. The present assessment report includes a tactical review of the UNIFIL military force structure (land, air and maritime component) and the civilian components to ensure that the mission's staffing structure is aligned with the mission mandate, taking into account the evolving context. Options are identified for enhancing UNIFIL mandate implementation efforts, on the basis of a review of its activities and their impact in terms of prevention and deterrence and in terms of monitoring the cessation of hostilities and assisting the Lebanese Armed Forces in taking steps towards the



establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. Options for enhanced technology and data collection, analysis, and reporting were reviewed. Also explored in the assessment are the context of and prospects for advancing the transition of responsibilities from the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force to the Lebanese Armed Forces, with a focus on what is realistic in the near future.

4. Taken into consideration in the assessment are previous review processes and evaluations of the mission, including the 2018 military capability study, the 2012 and 2017 strategic reviews of UNIFIL and the civilian staffing review undertaken in 2013/14, the latter of which was subsequently implemented over a three-year period. The implementation of these reviews has resulted in reductions in major equipment and troop strength, from 10,600 in 2016/17 to the current 10,155. Also explored in the assessment are different ways of doing business, including the use of new or alternative equipment and technology. Synergies with other United Nations entities in Lebanon were also looked at, taking into account policy frameworks such as Action for Peacekeeping (2018) and resolution 2436 (2018) on peacekeeping performance, as was the UNIFIL support role to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon in logistical and administrative matters and to other missions regarding conduct and discipline. In line with the system-wide strategy on gender parity, gender balance is a key principle guiding any future configuration of the mission's staffing. As a pilot mission of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System, some of its preliminary findings informed an evaluation of the mission's strengths and weaknesses and helped to articulate priorities for the coming years, as reflected in the present assessment.

5. Consultations on the assessment with the parties, members of the Security Council and troop-contributing countries have been held at the senior and working levels since the adoption of resolution 2485 (2019). Both parties emphasized their continued commitment to implementing resolution 1701 (2006).

## **II. Purpose, evolution and impact of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon**

6. UNIFIL was established pursuant to Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, restore international peace and security and assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area. On 11 August 2006, the Council adopted resolution 1701 (2006), enlarging the presence of UNIFIL to up to 15,000 troops. At the request of the Government of Lebanon, a Maritime Task Force was established in October 2006, with an initial 18 ships. Resolution 1701 (2006) also provided the mission with an enhanced mandate to monitor the cessation of hostilities, ensure that the area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind and accompany and support the Lebanese Armed Forces as they deployed throughout the south of Lebanon. UNIFIL assists the Lebanese Armed Forces in taking steps towards the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL. The mission is also authorized to take all action necessary in areas of deployment and as it deems within its capabilities to protect civilians under imminent threat of violence and to ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers.

7. With the exception of some isolated, albeit serious, incidents, the cessation of hostilities has been maintained and the situation along the Blue Line has remained

calm for the most part since 2006. However, occasional violence has underscored the fragility of the cessation of hostilities and the lingering danger of a rapid escalation. On 24 June 2007, six UNIFIL peacekeepers were killed during a car bomb attack in Sahl al-Dardarah. On 3 August 2010, an exchange of fire in Udaysah resulted in one Israel Defense Forces officer and three Lebanese soldiers killed. On 15 December 2013, an incident in Rosh HaNikra led to the killing of one Israel Defense Forces soldier, and on 28 January 2015, anti-tank missiles were fired in the Shab'a Farms area by Hizbullah, resulting in the death of two Israel Defense Forces soldiers and injuries to seven others. The subsequent fire by Israel also killed a UNIFIL peacekeeper. As detailed in [S/2019/889](#), in September 2019, following the unmanned aerial vehicle incident of 25 August in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Hizbullah claimed responsibility for launching three anti-tank missiles from the vicinity of a Green Without Borders location north of the Blue Line in Marun al-Ra's, at an Israel Defense Forces moving armoured vehicle, prompting the Israel Defense Forces to fire artillery rounds into Lebanon in the vicinity of Marun al-Ra's and Aytarun. The incident did not result in casualties on either side. UNIFIL liaison and coordination efforts with the parties, as well as with members of the diplomatic community in Beirut and Tel Aviv, led to a quick restoration of the cessation of hostilities following those incidents.

8. UNIFIL liaison and coordination mechanisms, including the Liaison Branch, the tripartite forum and the day-to-day bilateral engagement with the parties, are critical to ensuring calm along the Blue Line. When tension along the Blue Line increased in December 2018 as the Israel Defense Forces announced that it had discovered several tunnels crossing the Blue Line, UNIFIL liaised between the parties to establish the facts and prevent misunderstandings. Furthermore, when the Israel Defense Forces commenced T-wall construction south of the Blue Line in the Lebanese reservation area, in Misgav Am, across from Udaysah (Sector East), in January 2019, UNIFIL troops interposed between the parties and the Liaison Branch deployed preventively at locations where works were undertaken, while the tripartite forum facilitated interaction between the two sides, urging them to reach a mutually acceptable way forward. The works were eventually completed without incident. The visible marking of the Blue Line, while stalled since 2017, also remains an essential tool for the mission to maintain calm along the Blue Line.

9. The present configuration of UNIFIL is based on a saturation model, having the highest density of troops and major equipment among all United Nations peacekeeping operations. Its density of troops and its intense patrolling have proved essential to its ability to deter, de-escalate, prevent and deconflict, where and as necessary. The high concentration of troops in a relatively small area of operations and the significant operational tempo, wherein the mission is conducting approximately 400 operational activities daily, are an important deterrence. The presence of more than 10,000 troops from more than 40 different countries serves as a reminder to the parties that the international community is strongly committed to assisting them in the maintenance of the cessation of hostilities and the prevention of new tensions, with the expectation that political progress will resolve underlying causes of the conflict.

10. Since 2006, relative calm and a perception of security in the south have allowed for the return of many southerners. Population growth in the south is reflected in the increase in the number of eligible voters (21 years of age and above) from 373,646 in 2005 to 492,725 in 2018. During the holiday season, population density increases further, as members of the diaspora return.

11. Having adapted its operations since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, UNIFIL continues to fulfil its mandate, while minimizing health risks to staff and the local community. UNIFIL has been supporting coping mechanisms in southern Lebanon,

including by providing medical equipment to local authorities. While UNIFIL has reduced its training and outreach activities as a precautionary measure, it has maintained the operational tempo of its patrolling and monitoring activities, including independently, to ensure continued mandate implementation and the continued commitment by both Lebanon and Israel to the cessation of hostilities. There is an understanding with the United Nations country team that UNIFIL medical facilities will be available to all members of the United Nations family in case of need. Medical evacuation options are envisaged for any serious illnesses.

### III. Challenges to mandate implementation

12. While the underlying drivers of conflict and the dynamics between the parties have not dramatically changed since 2006, UNIFIL does face new challenges in the way that it is able to conduct its operations. UNIFIL has maintained the cessation of hostilities, but both parties have outstanding obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). The maintenance of arms outside the control of the State by Hizbullah and other groups in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) continues to restrict the ability of the State to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. There has been no progress in terms of a political process towards a permanent ceasefire or the demarcation of the land and maritime borders between Lebanon and Israel. The parties remain unwilling to engage, other than at the tactical level (in the tripartite forum). Blue Line demarcation has been stalled since 2017, with discussions to resolve the 13 Lebanese reservation areas yet to resume in the tripartite forum. While UNIFIL, by maintaining stability, has contributed to conditions conducive for a political process – which lies outside the scope of the mission’s mandate – any meaningful progress towards a permanent ceasefire remains elusive.

13. The deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces to south Lebanon has been progressing slowly since the establishment of the strategic dialogue between them and UNIFIL in 2010. The engagement of the Lebanese Armed Forces along the northern and eastern borders of Lebanon to contain spillover from the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic since 2011 has delayed the deployment of troops to the south. Such deployment was even reversed, as Lebanese Armed Forces units assigned to the UNIFIL area of operations were redeployed in August 2014 to address threats posed by Security Council-listed terrorist groups in north-eastern Lebanon. A model regiment, for which international partners have pledged support in terms of accommodation (barracks), equipment and training, was officially established in February 2018 but is yet to be staffed and deployed. Furthermore, with the start of nationwide protests in October 2019, Lebanese Armed Forces personnel were assigned to crowd control functions elsewhere in the country. The deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces to the south therefore remains tentative and uncertain, with only an estimated 3,000 troops deployed and a lack of proper defensive and other infrastructure and heavy (armoured personnel carriers, armour, artillery) equipment.

14. The Lebanese Armed Forces also lack infrastructure, equipment, funding, fuel and spare parts owing to budgetary constraints. Since June 2019, austerity measures have been adopted in the State budget, including a three-year freeze on recruitment, a reduced operational budget and reduced benefits and pensions. With further austerity measures expected in the coming three to five years, deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the area of operations is unlikely to improve.

15. Lebanon also lacks capabilities to secure its territorial waters. The Lebanese Navy has a few aging, donated vessels with limited ability to operate full-time across Lebanese waters. The Lebanese ships “Tabarja” and “Naquora” were certified in August 2018 and January 2019, respectively, to conduct operations with the UNIFIL

Maritime Task Force. The crew of a third vessel, “Trablous”, is undergoing training with the aim of conducting operations in close coordination with the Maritime Task Force in 2020. However, these vessels do not have the capacity to stay at sea for long periods of time or under bad weather conditions. Notwithstanding these limitations, the Lebanese Navy plans to assume Maritime Task Force responsibilities in part for four days a week in the central maritime corridor on the basis of existing naval assets and in close coordination with the Task Force. The partial transition plan, pending formal approval by the Lebanese Armed Forces leadership, was enabled by the upgrade of the Lebanese coastal radar system at the end of 2019, which significantly enhanced the Lebanese surveyance capacity over Lebanese territorial waters. The acquisition of additional vessels required for a sustainable gradual takeover of functions from the Maritime Task Force is affected by budgetary constraints, while donor support remains a necessity. The French donation of four rigid-hull inflatable boats to the Lebanese Navy on 25 March 2020 constitutes a slight increase in naval capabilities; further support will be needed to significantly upgrade the capability of the Lebanese Navy.

16. Since 2017, UNIFIL has experienced an increasing number of incidents in which the freedom of movement of its patrols is hindered. Local residents are sometimes fencing off new areas for farming, preventing UNIFIL from gaining access to public spaces that were previously accessible, including close to the Blue Line. Locals are also at times stopping UNIFIL patrols from entering villages, on the grounds that the use of heavy vehicles in narrow streets is disturbing and damaging roads and infrastructure. In other instances, the population hinders UNIFIL patrols unless they are accompanied by the Lebanese Armed Forces. It is evident that cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces is fundamental to the success of UNIFIL operations and to the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers. At the same time, the ability of the mission to conduct independent patrols and activities must continue to be a priority in accordance with the mandate of UNIFIL.

17. UNIFIL perception surveys, conducted annually since 2007, indicate that the population’s recognition of the Lebanese Armed Forces as the sole security provider in the south has significantly improved. Findings in the same surveys show that, since 2017, local residents have been questioning the impartiality of peacekeepers more and more, which negatively affects troop acceptance and results in more frequent restrictions on the movement of UNIFIL troops. Another phenomenon affecting access is the presence of Green without Borders, which has established fenced sites, thus cordoning off areas that were previously accessible to UNIFIL, including close to the Blue Line. To date, the continued and regular access of UNIFIL to these sites has not been facilitated by the Lebanese Armed Forces. UNIFIL continues to work with the Lebanese Armed Forces to expand the mission’s presence in areas outside main routes and municipal centres, including on private roads.

18. Of critical importance is the reality that UNIFIL has not been granted access to investigate the sites of serious violations of resolution 1701 (2006), including the cement factory in Kafir Kila, which was proven to be connected to one of the cross Blue Line tunnels discovered by the Israel Defense Forces, and the site of the missile strike of 1 September 2019 claimed by Hizbullah. The ability of UNIFIL to swiftly investigate such incidents constitutes a core part of its mandate and of its efforts to prevent actions by the parties that could undermine the cessation of hostilities. Going forward, the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to provide access without hindrance to all areas that UNIFIL determines to be a mandated priority will remain key to the meaningful implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

19. The occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line Forces continues. Overflights by the Israel Defense Forces of Lebanese airspace also continue, on an almost daily basis. UNIFIL regularly raises

and records these violations of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006) in tripartite meetings with the parties, in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of the resolution and in letters to the Israel Defense Forces. The Government of Lebanon continues to underline that violations occur not only in the south, but also throughout the entire Lebanese airspace. The Government also asserts that UNIFIL should bring these violations to a halt and that the fact that Israel persists in these violations undermines the credibility of the mission. Hence, successfully addressing airspace violations and ensuring that Israel ceases overflights remains one of the main challenges of UNIFIL.

20. The Israel Defense Forces also reportedly use Lebanese airspace to conduct raids in the Syrian Arab Republic. These dynamics, although outside the UNIFIL area of operations and not within the remit of its mandate, threaten to undermine the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon.

21. UNIFIL continues to focus on the gender parity of civilian staff and has made steady progress in reaching close to parity in some staffing categories, including National Professional Officers and some levels of international professional staff. The overall distribution of female civilian staff is 37 per cent, while 6 per cent of military personnel serving with UNIFIL are women. As a result, only 5 per cent of UNIFIL operational activities include women.

#### **IV. Key findings: options and recommendations for increased efficiency of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon**

22. To address the challenges outlined above, the options outlined below to adjust the mission to the changing environment are proposed.

##### **Capabilities**

23. The pattern of operations of UNIFIL and the frequency of its patrols, including close to the Blue Line, serve as a deterrent to potential spoilers and provides UNIFIL with the capacity to deter, prevent, de-escalate and deconflict rapidly. This has proved to be instrumental during incidents of heightened tension. UNIFIL will maintain a robust Force Reserve (Force Commander's Reserve and Sector Mobile Reserves) at different levels to enable effective intervention on the ground, as required.

24. While the current robust posture of UNIFIL serves as a deterrent and has prevented a return to hostilities, the frequency of patrols has led to some issues of contention with local residents, who oppose the use of heavy military vehicles on narrow roads going through their villages. In particular, standard armoured personnel carriers are not entirely suitable for crowded areas, narrow streets and mountainous terrain. Smaller vehicles such as high-mobility light tactical vehicles and reconnaissance vehicles, as defined by the 2020 Working Group on Contingent-Owned Equipment, are more suitable. Relevant troop-contributing countries will be encouraged to deploy smaller combat vehicles such as high-mobility light tactical vehicles and reconnaissance vehicles in appropriate locations, taking security considerations into account. The structure of infantry battalions also needs to be tailored to cater to different terrains in the UNIFIL area of operations. Some battalions, on the basis of operational requirements and proximity to the Blue Line, will be requested to replace up to 50 per cent of their armoured personnel carriers with high-mobility light tactical vehicles.

25. To further adapt the posture of UNIFIL to fit its current and future operational environment and challenges would require the creation of a more agile and mobile force, with improved monitoring capacity, by replacing some heavy infantry functions

used for day-to-day activities with reconnaissance functions. The shift would result in a force sufficiently protected but with a lighter footprint, geared towards better situational awareness. UNIFIL could decrease the density of troops near the Litani River, while maintaining troop density close to the Blue Line and at a number of strategic locations that are the focus of counter-rocket-launching operations. Checkpoints along the Litani River, which are critical to efforts to prevent the inflow of unauthorized weapons and equipment into the UNIFIL area of operations, would not be affected. A reconfiguration of second echelon battalions in the middle depth of the area of operations could also be considered. Overall, adaptation of the force posture would result in an increase in the number of troops suited for monitoring and observation assignments and in a reduction in the number of troops for those battalions in the centre of the area of operations, as the mission focuses on the density of troops along the Blue Line. Such a reconfigured force would have a reduced environmental impact, with less strain on roads and bridges, and could result in reduced support and maintenance requirements. The expectation would also be that patrols would face fewer restrictions of movement on narrow roads in smaller communities.

26. The liaison and coordination mechanisms of UNIFIL continue to provide a widely appreciated capability towards the maintenance of calm along the Blue Line. The physical presence of liaison teams on the ground when the parties undertake work in the vicinity of the Blue Line has proved crucial in defusing tensions and avoiding escalation. Furthermore, the contribution to tactical and strategic communications between the parties has been vital when defusing tensions, maintaining stability and avoiding escalation. Currently, liaison officers comprise a small percentage of UNIFIL forces. It is recommended that UNIFIL increase the number of liaison staff, with two additional teams, one on each side of the Blue Line. To further improve a rapid flow of information, liaison UNIFIL officers can also, in rotation, be positioned in the divisional command in Israel, as well as at Lebanese Armed Forces headquarters. The long-standing proposal of UNIFIL for a liaison office in Tel Aviv is also endorsed.

27. The existing tripartite forum has proved to be a valuable tool to discuss and resolve specific issues of mutual interest and contribute constructively to prevent miscommunication, mitigate risk and promote deconfliction with regard to the implementation of the UNIFIL mandate and Blue Line marking. It is recommended that UNIFIL explore with the parties the creation of additional ad hoc subcommittees within the existing tripartite system to ensure systematic coordination with regard to salient, recurring matters.

28. It is also recommended that there be some adjustments to the force headquarters configuration, with the aim of enhancing civil-military functional integration in the areas of information analysis, air operations, training, gender and technology. Such increased coordination would mitigate the impact of rotations, improve the institutional knowledge and memory of each section, ease information flow and prevent the duplication of effort.

### **Consolidation of United Nations positions**

29. UNIFIL has 55 positions in its area of operations. Some of these positions have limited visibility owing to the construction of T-walls by the Israel Defense Forces very close to the positions. There are also some positions located very close to one another. (Some positions, while lacking visibility south of the Blue Line owing to T-wall construction, remain critical for their visibility and patrolling north of the Blue Line, especially where located in areas with a history of cross-Blue Line incidents and at a considerable distance from the next United Nations position.) The closure of some United Nations positions could result in the more efficient use of resources from an

operational point of view, with a lower number of troops needed for force protection duties. The colocation of different contingents in the same position could also be explored. The consolidation of troops may also result in improved living conditions, while consideration could be given to handing over some of the vacated positions, where possible, to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

30. UNIFIL is envisaging a consolidation of up to five United Nations positions (representing 10 per cent of its total number of positions) in the area of operations, without major operational impact. The construction of watchtowers and the use of technology (further outlined below) may compensate for some of these observation gaps. The force levels and current saturation model, which have proved to be a deterrent to a resumption of hostilities, would not be affected, but efficiencies in terms of logistics support are expected. In general, savings related to facilities management may be gained within a four-year time frame.

#### **Improved use of new technology**

31. UNIFIL employs a large set of new technology to fulfil requirements related to force protection, situational awareness and the detection and reporting of violations of resolution 1701 (2006). To further increase operational efficiencies, UNIFIL may consider employing additional new technology. While simple technology such as closed-circuit television, sensors and automated access control systems are being used for perimeter security and to monitor the areas immediately outside the mission's compounds, more advanced technology such as thermal cameras, high-tech binoculars and unmanned aerial vehicles could enhance monitoring along the Blue Line and other parts of the area of operations. UNIFIL is undertaking force protection upgrades at 19 positions close to the Blue Line and intends to augment them with long-range, night-enabled cameras or other high-tech equipment or services that can be deployed to increase force protection and observation capabilities. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles for monitoring the Blue Line and area of maritime operations could also be considered. In accordance with established policies, rules and regulations, it would be appropriate to have such high-tech equipment available either as contingent-owned equipment or under a letter of assist with troop-contributing countries, or commercial sourcing, depending on which option provides the best value for the United Nations, recognizing that these capabilities require significant ongoing financial resources, maintenance, familiarization and training.

32. Increased technical capacity will require appropriate training of personnel. An increase in the amount of data gathered by UNIFIL will also require specialized capabilities (i.e., specialized human resources, secure information technology support) for analysis to ensure that data contribute to an enhanced integrated operational picture and to situational awareness and understanding (insight, context, foresight) for effective decision-making.

#### **Reconfiguration of the Maritime Task Force**

33. The Maritime Task Force of UNIFIL is an all-corvette fleet of six ships from six different Maritime Contributing Countries. It continues to support the Lebanese Navy to prevent the unauthorized entry of arms or related materiel by sea into Lebanon, through maritime interdiction operations and joint training. In order to maintain comprehensive coverage of the entire area of maritime operations and ensure the hailing of every ship entering or transiting Lebanese waters, with a view to preventing the unauthorized entry of arms or related materiel by sea into Lebanon, the Maritime Task Force maintains three ships at sea on a 24/7 basis. Some progress was noted in the assessment noted regarding the technical upgrade of coastal radar stations, the certification of the first seaworthy Lebanese vessels in 2018 and 2019, and the crew of the third vessel, "Trablous", undergoing training, with the aim of that vessel being

certified in 2020. In order to achieve the strategic end state of a gradual transition of United Nations responsibilities to the Government of Lebanon, the Lebanese Navy has begun to participate in the maritime interdiction operations along with the Maritime Task Force for a one-year trial period, in order to validate that the Navy is all-weather capable (both professionally and platform-wise) to take over partial responsibilities of the Task Force in one sector of the area of maritime operations, while maintaining the same operational tempo of the Task Force.

34. Given these developments, the Maritime Task Force may be in a position to make a partial transition of some maritime interdiction responsibilities to the Lebanese Navy. In doing so, the reduction in the size of the Maritime Task Force to five vessels could be realized in a way that preserves the overall operational capacity to ensure the monitoring and interdiction operations in the area of maritime operations. This evolution would require maintaining the efforts to build the capacities of the Lebanese Navy. An enhanced training schedule and a schedule for the handover of command and control of maritime interdiction operations to the Lebanese Navy are also under development. The Lebanese Navy fleet, while certified, is ageing and in need of replacement. Continued international support, including from UNIFIL and from bilateral partners, therefore remains critical in order to ensure an increase, with adequate sustainability, in Lebanese Navy capabilities.

#### **Efficiencies between the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon**

35. In their day-to-day work, the two missions' substantive components have distinct functions. The political team of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon supports the Special Coordinator's engagement at the strategic level, while the UNIFIL political team works in support of the Head of Mission and Force Commander's engagement with the parties, bilaterally or through the tripartite forum in accordance with the UNIFIL mandate. In the absence of a permanent ceasefire, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), UNIFIL continues to implement all aspects of its mandate to preserve the cessation of hostilities and maintain a stable and secure environment, including along the Blue Line, while the Office uses its good offices to explore and promote a resolution of the protracted political elements of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) and to support the political, security and socioeconomic stability of Lebanon to enable the country to comply with obligations pursuant to the resolution. The coordinated engagement by the Office and UNIFIL is intended to enable the parties to fulfil their outstanding obligations.

36. A thorough cost-benefit analysis in all areas of support was undertaken, and several services where efficiencies could be realized through the provision of administrative and logistics capacity by the entity holding comparative advantage were identified. Accordingly, the two missions have implemented a provision of services mechanism whereby UNIFIL delivers administrative support and service delivery to the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon in the areas of finance, procurement, write-off, claims, disposal, supply, engineering, field technology, vehicle support services, internal air transportation, medical, transportation of goods, customs clearances, property management, contracts management and security. UNIFIL has optimized its service delivery and administrative support to the Office.

37. At the substantive level, cooperation, coordination and information-sharing between the two missions was also optimized. Heads of Mission of UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon coordinate routinely, and the political sections engage in regular meetings to undertake joint risk assessments and analysis and explore further complementarity and concerted efforts

towards leveraging international donor support to the Lebanese Armed Forces. To institutionalize coordination and collaboration further, a strategic forum was created between the two missions' political components. During the escalation of tensions in late August and early in September 2019, both missions collaborated on preventing conflict and de-escalating tensions, including through the complementary good offices of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and liaison by UNIFIL with their relevant political and military counterparts in both Lebanon and Israel, as well as through alignment of messaging.

38. UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon also continue to encourage a coordinated donor approach, including through joint participation in donor consultations and alignment of messaging with regard to pledges of support for the deployment of the model regiment and the build-up of the Lebanese Navy and to the implementation by the Government of Lebanon of those obligations.

### **Operational support**

39. The assessment also contained a review of operational support to UNIFIL in the context of its support to United Nations entities in Lebanon and the region with the aim of realizing the opportunities offered by the management reforms of the Secretary-General. By understanding the different mandates and the political sensitivities, current arrangements between the missions can be strengthened by sharing best practices and lessons learned, with a view to promoting improved collaboration in the short and long terms. Once the security situation improves in Lebanon, UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon can jointly revisit the alternate premises options in Beirut, in cooperation with other United Nations entities, with a view to increasing efficiencies. The structure of the UNIFIL mission support components can also be further streamlined.

40. The performance and configuration of organic and dedicated military enabling capabilities should be evaluated and streamlined to ensure that the mission maintains an effective mix of enabling troop-contributing country capabilities and civilian-contracted services. The levels of major equipment in UNIFIL continue to be excessive relative to the needs as determined in the last military capability study, in 2018. All identified excessive contingent-owned equipment should be adjusted and removed from the UNIFIL memorandums of understanding with troop-contributing countries as soon as possible. UNIFIL has declared such equipment as surplus, and it is currently reimbursed at 50 per cent of the regular rate, pending repatriation. If such equipment is required owing to national standards, troop-contributing countries, in close coordination with UNIFIL, might explore the retention of such capacity under the national support element modality at no cost to the United Nations.

41. UNIFIL shall gradually downsize its reliance on United Nations-owned equipment. Ageing United Nations-owned equipment should be written off, while the United Nations shall request troop-contributing countries to obtain modern contingent-owned equipment and specialized equipment that meet the mission's military operational needs. The United Nations shall allocate appropriate resources for contingent-owned equipment.

42. A technical review of regional information and communications technology (ICT) support arrangements should be undertaken, given that UNIFIL plays an important role by providing ICT services to regional United Nations entities (Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, UNDOF, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, UNTSO-Observer Group Lebanon-Observer Group Golan) under the Middle East regional structure. The review shall include an analysis of effective technological solutions and support arrangements to

enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of the mission's mandated objectives.

43. The closer alignment of the workforce with the mission's needs and priorities warrants a civilian staffing review to take into account any reconfiguration subsequent to the recommendations of the present report, including the use of new technologies. The review will look at all mission pillars and substantive and operational support. The structure of the Mission Support Division of UNIFIL should be reviewed to comply with the most current operational support guidance.

44. Within existing resources, the requirement to establish strategic planning capabilities in the Office of the Head of Mission/Force Commander should be supported in order to strengthen and align integrated strategic and operational business planning in key cross-cutting programmes, including the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System, results-based budgeting, Umoja strategic management, risk management, business continuity, contingency planning, gender and environment.

## V. Observations

45. The stability of the UNIFIL area of operations remains fragile amid increasingly complex conflict dynamics in the region and the absence of political progress to resolve the underlying causes of the conflict between Israel and Lebanon, including through a permanent ceasefire, the respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon, border demarcation and a Lebanese-led and -owned national dialogue to determine a national defence strategy. Protracted tensions in the region, the security concern of Israel regarding Hizbullah's military capabilities, the Syrian conflict and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain key factors that affect the stability of the region and of the Blue Line, with an undiminished risk of a resumption of hostilities between the parties, even if accidentally triggered.

46. Pending a final agreement on the boundary between Lebanon and Israel, and as long as the Lebanese Armed Forces is not able to deploy to southern Lebanon in significantly larger numbers, the operational and liaison activities of UNIFIL continue to provide valuable deterrence and prevention and a critical de-escalation mechanism in a context in which escalation can spark easily. The leverage and ability of UNIFIL to continue to perform its mandated tasks are inextricably linked to its capabilities, and I believe that UNIFIL, with its robust posture, remains necessary to prevent a security vacuum until conditions on the ground change in the direction of a permanent ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel.

47. If the options for optimizing UNIFIL capabilities outlined in this report are supported and endorsed by the Security Council, the Secretariat will commence discussions with the Government of Lebanon, the Government of Israel and troop-contributing countries. Initial steps towards implementation could commence promptly, with resource implications most likely reflected in the 2021–2022 budget cycle and beyond.

48. It is my belief that the recommendations proposed in this report would enhance the capacity of UNIFIL to fully and efficiently implement its mandate. However, it is important to note that this capacity also depends to a very large extent on the full support and cooperation of the parties. I am grateful for the continued commitment of both parties to implement resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) and call upon them to further extend their full support and cooperation to UNIFIL as it implements its mandate.