



Statement

by

Mr. Ibrahim Assaf

Security Council Political Coordinator

at the

Security Council

on

Protection of civilians in armed conflicts

Wednesday, July 7, 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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

Thank you Mme President,

Allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Pillay for her perceptive remarks and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Holmes for his insightful comments, we wish him all the best in his next endeavors. Lebanon also expresses its support to the informal group of experts on the protection of civilians; its diligent work coupled with that of OCHA, has been instrumental in reporting the realities on the ground.

Mme President,

Civilians continue to account for the majority of casualties in armed conflicts even over a decade after the adoption of Resolution 1265 (1999). Thus the prospects of building safe, peaceful and prosperous societies are eroded, as children's hope for the future is shattered, women and girls continue to be subjected to endemic sexual and gender-based violence, and able men are killed or injured.

Tolerating impunity for the armed targeting of civilians, only encourages perpetrators in their heinous practices. Lebanon supports the establishment of standing mechanisms for the timely creation of independent fact-finding commissions in the immediate aftermath of hostilities. This would improve the Council's ability to fairly assess the realities on the ground and to take appropriate action against those parties undermining international law, and international humanitarian law.

Mme President,

The use of cluster munitions as a means of indiscriminate attacks against civilians is particularly lethal, since its risks to civilians, endure long after the conflict has ended. The Lebanese armed forces assisted by the international community are still working on clearing vast areas from the four million cluster bombs Israel dropped in the last 48 hours of the war it waged in 2006. Hundreds of civilians, a large proportion of which are children, are still dying or losing limbs, four years on, as a result of unexploded munitions.

Lebanon supports the concept of making amends and reiterates its demand that Israel pay due compensation for the Lebanese children and farmers harmed by cluster munitions in addition to the fishermen and others affected by the oil spill caused by the Israeli bombing of the Jiyeh power plant in 2006.

Mme President,

Standing by idle as human rights and international humanitarian law are violated, and civilian access to aid is consistently impeded, means abandoning them twice. The people of Gaza whose hospitals and schools have been repeatedly bombed by the Israeli army should be allowed to access, without waiting endless hours at checkpoints, the humanitarian aid that would cater to their basic human needs. Moreover the blockade of Gaza should be lifted immediately and without conditions.

The protection of civilians should also tackle the root causes hampering enduring peace and security, in addition to dealing with imminent physical threats. While Lebanon commends the work of UNRWA and OCHA in Gaza, the fact remains that without lifting the siege and allowing the people of Gaza to experience sustainable and sustained economic development their basic human right to freedom from want and need, will continue to be threatened. Lebanon also expresses its appreciation for the Quick Impact Projects carried out by the UNIFIL and that have made an important difference in the lives of our citizens.

While there is no doubt that civilians in armed conflicts are forced into vulnerable situations, it must be acknowledged that refugees and Internally Displaced Persons are generally in even more precarious conditions. It is imperative that the international community exerts a concerted effort to ensure the return of refugees and IDPs to safe and secure homes.

Mme President,

The Security Council has both the political responsibility and moral duty toward defenseless civilians in situations of armed conflict, as well as toward the humanitarian aid workers and journalists who risk their lives to help these vulnerable populations and to report on their plight. We owe it to them all to endow our peacekeeping operations with the indispensable resources to carry out their mandates and to embolden them with the necessary political will.