

Attached is an advance copy of **Twenty-first semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)** for the information of the members of the Security Council.

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to the Security Council on the implementation of
Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)**

I. Background

1. The present report is my twenty-first semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the process of the implementation of the resolution since my previous report on the subject, which was issued on 7 October 2014 (S/2014/720). I note herein the continued lack of progress on key provisions of the resolution and highlight increasing concerns about pressure on the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon. On 19 March, the Security Council adopted a Presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/7) in which, among other things, it reiterated its call on all parties to reflect positively on ways forward on all outstanding issues in the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1559 (2004), and expressed concern regarding violations to Lebanon's sovereignty, stalemate in Lebanon's Presidency, the impact of the conflict in Syria on Lebanon's security and stability, and acts of terrorism that have taken place in Lebanon. In the statement, the President also welcomed the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces in defending Lebanon's sovereignty, and, separately the mandate extension of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

2. As I stated in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), on 28 January, Hizbullah launched several anti-tank guided missiles from the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) towards an Israeli military convoy south of the Blue Line, which resulted in the deaths of two Israeli soldiers and injured several other soldiers and civilians. In retaliatory fire by the Israel Defence Forces, a peacekeeper from UNIFIL was killed. Both of these incidents are serious violations of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). At the time of the incident I condemned all violence and called on all concerned to exercise maximum calm and restraint, to refrain from any action that could undermine the stability of the area, and to act responsibly to prevent any escalation in an already tense regional environment.

3. The position of President of the Republic has been vacant for almost one full year. While recognizing the efforts of Prime Minister Tammam Salam and the Government in governing Lebanon through this difficult period, I am increasingly concerned both by the lack of progress in electing a new President and by the impact of such a prolonged vacuum on Lebanon. Parliament has been called to session to elect a President on 20 separate occasions since the position became vacant on 25 May 2014, but it has failed to convene on this issue due to a lack of quorum. Within this context, I note constraints on activity within the Cabinet brought about largely by the absence of a President of the Republic. On 5 November, Parliament did however meet to agree to the extension of its own mandate until June 2017.

4. The war in Syria continues to have a significant impact on Lebanon's security and stability. On 24 October 2014, clashes between militant groups and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the northern city of Tripoli, resulted in four fatalities and tens of injuries. On 10 January, a twin suicide bomb attack on a café in the Jabal Mohsen area of Tripoli killed at least nine people, including a member of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), and injured 37 others. Other terrorist attacks included two car bombs on 3 and 8 December in the area of Arsal, which also caused death and injury. The Lebanese Armed Forces and Security Services have detained a number of individuals involved in security incidents as part of their security operations in Tripoli, the Bekaa and southern suburbs of Beirut. Under the auspices of the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, dialogue between representatives of the Future Movement and Hizbullah began on 23 December 2014 and has continued over six sessions to date. The existence of the dialogue has contributed to a reduction in tensions between Lebanon's Sunni and Shia communities.

5. The Lebanese Armed Forces has continued to face challenges to Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It has responded strongly and contributed to a decrease in the overall number of cross-border incidents in Lebanon's northern and eastern border areas during this reporting period. Nonetheless, a significant threat to Lebanon's security from forces fighting across the border in Syria remains, including in particular from ISIL and Jabhat Al-Nusra and other extremist elements.

6. Lebanon continues to host the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, with 1,168,000 registered refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. On 28 October, the Government of Germany hosted a ministerial meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) in Berlin, within the context of a wider conference on Syrian refugees in the broader Middle East region. The group recognised the burden on Lebanon of dealing with such an unprecedented number of refugees and the need for greater international assistance and burden-sharing. On 15 December, the Government of Lebanon launched its Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016, a joint initiative with the United Nations to meet the humanitarian, protection and socio-economic needs of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees and host communities in the country. Harsh winter weather has caused conditions that have tragically led to a number of deaths from hypothermia in the refugee community. Separately, the Government of Lebanon also introduced a set of measures on 31 December in order to restrict the flow of refugees into the country and better manage the refugee presence. The United Nations continues to work closely with the Government of Lebanon on mobilising support for its crisis response plan and on the provision of greater assistance to the most vulnerable affected by this crisis.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

7. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented, as highlighted in my previous reports. Presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted freely and fairly in 2008 and 2009. 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.

8. During the reporting period, Prime Minister Tammam Salam continued to affirm Lebanon's respect for all United Nations resolutions. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and its corresponding impact on Lebanon, however, continued to limit progress in the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) and other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

9. The delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006), remains pending. Moreover, the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias along the border continue to pose a threat to the stability of the country and the region. The Lebanese Armed Forces has deployed several border regiments on the eastern border increasing the presence of State authority in the border areas. I welcome this positive development and continue to highlight the need for the Government and the armed forces to continue to step up their efforts to provide stability and for the international community to continue to support such efforts. The State must reach a full monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout Lebanon.

10. My representatives and I remained in regular contact with all parties in Lebanon during the reporting period, as well as with relevant regional and international leaders. I met Prime Minister Salam on 31 March in the margin of the Kuwait Donor Conference and noted the additional challenges that Lebanon faced as a result of the conflict in Syria, including the impact on political, security and economic life. I underlined the importance of putting aside partisan politics and electing a new President without delay, as called for by the Security Council, so that Lebanon is fully capable of making necessary and urgent decisions on matters relating to the security and stability of the country. The Deputy Secretary-General met with Lebanon's Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri and Prime Minister, Salam, as well as Patriarch Rai, during his visit to Lebanon, 14-17 December 2014. In the context of the launch of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan for 2015-2016, the Deputy Secretary-General highlighted the importance of electing a new President of the Republic without further delay. He also noted the continued impact of the conflict in Syria on Lebanon - including Syrian refugees and the host communities supporting them.

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

11. 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.

12. I am increasingly concerned by the continued failure to elect a new President. The mandate of the former President ended almost one year ago leaving the position of Head of State vacant for a prolonged period. This institutional vacuum has increased the country's vulnerability in the face of continuing security, economic and humanitarian challenges. Prime Minister Salam and his Government have worked to ensure the continuity of State institutions in the absence of a President, but this has become increasingly difficult and subject to constraints directly related to the vacancy in the Presidency. Parliament has been called to session to elect a President on 20 separate occasions since 24 May 2014, but it has failed to convene to elect a new President because of a lack of quorum and specifically the absence of parliamentarians from Hizbullah and the Free Patriotic Movement. Parliament did however meet on 5 November and agreed to extend its own mandate until 20 June 2017.

13. Under the auspices of the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, Future Movement and Hizbullah initiated a dialogue aimed at lowering tensions between Lebanon's Sunni and Shia communities. To date, six sessions of the dialogue have taken place beginning on 23 December 2014 and both parties have expressed their commitment to continue their engagement. I note that the renewed dialogue has led to progress in reducing tensions and providing political cover for security operations against militants and criminals in various locations around the country, although it has not yet made progress on a mechanism to help the parties overcome the deadlock and move forwards on electing a new President. In the interest of all Lebanese communities and Lebanon's standing regionally and internationally, I call upon all Lebanese politicians to meet to elect a new President without further delay.

14. 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 continue to call upon the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. Given the continuing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, however, progress has been even more difficult to achieve and no tangible steps were taken by either side in this regard during the reporting period.

15. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain elements essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. They also remain critical to facilitating proper border control. The complex security situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the current circumstances, including continuing 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 resolution 1559 (2004).

16. Cross-border violations of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity have continued on the eastern and northern borders as a direct result of the conflict in Syria. During this reporting period, there has been a decrease in the number of cross-border incidents, but there were at least 45 cross-border shooting incidents, seven incidents of cross-border shelling and 16 rocket attacks from the Syrian side of the border. The Syrian Government has also continued conducting air-raids violating Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity. These incidents caused injuries and material damage.

17. Security personnel, including members of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, that were kidnapped and taken hostage in August 2014 during an incursion of armed men belonging to the Nusra Front and ISIL, have still not been released. Since their kidnapping, four have been executed by their captors; the latest death was announced on 5 December 2014. Efforts to secure the release of the remaining hostages are on-going.

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

19. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area during the reporting period. Neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has yet 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).

20. Unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israeli Defence Forces continued to make almost daily overflights of Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The Government of Lebanon has regularly and

repeatedly protested against the violations. I have deplored them and demanded that they cease immediately. The Israeli authorities, in turn, claim that the overflights are carried out for security reasons.

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

21. The Government of Lebanon has reiterated to the United Nations its intention to extend State authority over all Lebanese territory, as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). The Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces have played a crucial role in implementing this commitment under difficult circumstances and the ability of the Lebanese State to fully exercise its authority over all its territory continues to be challenged.

22. Concern remains at the involvement of Lebanese fighters in the Syrian conflict, including members of Hizbullah. Hizbullah has continued to publicly acknowledge its participation in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic, contrary to its commitment to the Baabda Declaration and Lebanon's policy of disassociation. Funerals of its members killed in fighting in Syria have continued to take place in Lebanon during the reporting period. Other Lebanese have also participated in fighting across the border in the Syrian Arab Republic alongside the Syrian opposition and also reportedly for the Nusra Front and ISIL. The involvement of Hizbullah and other Lebanese elements in fighting in Syria further jeopardises the stability and security of Lebanon.

23. The Lebanese Armed Forces has deployed border regiments on the northern and eastern borders of the country. The deployment has repelled attempted incursions of Lebanese territory by armed fighters on several occasions. However, on 1 December, during one of these attempts, six Lebanese soldiers were killed and one was injured near the town of Ras Baalbek. In another such incident on 23 January clashes with armed fighters in the same area led to the death of eight soldiers and the injury of a number of others.

24. Urgent international support of the Lebanese Armed Forces remains a priority. The beginning of delivery of assistance related to the contribution of \$3 billion from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced in March 2014 is expected to begin imminently in cooperation with France. Saudi Arabia's additional donation of \$1 billion to Lebanon for specifically engaging in counter-terrorism activities has further bolstered the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces and security services in this regard. Bilateral security assistance by the United States, the United Kingdom and other Member States has also helped to strengthen the capability of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

25. Due to the efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces and security agencies, as well as increased cooperation between them, there has been an overall decrease in the number of terrorist incidents in the country. However, on 3 December a Lebanese soldier was killed and two others injured when they attempted to defuse a bomb close to the outskirts of the town of Aرسال. On 8 December, a car bomb exploded injuring at least three, also in the town of Aرسال. On 10 January, a double-suicide bomb attack in the largely Alawite neighbourhood of Jabal Mohsen in the northern city of Tripoli caused nine fatalities, including one member of the Internal Security Forces, and injured 37 others. The Nusra Front claimed responsibility for the Jabal Mohsen attack, which received broad condemnation from Lebanon's politicians across the political spectrum.

26. Security operations have been carried out throughout the country with specific plans implemented in Aرسال, Tripoli, the Bekaa area and southern suburbs of Beirut, leading to the detention of some extremists and criminals. In addition, on 12 January, the Internal Security Forces conducted an unprecedented security operation aimed at disrupting a terrorist communication network in Roumieh prison.

27. With regard to the border of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic, there continued to be reports of arms-trafficking in both directions. The Government of Israel has consistently alleged that there are on-going arms transfers to Hizbullah across the Lebanese-Syrian border, including on 12 December in a letter to the Security Council (S/2014/878). Although the United Nations is not in a position to independently verify these concerns, it takes such reports seriously. Hizbullah has continued to openly claim that it has substantial, sophisticated, military capacity separate from that of the Lebanese state, which it claims serves as a deterrent against a potential aggression from Israel.

28. On 18 January, an alleged Israeli airstrike in the Golan Heights killed six Hizbullah members and a high-ranking Iranian military officer. At the time of the incident I expressed concern about the potential consequences of such an episode, particularly considering the context of the conflict in Syria and the corresponding impact on Lebanon. I called upon all sides to act responsibly to prevent any further escalation in respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all of the countries concerned.

29. To tackle continuing cross-border incidents and in the context of the reports of arms smuggling, there remains an urgent need to improve the management of and control of Lebanon's land borders. This is also necessary to prevent armed groups and militias in Lebanon from expanding their weapons arsenal, given that such expansion outside State control constitutes a threat to national and regional peace.

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

30. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. This remains a key provision of the resolution that has not yet been 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 national context and the growing 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 and to strengthen the institutions of State.

31. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continue to operate outside 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, several Palestinian armed groups continue to operate in the country inside and outside the refugee camps.

32. There has been 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, no specific steps have been taken to tackle this crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. Several Lebanese groups and individuals continue to speak up against the maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal and the presence of armed groups such as the "Seraya al Muqawama", which they consider a destabilizing factor in the country and undermining democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued existence of such arms as an implicit threat for use within Lebanon for political reasons.

33. I have repeatedly expressed my deep concern to Lebanese leaders about the serious risks that armed groups pose to the stability of the country and the region. I have urged them to tackle this matter without further delay, given that it is their obligation under Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). 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.

34. On 28 January, Hizbullah launched an attack at an Israeli military convoy killing two Israeli soldiers and injuring a number of other soldiers and civilians. In its statement, claiming responsibility for the incident, Hizbullah attributed the action to its “Quneitra martyrs group” in reference to the 18 January alleged Israeli airstrike on the Golan. Also on 28 January, Israel retaliated into Lebanon, firing mortar rounds and artillery into the areas of Arab el Louaize, near Ghajar, Majidiye and Kafr Chouba (in sector east of UNIFIL’s area of operations). During the course of Israeli retaliatory fire a UNIFIL peacekeeper was killed in position 4-28. There were further retaliations from both sides, the details of which were set out in my last report on resolution 1701 (2006).

35. Hizbullah’s claim of responsibility for its attack across the Blue Line on 28 January demonstrated clearly the maintenance of unauthorised weapons by Hizbullah, outside the control of the State, and Hizbullah’s willingness to use such weapons against Israel. It confirmed the concern about the impact on Lebanon’s stability and security that I have warned of for some time. The presence of other armed extremist militants in Lebanon, as witnessed in Tripoli, Aarsal and the Bekaa is also deeply worrying. Violence and terrorist acts continued during the reporting period costing lives and causing great suffering and fear to many innocent Lebanese from all communities nationwide.

36. It is in the national interest of Lebanon to ensure that those behind terrorist acts, including political assassinations, are held accountable and that violence does not take place with impunity. It has been ten years since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and the adoption of resolution 1757 (2005). On 31 December 2014, the mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon was extended for another three years from 1 March 2015.

37. Reports of groups in Lebanese communities carrying arms to protect themselves for fear of attack by such groups as the Nusra Front and ISIL, have continued in this reporting period. I note the importance of ensuring the security and stability of these areas by the Government of Lebanon including in communities located close to the border, demonstrating the importance of the presence and role of State authorities, rather than militias, in ensuring security and stability in these vulnerable areas.

38. I have consistently highlighted the National Dialogue as the best way to deal with the issue of arms and achieve the ultimate goal of no weapons or armed forces in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. I note that once again no sessions of National Dialogue were held during this reporting period – another tangible effect of the continued vacuum in the Presidency. I am concerned that this in turn puts at risk the possibility of building consensus and a unified vision on the issue.

39. During the reporting period, the security situation in the Palestinian refugee camps remained generally stable, with the exception of a few violent incidents. On 24 November, a Syrian refugee was killed during a clash between armed groups in Burj el Barajneh camp. The capacity of the Joint Security Force, which largely controls security in Ain el Helwe camp, has increased. In cooperation with Lebanese authorities, the Joint Security Force intervened on a number of occasions to prevent the further escalation of security incidents, including on 20 January when a Palestinian was killed in Ain el Helwe. I am encouraged by the launch of the Joint Security Force in Mieh Mieh Camp on 26 March. I welcome the renewed commitment of Palestinian leaders to disassociate the Palestinian camps in Lebanon from the violence in Syria and the region more broadly.

40. Humanitarian conditions for Palestine refugees in Lebanon are increasingly dire, with the influx of an additional 45,000 refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic since the beginning of the crisis placing tremendous further pressure on the overall situation in the camps and gatherings, in addition to the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to assist them. UNRWA has taken measures to reduce tension between the Palestine refugees who have been residing in Lebanon and those arriving from the Syrian Arab Republic by, for example, including refugee children in regular classes in UNRWA schools. The United Nations has continued to urge the Lebanese authorities to improve the living conditions of the refugees. This should be done without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestine 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.

41. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continues to challenge the ability of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty over its territory. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue and confirmed in subsequent sessions, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country. All but one of the 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 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 relating to the dismantling of the above-mentioned military bases, and upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with those efforts in good faith.

Observations

42. I continue to be disappointed at the lack of further tangible progress towards the implementation of the remaining provisions of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). Lebanon continues to face challenges to its stability and security, both internally and along its borders with the Syrian Arab Republic, including from terrorism and extremist groups and arms smuggling. I am concerned that the continued stagnation in the implementation of the resolution could lead to the erosion of provisions already implemented and contribute to a further deterioration in the stability of Lebanon. 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 resolution 1559 (2004) for the long-term stability of the country and the region.

43. I remain deeply concerned over the serious deterioration of the security situation in Southern Lebanon that took place in January. I condemn all violence by all sides and call on all concerned to exercise maximum calm and restraint, to refrain from any action that could undermine the stability of the area, and to act responsibly to prevent any escalation in an already tense regional environment. I call on all sides to adhere to all relevant Security Council resolutions and condemn the tragic death of a United Nations Peacekeeper.

44. I have repeatedly cautioned that the widespread proliferation of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the existence of heavily armed militias, undermines the security of Lebanese citizens. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern, in particular because 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. The serious impact of these arms was clearly felt during this reporting period especially in the context of the 28 January incidents. I reiterate my call upon Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to engage in any militant activity inside or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

45. I have repeatedly condemned the continued violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon, including cross-border incidents in which civilians and members of the Lebanese Armed Forces have been killed or injured on the Lebanese side of the border because of the actions of warring parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. I condemn the continuation of cross-border shelling and rocket attacks by various groups in the Syrian Arab Republic and the air raids by the Syrian air force on Lebanese territory, which are a further violation of Lebanese sovereignty. I continue to call upon all parties, including the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

46. I condemn the participation of Lebanese citizens in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic in breach of the commitment of all Lebanese parties in the Ministerial declaration of the current Government to the policy of

disassociation and of the principles of the Baabda Declaration agreed to by all Lebanese parties in June 2012. The involvement of Hizbullah and other Lebanese elements in fighting in Syria seriously jeopardises Lebanon's security and stability. I welcome Prime Minister Tammam Salam's continued commitment to Lebanon's policy of disassociation, but remain deeply concerned about the ongoing threat of terrorism and extremism for Lebanon, including from groups such as ISIL and the Nusra Front. I deplore the terrorist attacks that have taken place in the country including those carried out by groups involved in the fighting in Syria. The suicide attacks that took place in Tripoli on 10 January led to the tragic loss of life and risked setting one Lebanese community against another as a result. However, I applaud the response of the various communities involved, especially those from the area of Jabal Mohsen, which refused to retaliate or respond to such violence. I encourage the Lebanese Government and local leaders to facilitate and support the efforts of Lebanese communities working towards strengthening ties including the development of socio-economic opportunities for the most vulnerable citizens. Working together in the spirit of moderation and unity will I hope bring the various communities in Lebanon together and contribute to the country's strength and resilience.

47. I am encouraged by the successes of the Lebanese State and specifically the Lebanese Armed Forces in strengthening its presence in border areas, in order to better protect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The positive impact of the deployment of border regiments has been felt across the country, especially in those communities most affected and vulnerable to attack from extremist armed groups attempting to infiltrate Lebanon's borders, such as the Nusra Front and ISIL. I regret that these deployments have not been without cost, including the loss of life of Lebanese soldiers. I condemn the detention and deplorable executions of Lebanese soldiers and security force personnel held captive by the Nusra Front and ISIL in the eastern Lebanese-Syrian border area. I call on those holding the remaining security personnel hostage to release them without further delay.

48. I welcome the cooperation between the various State security agencies and the armed forces, which has led to the detention and arrest of a number of extremists and criminals, particularly in Tripoli and the Bekaa area where specific security plans have been implemented. Their roles, including in counter-terrorism efforts, have been critical in preserving Lebanon's security and stability in the face of multiple challenges. I note the dialogues that have taken place between opposing political parties in Lebanon and welcome all attempts to deepen unity and political consensus throughout the country. Dialogue and unity are the best response to any attempts at dividing and destabilizing Lebanese society and I encourage such efforts to continue in the interest of all communities. Broad political support for the various security operations, including subsequent judicial processes, also send an important message that violence with impunity will not be tolerated. I note the commitment of the former President of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, Judge Sir David Baragwanath, to completing the current trial within the Tribunal's recently renewed third mandate, on the tenth anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 21 others who were killed in the same attack.

49. There is a growing fear in Lebanon of the incursion of armed militants and terrorists across the border from the Syrian Arab Republic, including ISIL and the Nusra Front. Continued reports of the formation of armed groups in local communities close to these border areas, with the alleged aim of providing protection to the local population, are worrying.

50. I continue to urge the Government and armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). It is vital that the National Dialogue meet again to address issues of national importance, including the arms held by Hizbullah and other groups. The discussion paper on a national defence strategy developed in the context of the National Dialogue remains a valuable starting point in this regard. It remains important that earlier decisions of the National Dialogue be implemented. I also call upon countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah 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.

51. I welcome the support provided by the international community for the Lebanese armed forces and security agencies. Bilateral assistance has also played an important part in providing timely and urgently needed requirements. The finalisation of the agreement for \$3 billion of assistance from Saudi Arabia, to be delivered in cooperation with France, is a positive development and will contribute to the strengthening of the Lebanese Armed Forces, as is the additional 1\$ billion contribution from Saudi Arabia to strengthen Lebanese security services. I encourage progress in expediting the delivery of this much-needed capability, particularly in counter-terrorism and border protection, in order to give the Lebanese Armed Forces the superiority needed to effectively address the multiple security challenges facing Lebanon.

52. The situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the limited resources available to UNRWA in order to assist them remains a concern, particularly in light of the continued presence of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic who have fled the violence there. I call upon donors to increase their support to UNRWA and its vital work in providing services to Palestine refugees in Lebanon. I note the work of the Palestinian joint security force in preventing an escalation of conflict on several occasions in Ain el Helwe camp and welcome the renewed commitment of Palestinian leaders to disassociate the Palestinian camps in Lebanon from the violence in the Syrian Arab Republic and the region more broadly.

53. I regret the absence of any progress on the delineation and demarcation of the border 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 the borders of Lebanon and help to prevent the illegal transfer of

weapons and fighters in both directions. This has become even more pressing in the context of events in the Syrian Arab Republic.

54. Israel's continued violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, including conspicuously the overflights of Lebanese territory by Israeli military aircraft, are deplorable. I reiterate my call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population. Recent incidents along the Blue Line, as detailed in my reports on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), underscore the importance of ensuring that the situation along the entirety of the Blue Line remains stable, including in the Sheba'a Farms area. I welcome the resumption of calm and the recommitment by both Lebanon and Israel to the cessation of hostilities, and call on all sides to avoid any provocative rhetoric. Full implementation of all provisions of relevant resolutions remains the best prevention against the risk of miscalculation or tensions.

55. I am concerned at the continued failure to elect a new President for almost a full year, which puts additional pressure on the remaining State institutions including the Cabinet. Leaving the position of Head of State vacant increases the country's vulnerability to mounting security, economic and humanitarian challenges. I commend the efforts of Prime Minister Salam and the Government to ensure national unity and the continuity of State institutions. Lebanon cannot afford to wait for a new crisis in order to resolve this anomaly and I hope that Lebanese leaders will use the opportunity of the current relative stability to put the national interest ahead of partisan politics with regard to the election. I note that parliamentary quorum was observed on 5 November, when Lebanese politicians met to extend Parliament's mandate until June 2017. I therefore call upon Lebanese Members of Parliament to exercise their responsibility by attending Parliament and ensuring that quorum is observed to urgently elect a new President without further delay. The Lebanese people deserve to have a Head of State to help contribute to unity and stability in the country and tackle long-term issues that have a tangible impact on all Lebanese.

56. Recent security developments, especially in the eastern border region, have put even greater pressure on the refugees, the host communities that receive them and the country more broadly, necessitating further support from the international community. I welcome the launching of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, jointly developed by the Government and the United Nations. I encourage the Lebanese authorities to continue to work closely with the United Nations in their efforts to host, assist and protect refugees in accordance with human rights and humanitarian principles. The refugee crisis in Lebanon is not only a major humanitarian and socio-economic burden for Lebanon, but also a challenge to the country's stability and must be addressed as such. I strongly encourage Member States, including regional donors, to fulfil their burden-sharing responsibilities by contributing generously through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and other mechanisms available in the Kuwait Donor Conference of 31 March 2015.

57. Developments in the region make for an even more complex and fragile environment in which Lebanon's security, stability and unity remain key and I remain firmly committed to the implementation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). I therefore count on the continued commitment of the Government to its international obligations and call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#), [1680 \(2006\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#). I further call upon Member States to renew efforts to support Lebanon in ensuring respect for its obligations under those 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 those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.