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BY

**H.E. Mr. NAJIB MIKATI
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
OF LEBANON**

**AT THE
SIXTY-SEVENTH SESSION
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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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. Vuk Jeremic , President of the UNGA 67th session,
Mr. Secretary General
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first to congratulate you for heading the present session that, I am confident, will achieve success due to your rich diplomatic experience and expertise and to assure you of Lebanon's support.

I thank His Excellency Ambassador Nasser Abed Al Aziz Al Naser, president of the UNGA 66th session for his exerted efforts to ensure its success. I would like to also extend my gratitude to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon for his concern as to global issues specifically that of the Middle East and Lebanon, in which he reflected upon in the UN annual report.

Lebanon, a founding country to the UN, reiterates its commitment to the noble principles and human values that constituted the establishing pillars of the United Nations and enabled it to act globally for justice, freedom, prosperity and peace and to take the responsibility in facing the world's on-going challenges, which place the international organization's credibility, efficiency and role at stake and ensure social freedom, political stability and economic independence to all afar from oppression, bipolarization, fear and double standards.

The reinforcement of UNGA's role as a global representative has become necessary, and should not be bound to UNSC's prerogatives that are restricted to a limited number of countries controlling crucial decisions including those of war and peace.

In order to obtain greater justice and democracy, UNSC's structure, prerogatives and extension should be revisited taking into consideration the new political and economic global juncture. Extending membership to more countries is much needed to achieve justice and equality.

Our meeting today, comes at times of global developments and changes, times where Arabs are seeking political reforms, change and effective participation in political life in order to achieve democracy, freedom and respect for human rights. However, these legitimate demands can only be attained through specific transition and dialogue and not through violence and foreign interference that will only lead to more chaos, injustice and partition, which will increase the number of refugees and exacerbate related human consequences.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In regards to the Syrian crisis, Lebanon reaffirms its dis-association policy on both the political and security levels in order to maintain stability and avoid related consequences and risks. Hence, Lebanon did not dissociate itself from providing humanitarian support to the Syrian displaced migrants in Lebanon in an attempt to alleviate their sufferings. However, Lebanon alone cannot handle the increasing number of displaced migrants, as international support and assistance on all levels is much needed. The security consequences of the Syrian crisis threaten peace and stability in the Middle East and specifically in Lebanon. The international community must exert more efforts in order to assure political consensus among Syrian parties to end violence that is claiming hundreds of innocent lives each day.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we support freedom and the legitimate rights of people, we have to uplift the main cause of the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and to achieve an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. The recognition of the Palestinian state and its acceptance as a full member in the international organization and its agencies should pave the way towards a just political solution to the Palestinian cause and put end to the on-going historical injustice that has been inflicted on Palestinian people since 1948.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are committed to maintain stability and peace in Southern Lebanon and we reaffirm our commitment to UNSC resolution 1701. However, the continuous Israeli violations to Lebanese sovereignty that exceeded, since 2006, 9000 violations, is imposing limits to UNIFIL's freedom of action while threatening the security of its members, and violating once again international resolutions specifically 1701. We appeal to the international community to pressure Israel to respect international resolutions and international law, to immediately withdraw from occupied North Ghajar, Chebba farms and Kfarchouba hills and to bring to an end the continuous threats towards Lebanon's security. Lebanon values UNFIL's role and sacrifices, and its on-going cooperation and coordination with the Lebanese army and we express our gratitude to all participating and supporting countries.

Lebanon calls for the full implementation of UNGA resolution 192/66 of 22/12/2011 regarding the oil spill on its coastal shore during the Israeli 2006 war on Lebanon and compensation in application of article 4 of this resolution.

We reiterate our commitment to defend our exclusive economic area and our maritime borders as set by international law and in accordance with the UN agreement on maritime law which affirms our right to exploit our wealth and natural resources.

Lebanon, a cross-road of religions, communities, cultures and civilizations is a country which is committed to religious and human values. We reiterate our commitment to freedom of speech, tolerance and dialogue, as we are certain that diversity and integration are essential to the region and to the world. In the words of Pope John Paul II, Lebanon is more than a country, but rather a message. We consider prejudice to all religions and prophets a clear aggression to dignity, values and feelings of all believers for it can only instigate conflict, violence and condemnable and unacceptable reactions. We therefore emphasize the importance and necessity of dialogue between civilizations and cultures. Building confidence and fostering mutual understanding are essential to end once and for all violations of religious symbols, as well as to ensure respect of people's feelings and freedom of belief. Such efforts can put an end to extreme reactions and condemnable practices which we have unfortunately witnessed recently in some countries. Respect of religious related symbols is a rational practice that does not limit freedom of speech.

In this spirit, Lebanon adopted a national dialogue between the different Lebanese constituents based on national principals, including the "the Baabda Declaration" which was welcomed by the UN Security Council. Dialogue is considered the best means to ensure stability in Lebanon.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lebanon is committed to peace and strives to its achievement in the Middle East, a region in which we want to rid of massive destruction weapons. In this regard, we must remind ourselves that Israel is the only country in the region to have such destructive weapons and still refuses to ratify the United Nations Treaty of Non-Proliferation of nuclear arms, a position that is a constant threat to peace in the region and the world at large.

We would like to emphasize once more the necessity of a peaceful diplomatic solution of the Iranian nuclear issue while stressing on countries' right to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, while avoiding double standards. We constantly value international efforts exerted to eradicate terrorism in the world.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The peace in which we strive for is that of one established on human rights and not imposed by junctures and circumstances, justice that we wish to attain globally and in our region is not one of double standards which is unfortunately the case globally and in the Middle East. Our region is still striving to cope with the dramatic consequences that followed the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and its on-going occupation of Arab territories and its continued violations of

International Law and United Nations resolutions. Peace along with freedom and justice are the pillars for attaining both security and stability and will pave the way towards the eradication of oppression, extremism, and terrorism in our world. Stability cannot occur without a Palestinian spring through the full implementation of the Palestinians right to self-determination on their land.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Arab world is witnessing one of the most sensitive periods of its modern history, we have reached a cross point where communities must make choices that would translate their ambitions into a reality. The international community is therefore requested to draw up a serious economic and cultural road map in order to assist those countries' new beginning.

Our young Arab communities are most in need of awareness and development that can only be achieved by providing education and employment, so that we can end ignorance and improve living conditions. This will also certainly contribute to fighting extremism.

We suggest that countries step forward with their technical expertise while others offer their financial assistance to draft a plan that would be implemented through the framework of a new institution, in order to assist young men and women working in public administrations to promote good governance, efficiency and productivity in governmental agencies. In this perspective, I propose to establish an institution in Beirut that can offer an integrated program on good governance; we are currently in the process of presenting this initiative.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

history, we call on the international community to perceive Lebanon as the beacon of hope and the message of freedom and pluralism that it is...

Lebanon is not simply a small nation in need of shelter amidst a stormy region; and we are not asking for protection to ensure our own survival....

We are rather calling on you to look to us in light of the rightful role that Lebanon has embodied time and again, and despite our many difficulties, our small nation by our geography but certainly not by our presence in the world, Lebanon has proven to be the example of a democratic, tolerant, and pluralistic country amongst its neighbors. It is the duty of the international community to insulate Lebanon from the turbulent region and to help us amid our obstacles, so as to allow the people to thrive and the country to shine on, and its rays will propagate across the Middle East...

For it is only then, that you would be providing our unstable region with a real source of inspiration: a viable nation, and a vibrant one, full of life and a model for civil and religious liberties, social diversity and political freedom.

Your Excellencies,

Look at Lebanon not as a responsibility, but as an opportunity: An opportunity to provide the safest and fastest way towards all that the Middle East can be: Democratic, peaceful, and prosperous.”

I call upon you to preserve Lebanon from any harm so as to preserve peace in the Middle East and indeed in the whole world.

Thank you,