

**Statement by United States Permanent Representative
Ambassador Warren W. Tichenor**



**Special Session of the Human Rights Council
August 11, 2006**

(Check against delivery)

Mr. President, the United States, too, is deeply concerned about the suffering of innocent Lebanese and Israeli civilians, extensive damage to civilian infrastructure, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of persons. The human costs in both Lebanon and Israel have been tremendous. We and other members of the Security Council are working around the clock to bring a sustainable end to the violence. We continue to work with the Governments of Lebanon and Israel and others on the ground to help address the humanitarian situation in Lebanon.

We believe that this Special Session is unhelpful and potentially counter-productive to the Security Council's efforts to address the complex issues involved in this conflict, while taking into account the views of Lebanon and Israel, in search of a durable settlement.

The United States remains firm in our belief that the special sessions mechanism is an invaluable tool in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council must, however, act responsibly -- striving for impartiality and non-selectivity.

It is worth remembering that the current crisis in Lebanon was precipitated by an unprovoked attack on Israel. This session and the proposed resolution fail to acknowledge that fact. This Council and the resolution also fail to take into account the more than 3,000 rockets Hizballah has fired into Israel, deliberately targeting civilians, killing dozens and injuring hundreds of innocent Israeli citizens. Israel has the right under international law to defend itself against Hizballah's continuing attacks.

When exercising this right, however, Israel, like any other state, must comply with its obligations under laws of war. Where there have been specific incidents of concern, we expect the Israeli Government to take appropriate action to investigate, as they have done with respect to the attacks on the UN post and at Qana, and in a thorough and transparent manner. If there was any wrongdoing, those responsible should be held to account.

There is, however, no moral equivalency as Hizballah has adopted a specific policy that intentionally endangers innocent civilians both in Lebanon and in Israel. It continues to launch missile attacks deliberately targeted at Israel's civilian population. Hizballah has deliberately concealed itself and its weapons within civilian areas in Lebanon in order to launch these attacks. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recognized Hizballah's tactic of hiding and operating in civilian areas is a factor in any legal assessment of Israel's actions. Failure to address the pernicious role that Hizballah has played in this conflict will likely further polarize the situation and make it more difficult to end the fighting.

The draft resolution unfairly condemns Israel while leaving Hizballah's egregious actions unmentioned. It contains unsubstantiated factual allegations and conclusions of law that are not supported by fact or analysis.

It is important for the international community to speak with a unified voice. We urge the members of the Human Rights Council not to take any unbalanced or one-sided action that could undermine the Security Council's efforts to contribute to a peaceful and durable solution in Lebanon.

Thank you, Mr. President.