



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. Mr. TAMMAM SALAM  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON**

**AT THE MEETING**

**OF THE**

**“INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP FOR LEBANON”**

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations  
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017*

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first to express my utmost gratitude for the efforts of the Secretary General, who launched this initiative in September of last year and to all ISG members for being alongside my country throughout this period.

Your presence here, this year again, reflects the growing alarm, that Lebanon is going through one of the most perilous periods of its history, as it faces serious threats to its institutions, to its security, and to its socio-economic fabric.

The power games involving regional issues are beyond Lebanon, yet, they are bearing on our internal political struggle and leading to a major impairment of our institutions, preventing the all-important election of a President of the Republic and practically paralyzing legislative action.

Political uncertainty and precarious security, has gravely affected our economy with a dramatic increase in unemployment and poverty to unprecedented levels.

You know that an influx of over a million and a quarter displaced Syrians, equivalent to one-third of the Lebanese population have flooded our country, and, let me stress that this situation is becoming uncontrollable as the flow has hardly abated and we are struggling, with limited success, to mobilize the means to redress the economic hardship it has caused.

According to the World Bank, the Syrian crisis has cost Lebanon over 7 billion dollars in additional annual public expenditures, lost fiscal revenues and deterioration of the infrastructure.

These are serious challenges that have to be urgently addressed on all fronts, to avoid a gradual collapse of my country which remains a symbol of democracy, coexistence and modernity in this tormented region.

It is imperative for all Lebanese parties, to safeguard and reiterate their commitment to the decisions of the National Dialogue previously held in Parliament and in the Presidential Palace in Baabda, and referred to supportively in many instances from this very building. This ought to be done in order to iron out differences and revive our institutions starting with the urgent and vital election of a President of the Republic.

It is equally imperative to accelerate the support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and other security forces, in accordance with decisions taken by yourselves last September, and confirmed in Paris and Rome.

In this regard, I would like to thank His Majesty King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia for his most generous and effective gesture, wisely conscious, as he is, of the fact that Lebanon is being drawn, against its will, into a confrontation with terrorism.

I would also like to thank all States for their pledges and on-going contributions to support our army and security forces.

Regarding the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, we have amply demonstrated a commitment, to all international norms.

The generous response of the whole country to this unprecedented crisis is yet a new page of principles in the records of humanity.

You have all been apprised of the dual plight it causes for both the Lebanese and the Syrians. UNHCR, is playing a crucial role under the leadership of Mr Guterres, to help us alleviate this plight and I wish to thank him and his team.

Despite all that, the problem of the displaced Syrians is evolving on such a multi-faceted course that traditional solutions can no longer help.

The time has come to resort to a variety of simultaneous and converging policies:

Lebanese Authorities will be tightening border controls and applying strict rules to obtain an exact tally and to define who may qualify to remain in Lebanon as a refugee.

It is of the utmost importance that assistance to host communities be expanded and funnelled through official delivery channels.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,

It is now evident that there is no effective alleviation of this issue without serious burden-sharing, as we have requested on several occasions, that is by the relocation of significant numbers of refugees in third countries in a collective commitment by the international community.

All such measures are meant to help diminish the pressure and risks for Lebanon, recognizing, however, that the true solution will only emanate, from a permanent cessation of hostilities leading to a political settlement in Syria.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,

In the past few months, we have been able to convince our international partners of the necessity for a paradigm shift, from pure humanitarian assistance, to aid for structural development that would supplement it.

Today, I appeal to all our friends to rally and use the various financing mechanisms at their disposal, either through direct bilateral aid or, via the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which, despite its very limited resources to date, has been used to finance a major project directed at eleven municipality federations.

Other projects are expected to be approved shortly. Again, in this regard, I would like to thank the World Bank and, especially its President, for their sincere commitment and extend my gratitude to the first donors, Norway, Finland and France.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,

Beyond your valued support that has helped preserve Lebanon's stability, and for which my people are grateful;

It is with a sense of urgency that I call on you, and through you to other friendly Member States, to remain steadfast in the face of intolerance, violence and terrorism.

Help us preserve that image of pluralism and peaceful coexistence that Lebanon represents, for Lebanon to remain the bastion of democracy and freedom in the region.