

14 July 2006



Security Council

SC/8776

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Security Council
5489th Meeting (AM)

SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATES ESCALATING CRISIS BETWEEN ISRAEL, LEBANON:

UN OFFICIALS URGE RESTRAINT, DIPLOMACY, PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

Lebanon's Ambassador Calls Israel's Acts 'Barbaric Aggression': Israel Says Actions Direct Response to Assault, Targeted Hezbollah Strongholds

The Security Council today convened an urgent meeting to discuss the intensifying violence between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and heard the United Nations top political official call on all sides in the worsening conflict to show restraint and allow diplomacy to work, warning that a window of opportunity was "quickly closing".

Briefing Council members at a meeting requested by Lebanon, Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, expressed "deep alarm" at the spiral of violence, sparked by Wednesday's kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah fighters crossing the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon. He said that parts of Lebanon were now under blockade and heavy Israeli military action, while Israel was being subjected to indiscriminate bomb attacks by Hezbollah.

Warning that reckless and dangerous actions would only lead to further bloodshed and instability, inflaming an already highly volatile region, he said that he and other United Nations officials were particularly alarmed at the suffering that had been unleashed on civilians on both sides. "We are emphasizing to all parties that a qualitative escalation of the conflict is in no one's best interests, and the space for diplomatic initiatives is quickly closing. All parties must do their utmost to ensure that this space remains open."

In light of the alarming developments, he recalled that the Secretary-General had sent a political mission to the Middle East to help defuse the crisis. The three-member team, led by Special Political Adviser Vijay Nambiar, was expected to arrive in Cairo today, and would meet with ministers of the League of Arab States. The team would then travel to Lebanon, Syria and Israel.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, gave Council members a detailed briefing on the current incidents, which he called the "most serious crisis between Israel and Lebanon" in the past six years. Among other things, he noted that, on the afternoon of 12 July, the Lebanese Government had requested the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to broker a ceasefire. Israel had responded that a ceasefire would be contingent upon the return of the captured soldiers.

He said that the Secretary-General had condemned Hezbollah's initial attack, and had called for the captured soldiers' immediate and unconditional release. He had also called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, Mr. Guéhenno added.

Following those briefings, Lebanon's representative said the Council was meeting "in the shadow of a widespread barbaric aggression waged by Israel at this very moment against my nation". He warned that Israel's destruction of vital bridges, roads and buildings, and the killing and maiming of hundreds of Lebanese civilians "will not resolve the problem, but will further complicate it".

He said the Israeli Government had held Lebanon responsible for Hezbollah's acts, even though the Lebanese Government had issued a statement on 12 July, declaring that it was not aware of the incident, that it did not take responsibility for it, and did not endorse what had happened. Israel's subsequent aggression undermined Lebanon's sovereignty and attempts to exercise its authority over its entire territory, he said, calling on the Council to take a clear decision to establish a ceasefire and to end the air and sea blockade imposed on Lebanon.

Israel's representative said that Hizbollah terrorists continued to act with impunity in southern Lebanon. They had carried out their heinous acts and then retreated to the Hizbollah stronghold in southern Lebanon. Israel had to respond, as any sovereign Government would, to the assault that had been carried out against it on a scale that had not been seen in recent years. Israel's actions had been in direct response to Hizbollah's actions, he declared, stressing that Israel had targeted Hizbollah strongholds and infrastructure, not civilian targets.

Unfortunately, since Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, the Lebanese Government had chosen to succumb to terror, rather than vanquish it, and to relinquish control of its country, rather than exercise its sovereignty. It had become a country held hostage and tormented by decades of sectarian strife, political assassinations, full-fledged civil war and Syrian control. He said the Council had a duty to help the Lebanese people achieve the goal of a free, prosperous and democratic Lebanon. It was up to the Council and the international community to see that the opportunity was seized, for the sake of generations to come.

Speaking in his national capacity, the representative of France, which holds the Council Presidency for the month, said that Israel had the right to defend its territory and its citizens when attacked -- and it had been attacked -- but he condemned the disproportionate nature of the response. The response threatened to erase Lebanese efforts to restore its economy and State authority throughout the territory, as well as to consolidate democracy.

Condemning the destruction of infrastructures, as well as the blockade, he said: "The Lebanese people must not be taken hostage." Freedom of movement for Lebanese and foreigners must be restored immediately. There could be no military solution to the crisis, or to any conflict that had affected the Middle East for decades, he continued. Those conflicts fed on each other. He wholeheartedly supported the missions of the United Nations and the European Union to the region. He called upon parties to immediately end hostilities and called for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all parties.

Also speaking today were the representatives of the Russian Federation, Ghana, Argentina, United States, Qatar, China, Japan, United Kingdom, Congo, United Republic of Tanzania, Peru, Denmark, Slovakia and Greece.

The meeting began at 10:15 a.m. and ended at 12:00 p.m.

Background

The Security Council met this morning to consider the situation in the Middle East, as requested by Lebanon in a letter dated 13 July (document S/2006/517) from the Permanent Mission of that country to the Council's President. In that letter, the Mission's Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Caroline Ziade asked the Council to consider "the grave situation resulting from the latest Israeli acts of aggression in Lebanon".

Another 13 July letter (document S/2006/518) from the Mission's Charge d'Affaires informs the Council that the Lebanese Council of Ministers had issued a statement on 12 July, saying the Lebanese Government "was not aware of the events that occurred and are occurring" on the Lebanese border, and "is not responsible for the events and does not endorse them".

A further letter from the Charge d'Affaires, also dated 13 July (document S/2006/522), describes the damage done by Israeli air and artillery strikes, and states that 53 civilians have, thus far, been killed.

A 12 July letter from the Permanent Representative of Israel (S/2006/515), describes the Hizbollah attack across Israel's border with Lebanon, which included a barrage of heavy artillery and rockets, and the kidnapping of two Israelis soldiers, as "a clear declaration of war".

The letter goes on to say: "Responsibility for this belligerent act of war lies with the Government of Lebanon, from whose territory these acts have been launched into Israel. Responsibility also lies with the Government with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic, which support and embrace those who carried out this attack."

Briefings

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, JEAN-MARIE GUÉHENNO, said the most serious crisis between Israel and Lebanon since the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from south Lebanon in 2000 had broken out on 12 July, when, around 9 a.m. local time, Hizbollah had launched several rockets from Lebanon across the Blue Line towards positions of the Israel Defense Forces near Zarit, had crossed the Blue Line and captured two Israeli soldiers, killed three others and wounded two more. The captured soldiers had been taken into Lebanon.

He said that, subsequently, a heavy exchange of fire had ensued across the Blue Line. Israel had retaliated by ground, air and sea attacks. In addition to air strikes on Hizbollah positions, the Israel Defense Forces had also targeted numerous roads and bridges in southern Lebanon to "prevent Hizbollah from transferring the abducted soldiers". At least one Israeli tank and a platoon had crossed into Lebanon in an attempt to rescue the captured soldiers, resulting in the killing of more Israeli soldiers.

In the afternoon of 12 July, the Government of Lebanon had requested the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to broker a ceasefire. Israel had responded that a ceasefire would be contingent upon the return of the captured soldiers. The Secretary-General had condemned Hizbollah's attack, and had called for the captured soldiers' immediate and unconditional release. He had called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

In the morning of 13 July, he continued, Hizbollah had launched numerous rocket attacks, including on Haifa. The Israel Defense Forces had responded with bombing of Hizbollah positions, attacks on the Beirut international airport, Hizbollah-affiliated Al-Manar television station and two airbases. It had further been reported that Israel had attacked the Beirut airport for a second time, setting the fuel depots on fire. Israeli planes had also dropped leaflets across Lebanon, warning the population to avoid areas known for Hizbollah's presence.

Intermittent exchanges of fire from both sides continued along the Blue Line, he said. The numbers of those killed and wounded on both sides, while disturbingly high, could not be confirmed reliably at the current time. Based on available information, eight Israeli soldiers had been killed and several wounded; two Israeli civilians had been killed and dozens more wounded. One Lebanese Army soldier had been reported killed, in addition to more than 50 civilians reported killed and scores more wounded.

He said the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for Lebanon, Geir Pedersen, had expressed his alarm at Israel's heavy attacks and the escalation that had taken place across the Blue Line. He had also voiced his deepest concern about the Israeli air and sea blockade. UNIFIL had reported several instances of firing close to its positions. One instance of Hizbollah firing close from one UNIFIL position had also been reported. No United Nations personnel had been injured and no equipment had been damaged.

Since the beginning of hostilities, UNIFIL military personnel had remained confined to their positions. It had not been able to carry out its regular patrols, and monitoring had been very limited. UNIFIL was in contact with the parties, urging them to exercise restraint. Lebanese civilians, displaced from their homes in the south, had approached UNIFIL with requests for shelter and other assistance.

IBRAHIM GAMBARI, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said the Secretary-General was deeply alarmed at the escalation of violence in Lebanon and Israel. Parts of Lebanon were under blockade and heavy Israeli military action, while Israel was being subjected to indiscriminate attacks by Hizbollah. Escalation had occurred on both sides, and the United Nations was particularly alarmed at the suffering that had been unleashed on civilians on both sides. He said that the Secretary-General condemned all actions that targeted civilians or unduly endangered them, due to their disproportionate or indiscriminate character.

The parties should be reminded that under the laws of armed conflict, attacks must not be directed against civilian objects, he said. In particular, they had an obligation to exercise precaution and to respect the proportionality principle in military operations, so as to prevent unnecessary suffering among the civilian population. He said the Secretary-General had been working unceasingly to calm tensions and called on all parties to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law and international agreements. The Secretary-General had joined leaders from around the world in working to find a solution to the crisis, to urge restraint and prevent this situation from spiralling even further out of control. "We hope that the parties heed this counsel, and that regional players who have influence will do likewise," he said, adding: "Reckless and dangerous actions will only lead to further bloodshed and instability, inflaming an already highly volatile region."

He said the United Nations had been encouraged by recent statements by the Lebanese Cabinet, which reconfirmed its commitment to international resolutions and respect for the Blue Line. The United Nations was emphasizing to all parties that a qualitative escalation of the conflict was in no one's interest, and the space for diplomatic initiatives was quickly closing. "All parties must do their utmost to ensure that this space remains open," he said. In light of the alarming developments, the Secretary-General had sent a political team to the Middle East to exercise his good offices and to help defuse this major crisis. The team was led by his Special Advisor, Vijay Nambiar, and included two other senior United Nations political officials, Alvaro de Soto and Terje Roed-Larsen.

That mission would endeavour to contribute to deescalating the situation, by conveying the Secretary-General's call for the release of the captured soldiers, for restraint by all parties and for a ceasefire. All parties would also be encouraged to use their influence to defuse the situation. In all instances, the team would also emphasize the Secretary-General's message to respect international humanitarian law and to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. The team was arriving in Cairo today, where it would conduct meetings with Egyptian officials and consultations with foreign ministers of the League of Arab States. The team would then travel to Israel, Lebanon and Syria, as well as to other places the Secretary-General deemed necessary.

Statements

NOUHAD MAHMOUD ([Lebanon](#)) said his country was suffering from a continuous, widespread and barbaric Israeli aggression that was destroying Lebanon's infrastructure, and causing the deaths of innocent civilians, in full view of the international community, which must curb the aggression and bring it to an end. The Israeli destruction and killing

since 12 July would not resolve the problem, rather, it would further complicate it. The Israeli Government had held the Lebanese Government responsible for the Hizbollah attack, even though the Lebanese Government had issued a statement on 12 July, whereby it had declared that it had not been not aware of the incident, it did not take responsibility for it and did not endorse what had happened.

He said many major bridges, runways of the international airport and other infrastructure had been destroyed. There had been a large number of casualties among the civilian population. The Israeli forces had also enforced an air and sea blockade, in an attempt to isolate Lebanon. Civilians, in violation of their human rights, had also been targeted. The number of casualties, as of this morning, was now more than 60, most of whom were civilians, in addition to hundreds of injured.

He said his Government condemned and denounced the Israeli aggression, which was a blatant violation of all international resolutions, laws, conventions and customs. What Israel was undertaking was an act of aggression and devastation that aimed to bring Lebanon to its knees and to subvert it by any means. His Government had ascertained its responsibility for the protection of the country and its nationals, and its responsibility for their safety and security. It had also affirmed its right and duty to exercise its authority on its entire territory. For more than one year, the Lebanese had worked tirelessly to complete the efforts of regaining independence, with a full commitment to the Council resolutions. Israel's aggression had hampered the efforts exerted towards fostering democracy, since it undermined Lebanon's sovereignty and attempts to exercise its authority over its entire territory.

He said his Government welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to send a high-level delegation. It also called for the respect of international humanitarian law, and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructures. Israel's disregard of the calls made by the Lebanese Government — which had expressed its complete willingness to negotiate the crises through the United Nations and other parties — was clear evidence of the escalatory intentions of the Israelis, and their determination "to kill and destroy", thus implementing the scorched-earth policy, for which they were known.

Lebanon invited the international community, and specifically the Council, to take a clear decision to establish a ceasefire and to end the aerial and sea blockade imposed on Lebanon, he said. The Council was called upon to take up the current crisis along the Blue Line, as well as its root causes.

DAN GILLERMAN (Israel) said that, in July 1974, Lebanon had been a peaceful, prosperous country, referred to by some as the "Switzerland of the Middle East". But, one year later, in 1975, the Lebanese had begun their long descent into depression, oppression and terror. Since that time, it had become a country held hostage and tormented by decades of sectarian strife, political assassinations, full-fledged civil war and Syrian control. He said that, when Israel had made the painful decision to withdraw from southern Lebanon, the international community had asked: Would the Lebanese Government look inward and free its people from the strangle hold of terror, or would it allow the territory to be used as a training ground for Hizbollah terrorists? Unfortunately, the Lebanese Government had chosen to succumb to terror, rather than vanquish it, and to relinquish control of its country, rather than exercise it sovereignty.

Never had the axiom "never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity" been so apt, and sadly, today, the people of Lebanon were bearing the cost of that inaction and ineptitude. Days ago, Hizbollah terrorists had acted with impunity in southern Lebanon, kidnapping Israeli military officers and raining hundreds of rockets into Israel, subsequently killing several Israeli civilians and wounding countless others. Those terrorists had carried out their heinous acts and then retreated into the terrorist stronghold of southern Lebanon. Israel had had to respond, as any sovereign Government would, to the assault that had been carried out against it, on a scale that had not been seen in recent years. Israel's actions had been in direct response to Hizbollah's actions, he declared, stressing that Israel's actions had targeted Hizbollah strongholds and infrastructure, not civilian targets. At the same time, Hizbollah had continued to use civilians as human shields, with complete disregard for life. That group had even used civilian homes as bases from which to launch rockets into Israel.

He said that Israel had warned the international community for years about the vast numbers of rockets that Hizbollah had at its disposal. And, while Hizbollah's continued shelling of Israel was reprehensible in its own right, Hizbollah was merely acting as "the bloody finger" on the hand of the long reaching arm of Iran. That country headed a terrorist club, which also included Syria, the entry fee to which was the blood of innocents and an agreement to practice terror against the entire world. Indeed, Iran's current leader continually denied the Holocaust, while gleefully preparing for the next one. That same regime was funding Hizbollah to the tune of \$100 million a year.

Syria, the other member of that club, was occupying Lebanon and using its territory to shelter and breed terror. Indeed, the real occupier in the region was terror, he said. But, Lebanon had yet another chance to release itself from the terror of Iran and Syria, and deploy its military to exercise full control over its own territory. He said that many brave and patriotic Lebanese citizens and ministers had cried out against the tyranny of Iran and Syria.

He made a personal appeal to the Lebanese Ambassador, who he said knew deep down that, if he could, he would add his brave voice to those Lebanese citizens. The Lebanese Ambassador knew that, if he could, he would say that what Israel was doing was the right thing and that, if it succeeded, Lebanon would be the beneficiary. The Council

had a duty to help the Lebanese people achieve the goal of a free, prosperous and democratic Lebanon. It was up to the Council and the international community to see that the opportunity was seized, for the sake of generations to come.

KONSTANTIN DOLGOV ([Russian Federation](#)) said the situation between Israel and Lebanon continued to intensify. The conflict was quickly escalating into a major confrontation that threatened the peace and stability of the region. The retaliatory actions by Israel, including the destruction of infrastructure and the blockade, were translating into civilian casualties and suffering. Hizbollah had started firing rockets into Israel, thereby also inflicting harm on innocent people. All of that was going on in parallel with Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip.

He said his country condemned the abduction of soldiers and the firing of rockets into Israel, but considered Israel's reaction disproportionate. Urgent steps needed to be taken to end the escalation. He urged Israel to halt incursions into Lebanon, lift the blockade and stop destroying infrastructure. Hizbollah must refrain from anti-Israeli actions that also threatened Lebanon. It must release the captured soldiers, halt rockets attacks and respect the Blue Line. The Russian Federation was taking measures to achieve a ceasefire. On 13 July, his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, had met with the Secretary-General, the Prime Minister of Lebanon and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel. He supported sending the special mission to the region. Given the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, the Russian Federation had also sent a special representative to the region.

NANA EFFAH-APENTENG ([Ghana](#)) welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to send a three-member delegation to ascertain what could be done to end the unfortunate turn of events. He reiterated the call for the immediate release of all kidnapped Israeli soldiers and the Palestinian parliamentarians abducted by Israel. Once unleashed, force was difficult to control, and its casualties were frequently innocent civilians, including the general deterioration in the humanitarian situation. Furthermore, mistrust grew, positions hardened and the prospects of a diplomatic solution receded, to the frustration of all. The Council was fully aware of such dangers and had repeatedly called for restraint on both sides of the Middle East peace divide. The Council had also repeatedly reminded the parties of their commitments under international law and international humanitarian law.

Against that background, the widespread bombardment of vital Lebanese infrastructure, including the airport and highways, in order to enforce a total blockade on a sovereign State, was not acceptable, he said. Diplomacy had hardly been given a chance, in spite of the well-known difficulties faced by the Lebanese Government in disbanding the militia and extending control over all of its territory in full compliance with Council resolution 1559 (2004). While some success had been achieved through the strategy of containment, not much had been achieved in addressing the underlying causes of the conflict in the Middle East.

Noting that the Middle East crisis revolved around the Palestinian question, which boiled down to the achievement of an independent and viable State for the Palestinians, within internationally recognized boundaries, he called for an immediate cessation of hostilities between Israel and the various armed groups, and a speedy resumption of the peace negotiations, without preconditions. The Council must live up to its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security by refocusing its energies and attention on seeking a just and lasting solution to the Middle East question.

CESAR MAYORAL ([Argentina](#)) said his delegation was gravely concerned by the current crisis in Lebanon, which, coupled with the recent incidents in Gaza, had the potential to destabilize the entire Middle East region. It was essential that all parties exercise restraint and cooperate with the high-level United Nations team that had been sent to the region by the Secretary-General. He said that Argentina condemned the launching of Qassam rockets into northern Israel, which had killed an Argentine citizen. Argentina also condemned the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers. He called for the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. The Lebanese Government should do its utmost to exercise its control in the southern part of its country.

And, while Argentina respected Israel's right to defend itself, it was gravely concerned by the targeting of civilian infrastructure inside Lebanon, and called for those practices to cease as soon as possible. Israeli violence along the Blue Line and disproportionate response that had led to the loss of life must also cease. All parties should do their utmost to ease tensions, do everything possible to contain the conflict and contribute positively to efforts to obtain the release of the detained soldiers. Argentina would call on all leaders in the Middle East, and those leaders of other nations that had influence in the region, to do everything they could to help prevent further deterioration in the region, which, if allowed to happen, would have consequences for the entire international community. The recent events had shown the need for the Council and the wider international community to ensure a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

JOHN BOLTON ([United States](#)) said that, in recent days and weeks, there had been an outbreak of violence in the Middle East, sparked by attacks and kidnappings carried out by Hamas and Hizbollah. Hizbollah's incursions on 12 July into Israeli territory had been deliberate. He unequivocally condemned the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hizbollah, a terrorist organization, and called for their immediate and unconditional release. The situation highlighted the need for full compliance by Syria and Hizbollah with Council resolutions.

He said the international community had clearly expressed its desire to see the authority of Lebanon extended throughout its territory. He was concerned about the fragile democracy in Lebanon. The democratic aspirations of the

Lebanese people must not be undermined by the actions of Hizbollah. He also expressed concern about the presence of terrorist groups in Syria and Iran. All militias, including Hizbollah, in Lebanon must disarm and disband immediately. The Lebanese Government must extend its control over all its territory.

Syria and Iran must be held accountable for their role in international terrorism, he said. Syria supported Hamas, while Iran supported Hizbollah. No reckoning with Hizbollah would be adequate, without reckoning with its sponsor, Iran. He again called on Syria to arrest a Hamas leader and recognized terrorist that resided on its territory. He welcomed the decision to send a United Nations team to the region. His country was engaged as well, with senior officials in the region. He called on all parties in the region to accept their responsibility for security in the region.

MUTLAQ AL-QAHTANI ([Qatar](#)) said that, over the past two days, Israel had waged a barbaric military campaign against Lebanon and its people. The Israeli assault had killed and wounded countless women and children, and had disproportionately wrecked Lebanese infrastructure. Was the Council going to continue to allow Israel to flout international law, target innocent civilians, bomb civilian infrastructure and blockade entire countries?

Lebanon was a rare international experiment that had born fruit, and, if that experiment was to continue to flourish, the international community must do everything to stop its destruction. The fact that the Israeli Government held Lebanon responsible for the kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers had sparked its outrageous response. He called on both sides to exercise restraint, and on the Council to end the barbaric attacks on Lebanon. "We cannot allow Lebanon to be brought to its knees in any way," he said.

LIU ZHENGMIN ([China](#)) said his country opposed any action that would destabilize the region, and called on all parties to strictly respect the Blue Line and the relevant Council resolutions. He denounced the armed aggression of Israel against Lebanon. Israel had used disproportionate force that had destroyed civilian infrastructures and violated the sovereignty of Lebanon. He demanded that Israel stop military action and lift the blockade. He also denounced the actions of Hizbollah and called for the timely release of the abducted Israeli soldiers.

He said the situation in the Middle East was extremely volatile. Imprudent actions by any party might light the fuse of a powder keg. History had taught that violence for violence and a tooth for a tooth would lead nowhere. He called on all to exercise the utmost restraint and to resolve the crisis through diplomatic means. He supported the decision to send a United Nations mission to the region, and hoped that it would live up to the expectations and the promise of peace.

SHINICHI KITAOKA ([Japan](#)) said that, following the events in the Gaza Strip during the past two weeks and yesterday's sudden escalation in Lebanon, the Middle East had seen a serious and grave deterioration. Japan feared that the actions on both sides in the Palestinian Occupied Territory and in Lebanon would have serious repercussions for international efforts to ensure peace in the wider region. And, while Japan recognized the right to self-defence, it called on Israel to refrain from targeting civilian areas and infrastructure.

Japan also called on the Lebanese Government to exercise full sovereignty over its territory, and recognized that the disbanding of Hizbollah bore directly on that exercise. Japan expected the Lebanese Government to make every effort to ensure the release for the Israeli soldiers. Japan strongly hoped that the leaders in the region would employ wisdom and judgement in bringing about an end to the current situation.

EMYR JONES PARRY ([United Kingdom](#)) said he was gravely concerned by the escalation of the crisis, which posed a serious threat to Israel and Lebanon. A priority must be to calm the situation, to support the moderates on all sides and to create conditions for a diplomatic solution. Focusing on assigning fault was not helpful in that regard. He fully supported the Secretary-General's decision to send a mission to the region. He also supported the mission of the European Union High Representative, and hoped that the two missions could coordinate closely on the ground.

He reiterated the call for the early release of Israeli soldiers and a halt of the attacks on Israeli towns. Although Israel had the right to self-defence, it must exercise restraint, conform to international law and avoid civilian casualties. The crisis underscored the need for full implementation of Council resolution 1559 (2004), including the importance for the Lebanese Government to exercise its full authority throughout its territory.

BASILE IKOUBE ([Congo](#)) said he hoped the Council was taking into account the full scope of the situation. He hoped the Council would send the right message, underscoring not only the need for peace, but for increased dialogue on both sides. Congo condemned all acts of violence, whoever the authors and whatever the motivation. It particularly deplored the provocative acts -- kidnapping of Israeli soldiers and rocket attacks -- that had sparked the recent events. But, Congo would also stress that Israel's response was also an act of war, particularly since it did not hesitate to attack Lebanon and destroy that country's civilian infrastructure.

But, he said, this was not a time for condemnation and finger-pointing. That was why his delegation had welcomed the decision of the Secretary-General to send a high-level diplomatic mission to the region. He hoped that that mission would seek to promote dialogue that would lead to a decrease in tensions towards a lasting peace in the region. As things stood now, the targeting of civilians by both sides, the kidnapping of military officers and the firing of rockets across the Blue Line was doing nothing to help matters.

AUGUSTINE P. MAHIGA (United Republic of Tanzania) said he was alarmed by the escalating fighting along the Blue Line. He condemned the Hizbollah attacks and the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers, which had been a blatant breach of Council resolutions. Israel was continuing to strike Lebanon by land, sea and air, and had imposed a blockade with devastating consequences for civilian life. On their part, Hizbollah had fired volleys of rockets, which presented a major escalation of the crisis. The situation was definitely spiralling out of control.

He urged the parties to exercise maximum restraint and stop the hostilities, to allow mediation efforts to resolve the crisis. That was urgent, he said, as a similar situation was raging in the Gaza Strip. The current security situation demonstrated, once again, the urgency for the Lebanese Government to extend its control over all its territory. There was a need for decisive international action to help Lebanon stabilize itself. The parties should be encouraged to abstain from acts that constituted a violation of international law. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon must be respected in the context of a comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem.

AUGO PEREYRA (Peru) said his delegation emphatically deplored the escalation of the crises and the loss of life in the Middle East. The parties must immediately cease all violence, so that tensions could be eased and the search for a lasting peace could restart. He called for an immediate ceasefire and the start of negotiations for the release of detainees. The recent events had been sparked by the actions of Hizbollah. That group had kidnapped soldiers from Israeli outposts. And, while Peru recognized the right of Israel to defend itself, such response must be proportionate and within the bounds of international law. Such response must not target civilians, he added.

He said that the recent events had also highlighted the need for the Lebanese Government to exercise full control over all its territory, and to implement relevant Security Council resolutions that had called for the disarming of all armed groups in the country. That must happen straight away, lest Lebanon be drawn into an international conflict, which no one wanted to see. He welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to send a high-level diplomatic mission to the region, and urged that team to not only stress the need for all sides to exercise restraint and avoid civilian casualties, but that the parties adhere to the objectives set out in the Quartet-backed Road Map peace plan.

ELLEN MARGRETHE LØJ (Denmark), noting the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, said that an already difficult situation had become even more volatile, with dire consequences not only for the civilian population, but for the prospects for lasting peace. In the midst of that grim news, the relationship between Lebanon and Israel had worsened and posed a grave threat to the wider security of the region. Her Government had condemned Hizbollah's provocations in the strongest possible terms. Those who provided the means for carrying out its deadly attacks were equally responsible for their consequences. Given the prevailing tensions, Hizbollah's attacks inside Israel were simply irresponsible and unacceptable. The abducted Israeli soldiers must be released immediately and unconditionally.

While Denmark was unwavering in its recognition of States' — in the current case Israel's — right to self-defence, care must be taken to ensure that the exercise of that right was proportional and measured, she said. All actions must conform to international law and must be carried out with due respect for States' obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in times of war. Denmark was gravely concerned about the wide damage caused by Israel's actions on civilian life and infrastructure. Of special concern was the attack on the civilian airport in Beirut, as well as the air and sea blockade on Lebanon. Denmark strongly urged Israel to show the utmost restraint.

The Council had repeatedly called on Lebanon's Government to restore its sovereignty over all its national territory and to exercise the sole rights to the use of force on that territory, she said. She welcomed that the Lebanese Government had distanced itself from Hizbollah's actions, and joined in urging all countries in the region to do everything possible to calm the situation. The humanitarian consequences of recent developments were cause for grave concern. The situation required urgent attention, first and foremost from the parties, but also from the international community. The level of tension in the region made it imperative that all parties refrain from any action that would enflame the already tense situation. In that regard, she welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to dispatch a senior diplomatic mission. The parties must extend their full cooperation to the team, as well as to delegations from other key players, allowing them to fulfil their mission to contain the conflict. Any effort to ease the situation, including the Secretary-General's, were highly welcome.

MICHAL MLYNAR (Slovakia) said he was deeply concerned about the recent events in southern Lebanon and in northern Israel, as well as about the bombings that had hit the cities and suburbs of Beirut and Haifa. Loss of civilian lives and attacks on civilian infrastructures were very alarming facts. The situation was dangerously accelerating, where both parties, suspicious of each other, were refusing to stop violent actions. The Council must call on all parties to immediately stop all operations. All parties must agree to a ceasefire, terminate the blockade and return to negotiate all causes affecting the escalation of the situation.

While recognizing the right of each State to self-defence, he said that right could not stand for counterattacks and other military provocations. Neither party must turn to a disproportionate use of force. He strongly condemned any terrorist attack, in particular those directed at civilians. All parties must return to a constructive dialogue. The two soldiers must be released immediately, rocket shelling stopped and the Blue Line respected. In spite of the latest wave of violence, there was still a window of opportunity for both Governments to put the peace process on the right track. That

window of opportunity must be seized, through concrete and immediate action. He welcomed and supported the role of the Secretary-General and that of his senior team that had been dispatched to the region.

ALEXANDRA PAPADOPOULOU ([Greece](#)) said that, over the past few days, events in the Middle East had been spiralling out of control, reaching unacceptable new levels of violence and tension. Indeed, the situation seemed to be worsening by the hour. Greece stressed its deep concern at the latest events along the Blue Line, which were unfolding even as the Council met. Greece deplored the recent Hizbollah attack, which resulted in the killing of a number of Israeli soldiers and the kidnapping of two others, as well as it firing of rockets into Israeli territory. She called on Hizbollah to immediately release the two soldiers and refrain from such rocket fire in the future. She also equally deplored and expressed Greece's deep alarm at Israel's counterattacks, which had resulted in the killing of more than 50 Lebanese civilians, including 10 children, and the wounding of 100 more, as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure in the country.

Greece continued to believe that, while preserving the right to self-defence, Israel must respect its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Actions that contravened international law could only aggravate the vicious cycle of violence and retribution, she added. To that end, she called on Israel to halt its disproportionate use of force, put an end to attacks against civilians and such public infrastructure as Beirut's airport, and refrain from violating Lebanese airspace. It was, at the same time, imperative for the Lebanese Government to take effective and immediate action to prevent further attacks against Israel by Hizbollah.

Speaking in his national capacity, Council President JEAN-MARC DE LA SABLIERE ([France](#)) said he was very concerned about the escalation of violence between Israeli soldiers and the ongoing launching of rockets. The Lebanese Government had disassociated itself from the provocation, but must, nevertheless, abide by Council decisions and restore its authority throughout its territory, as well as disarm Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

He said Israel had the right to defend its territory and its citizens, when attacked — and it had been attacked -- but he condemned the disproportionate nature of the response. The response threatened to erase Lebanese efforts to restore its economy and State authority throughout the territory, as well as to consolidate democracy. Condemning the destruction of infrastructures, as well as the blockade, he said: "The Lebanese people must not be taken hostage." Freedom of movement for Lebanese and foreigners must be restored immediately. France could not accept that its citizens were being prevented from returning to their country.

There could be no military solution to the crisis, or to any conflict that had affected the Middle East for decades, he continued. Those conflicts fed on each other. He wholeheartedly supported the missions of the United Nations and the European Union to the region. He called upon parties to immediately end hostilities, and called for respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all parties.

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record