

MISION PERMANENTE DU LIBAN
AUPRES DE
L'OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES
A GENEVE

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Statement
of
Ambassador Gebran SOUFAN
Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations Office
and other International Organizations
in Geneva

regarding

the report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights on the follow-up to the report of the Commission
of Inquiry on Lebanon

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5th Session of the Human Rights Council

Geneva, June 13, 2007

Mr. President,

In its resolution 3/3 adopted without a vote on 8 December 2006, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to consult with the Government of Lebanon on the report of the Commission of Inquiry established according to resolution S-2/1 dated 11 August 2006, with a specific mandate regarding the “grave situation of human rights in Lebanon caused by Israeli military operations”, and to report to the Council on its fulfillment.

The report of the United Nations High Commissioner, contained in document A/HRC/5/9, is a follow-up to the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon and its 16 recommendations.

In discharging her duties, the High Commissioner initiated consultations with the Government of Lebanon and sent letters to a wide range of Organizations and Agencies, mainly in the United Nations System.

Due to the unprecedented circumstances in Lebanon, only some Lebanese administrations were able to provide their opinions and points of view.

Given the ongoing events and constraints on the Lebanese side, the main pillars of the report lie in the replies of the Organizations and Agencies insofar as they reflect programmes and activities appertaining to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

Our observations are the following:

- 1- The report of the high Commissioner is factual. It highlights the various activities and programmes undertaken in Lebanon in the framework of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.
- 2- It reflects a partnership between Lebanon, the UN System, Specialized Agencies and NGO's to reconstruct the country, while ensuring that a focus on an affected region does not create new disparities elsewhere in Lebanon.

- 3- The report takes stock of the activities launched and monitored in Lebanon till April 2007 in various fields and sectors, coinciding with the subtitles of the recommendations mainly:
- Humanitarian Assistance and reconstruction.
 - Vulnerable groups (children).
 - Weapons.
 - Redress violations of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.
- 4- As Lebanon's well known achievements in 15 years of post war development have been wiped out in a matter of days by Israel's military machine, as stated by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, we did not expect the Commissioner's report to announce a happy ending or conclusive results.

But we are heartened to see concrete follow-up to the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, in particular the humanitarian assistance, superseded now by reconstruction.

I agree with the High Commissioner that "all the UN agencies are involved in providing assistance to Lebanon's reconstruction and recovery". And we are grateful for their invaluable contributions.

- 5- The Commissioner's report touches on the question of weapons, a top priority for Lebanon, including the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions. While a new momentum is observed, be it in CCW or the Oslo process, no concrete results emerged yet.

In this regard, the report indicated the entry into force of CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of war as of 12 November 2006. Yet advantageous as it may be, the Protocol does not apply to Existing Explosive remnants of war and hence to Lebanon's case.

- We welcome UNIDIR view that "stronger action needs to be taken to reduce the effects of the (cluster) munitions on the lives and livelihoods of civilians" (paragraph 44)

- With regard to “information on the use of cluster munitions”, elaborated in paragraph 45, it is most regretful that Israel did not provide the UN with “the cluster munitions fire plan data”, despite the repeated calls of the Secretary General.
 - Regarding UNEP’s analysis result, showing “no evidence of the use of depleted uranium...” (paragraph 41), the Government of Lebanon does not consider this conclusion as final, as it takes three years to investigate all suspected sites and locations in Lebanon.
- 6- On “the redress for victims of violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law”, the urgent issue, pertaining to individual complaints and international mechanism to seek and obtain compensation, remains unsolved.

Many other problems of equal importance require further attention, like the Oil spill. The Lebanese Council for Scientific Research noted that 30 kilometers of the most beautiful rocky and sandy seashore are still polluted with devastating implications on the fauna, flora and fishery.

- 7- Finally, Mr. President, since the outbreak of violence, the Government of Lebanon and the UN System have worked in coherence and synergy to restore normalcy, recovery and to establish the required coordination and funding mechanisms highlighted in the report. Moreover, the report reflects the Governments firm will to apply accountability and transparency with respect to the channeling and use of donor funds.

It does not prescribe therapies or propose specific initiatives per se, nor does it describe the major impediments encountered by the UN, Lebanese and foreign relief agencies in accomplishing their tasks due to the Israeli campaign, but has nevertheless the merit of being an advanced and transparent version of the ongoing work and the progress made so far.

We appreciate the efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to produce this report, and we welcome further support to the Government’s activities and programs consistent with the report.
