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Implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

Thirty-fourth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. The present report is the thirty-fourth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the implementation of the resolution since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (S/2021/396), on 22 April 2021, and covers developments until 27 September 2021.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

2. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) by the Security Council on 2 September 2004, limited progress has been made in its implementation. A number of provisions, including with respect to the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, remain pending.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

3. Through the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council sought to help to strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in accordance with the Taif Accords of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon had committed themselves. That objective has remained the priority of my efforts.

4. During the reporting period, Lebanon continued to be affected by the protracted delay in the formation of a government, the severe socioeconomic crisis, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the aftermath of the explosion in the port of Beirut on 4 August 2020.

5. On 10 September 2021, the Prime Minister-designate, Mohammad Najib Azmi Mikati, formed a government of 24 ministers, more than a year after the resignation of the previous Government. The new Government comprises one woman and 23 men, which represents a decrease from 30 to 4 per cent in the proportion of women compared with the previous Cabinet. The Government and its ministerial statement



obtained a vote of confidence in Parliament on 20 September, with 85 votes in favour of the 100 Members of Parliament present. The Government focused its statement on economic and financial matters and affirmed “its commitment to holding legislative elections on time, as well as elections at the municipal and neighbourhood levels” and its “keenness to continue all investigations to identify the reasons behind the explosion in the port of Beirut and to uncover the full truth and punish all the perpetrators”. As in previous ministerial statements, the Government reiterated the determination of Lebanon to put an end to violations of its sovereignty by Israel, noting in that connection “the right of Lebanese citizens to resist the Israeli occupation, thwart its aggressions, and recover the occupied territories”. In a press statement issued on 27 September, the members of the Security Council welcomed the formation of a new government and reaffirmed their strong support for the stability, security, territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon, consistent with Council resolutions [1701 \(2006\)](#), [1680 \(2006\)](#), [1559 \(2004\)](#), and [2591 \(2021\)](#).

6. In this context, one year after the explosion in the port of Beirut, France and the United Nations co-convened a conference in support of the Lebanese people on 4 August. Speaking at the conference, the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, emphasized the emergency needs of the Lebanese population and of Syrian and Palestine refugees for humanitarian assistance and longer-term recovery support, including a comprehensive social protection system. Participants pledged financial support totalling \$370 million, to meet the most urgent needs in the areas of food security, water and sanitation, health and education, in addition to substantial in-kind assistance.

7. Efforts by Investigating Judge Tareq Bitar to pursue the investigation into the explosion in the port of Beirut continued. His request to question the former Prime Minister Hassan Diab, the State Security Chief, Tony Saliba, the General Security Chief, Major General Abbas Ibrahim, and parliamentarians and former ministers have been unsuccessful to date. On 4 August, several protests, gatherings and marches were held in the country in commemoration of the explosion, while on 12 August, activists stormed the Justice Palace in Beirut to demand a transparent investigation into the incident. The international community has emphasized on several occasions the need for an impartial, thorough and transparent investigation into the explosion. On 27 September, the probe was reportedly put on hold after the request by a former Minister of the Interior, Nohad al-Machnouq, for the removal of Judge Bitar, pending the decision of the Beirut court of appeal. There was also no progress in the investigation into the killing of Lokman Slim.

8. Fuel shortages combined with the electricity crisis had a severe impact on essential services, including electricity provision, public health services, public water supply, businesses and livelihoods. This had a significant impact on women, as a considerable number of protection service providers were unable to maintain adequate levels of service delivery and women continued to bear the disproportionate burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities, struggling to ensure continued access to education, health care and clean food for their families. While the spread of COVID-19 generally slowed during the reporting period, the ability of hospitals to respond to the needs of patients was considerably affected by fuel shortages, power cuts and medicine shortages.

9. On 16 September, diesel oil from the Islamic Republic of Iran was reportedly imported into Lebanon. This came after the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, declared in three speeches in August that his party would procure diesel oil from the Islamic Republic of Iran for Lebanon. On 13 September, he announced that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic had agreed to receive the ships and that “the fuel would be transferred from that country to Lebanon through land

borders”. In an interview given to the media on 17 September, the Prime Minister, Mr. Mikati, stated in response to a question on the arrival of trucks carrying Iranian fuel into Lebanon facilitated by Hizbullah that he was “sad because that [demonstrated] a lack of sovereignty of Lebanon”.

10. On August 19, the Lebanese presidency publicly announced discussions with the World Bank, the United States of America and other countries on a regional energy framework that would allow Lebanon to import natural gas from Egypt through the Arab Gas Pipeline, through Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and electricity from Jordan. A senior Lebanese ministerial delegation, led by the caretaker Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Zeina Akkar, visited Damascus on 4 September to discuss the matter. The visit to the Syrian Arab Republic was the first carried out in an official capacity by Lebanese officials at that level since 2011. At a meeting held in Amman on 8 September, the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of Jordan, the Ministers of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Egypt and of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Minister of Energy and Water of Lebanon agreed on the delivery of Egyptian natural gas to Lebanon through Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic and on an action plan and a timetable for the project implementation.

11. In its resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request made by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border, noting that such measures would constitute a significant step towards asserting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon and improving the relations between the two countries.

12. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain critical to enable proper border control and management and to prevent smuggling, including with regard to the movement of people, goods and, potentially, arms. They also remain essential to guarantee national sovereignty and territorial integrity. While border delineation is a bilateral matter, progress on the issue remains an obligation for Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#).

13. There were reports of intimidation attempts made against Syrians in Lebanon on 20 May, during the out-of-country voting for the Syrian presidential election, including attacks on vehicles heading to the Syrian embassy in Beirut. Video footage showed attackers pelting cars with rocks and smashing windows with sticks in several areas in and outside of the capital, resulting in several people getting injured. Threats of violence against those not wishing to vote and calls upon the Government by some Lebanese politicians to return Syrian refugees to their country were also reported.

14. Israel continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

15. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab’a Farms area. Furthermore, neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has responded to the provisional definition of the area contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) of 30 October 2007 ([S/2007/641](#)).

16. During the reporting period, unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israel Defense Forces continued to fly almost daily over Lebanon, in violation of Lebanese territorial sovereignty and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#). In identical letters dated 1 June addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([A/75/913-S/2021/537](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, on behalf of her Government, stated that, on the night of 7 to 8 April, Israeli army warplanes had violated Lebanese airspace and fired several

missile salvos at the area surrounding Damascus. In a letter dated 22 July addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/712](#)), she stated that, upon instructions from the President of Lebanon, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants “condemned the recent attacks and violations against Lebanon committed by Israel, as Syrian military sites were targeted from Lebanese territory and airspace”. In identical letters dated 19 August addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([A/75/1001-S/2021/743](#)), upon instructions from her Government, she stated that, on the same day, Israeli warplanes had begun to carry out low-altitude flights over Lebanon, in the course of which they had “blatantly fired missiles from within Lebanese airspace at positions in Syria”, and that the violation had “caused panic among Lebanese civilians” and “posed a direct and serious threat to Lebanese civil traffic and the safety of civil aviation”.

17. The financial situation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon remained dire. Owing to funding constraints, in 2021, the Tribunal will only be able to continue the prosecution’s appeal proceedings against the acquittal of Hassan Habib Merhi and Hussein Hassan Oneissi in the main Ayyash et al. case concerning the bombing on 14 February 2005 that killed 22 people, including the Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, and injured 226 others. Proceedings in the “connected cases” concerning the attacks against Marwan Hamade, George Hawi and Elias el-Murr remain stayed by order of Trial Chamber II. For 2022, the budget of \$8.3 million approved by the Management Committee of the Tribunal will include funding for the completion of the appeal, drawdown activities and the commencement of the residual phase of the Tribunal once the appeal is completed.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

18. The Government of Lebanon continued its efforts to extend the authority of the State over all Lebanese territory, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

19. Following an official visit to France of the Head of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Joseph Aoun, on 25 May, France hosted on 17 June a virtual ministerial conference, co-chaired with Italy and supported by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, to mobilize emergency support for the security forces of Lebanon. Two meetings were held in follow-up to that conference, on 25 August and 21 September, respectively. The Lebanese Armed Forces presented their immediate needs to the participants, including a request for troop transportation, food delivery, medical items and spare parts. The urgent need for cash assistance to pay the soldiers’ wages was highlighted at both meetings.

20. From 13 to 15 August, the crisis triggered by the lifting of fuel subsidies led to a sharp deterioration of the security situation throughout the country. Following a meeting of the heads of the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Internal Security Forces, the General Directorate of General Security and the State Security held on 13 August, security agencies stepped up their efforts to crack down on illegal storages of fuel and began confiscating and re-distributing fuel to Lebanese citizens. In that context, on 15 August, in Tulayl, Akkar Governorate, a reservoir containing 60,000 litres of fuel exploded, reportedly killing 36 people, including two military personnel, and injuring more than 80. The President, General Michel Aoun, chaired a meeting of the Higher Defence Council that tasked security forces with monitoring the fuel distribution process until 15 September. The Council also instructed security forces to “control the security situation in Akkar in order to prevent lawlessness and to protect the

interests and security of citizens”. Fuel shortages also led to multiple incidents between individuals at fuel stations, some of which involved the use of small arms, hand grenades and rocket-propelled grenades and resulted in casualties, at times igniting sectarian tensions.

21. Separately, on 31 July, in Jiyah, Mount Lebanon Governorate, a Hizbullah member, Ali Chibli, was killed in a shooting at a wedding by a member of a Sunni Arab population group of Bedouin origin living in the area. The incident followed the killing on 27 August 2020 of a member of that group ([S/2020/1032](#), para. 27), allegedly by Mr. Chibli. The Sunni Arab residents of Khaldah claimed that the killing was an act of revenge. On 1 August, in Khaldah, Mount Lebanon Governorate, at least five people were killed and several injured in an attack on Hizbullah supporters attending Mr. Chibli’s funeral. The attack was attributed to members of the same group. The ensuing clashes lasted intermittently for several days. A Hizbullah Member of Parliament, Hassan Fadlallah, called the events “a major aggression that would have big repercussions unless these gangs [were] stopped”. In a speech given on 23 August, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah similarly called the event “not an incident but a massacre”, asked for the arrest of all concerned and urged for “a radical solution to the situation along the coastal highway [that connects Beirut and the south]”. On 3 August, in Alayh, Mount Lebanon Governorate, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested an individual involved in the Khaldah clashes.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

22. In its resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#), the Security Council called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, a key provision of the resolution that has yet to be implemented. The provision reflects and reaffirms a decision which all Lebanese committed themselves to in the Taif Accords.

23. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continued to operate outside the control of the Government, in violation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside government control, Hizbullah is the most heavily armed militia in the country.

24. There has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle that crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the question of sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. The maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal outside of a legal framework and its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be denounced by a number of voices in Lebanon, which consider that those issues are destabilizing factors in the country and undermine democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued presence of such arms as an implicit threat that the weapons could be used within Lebanon for political reasons.

25. The self-acknowledged maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups and the alleged increase by Hizbullah of its arsenal pose a serious challenge to the ability by the State to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory.

26. In the context of the developments in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, rockets were fired from southern Lebanon towards Israel on 13, 17 and 19 May, twice impacting in Israel and prompting response fire on two occasions ([S/2021/650](#), paras. 2–4).

27. From 11 to 19 May, Palestinian and Lebanese protestors also held sit-ins and organized marches in several locations across the country, particularly in Palestine

refugee camps, in solidarity with the Palestinian people. On 14 May, demonstrators in vehicle convoys displayed Palestinian, Lebanese and Hizbullah flags at several locations along the Blue Line. In one of those instances, at least 10 protesters crossed the Blue Line across from the Israeli village of Metulla, where they planted Palestinian and Hizbullah flags, threw stones and lit a bush fire. Israel Defense Forces soldiers opened fire, prompting the demonstrators to return north of the Blue Line. In identical letters dated 17 May addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([A/75/890-S/2021/482](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon stated that “on 14 May 2021, during a rally of civilians in solidarity with the Palestinian people near the technical fence in the Ibil al-Qamh area in the town of Sarda, Israeli enemy soldiers opened fire in their direction into Lebanese territory. That led to injuries to Husayn Sulub ... and Muhammad Tahhan ... Mr. Tahhan died from his injuries shortly thereafter”.

28. In identical letters dated 27 May addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/507](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel stated that the firing of rockets from southern Lebanon was “clear evidence of the existence of unauthorized weapons in southern Lebanon and confirmation of Israel’s repeated claims concerning this matter”. He also stated that the Deputy Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Sheikh Na’im Qasim, had publicly announced on Al-Manar, on 22 May 2021, that many of the recent events in the vicinity of the Blue Line were sponsored by Hizbullah. According to the Permanent Representative, this clearly showed the direct connection between the activity of Hizbullah in southern Lebanon and the security situation in the region. In identical letters dated 21 July addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/672](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel stated that during Operation “Guardian of the Walls” in Gaza, between 10 and 21 May, there had been a significant increase in attacks and other hostile activities by Hizbullah and other armed groups in Lebanon.

29. On 20 July, two rockets were launched from Lebanon towards Israel, triggering artillery fire from the Israel Defense Forces into Lebanon.

30. On 4 August, two rockets were launched from Lebanon towards Israel, triggering Israeli artillery fire. On 5 August, the Israel Defense Forces reported that they had conducted air strikes targeting three areas in South Lebanon. On 6 August, rockets were fired from Lebanon towards Israel, triggering artillery fire from the Israel Defense Forces into Lebanon. The Israel Defense Forces reported that 19 rockets had been fired from Lebanon towards Israel. Hizbullah issued a statement the same day claiming responsibility for the rocket fire, stating that, “in response to the Israeli air raids [in Lebanon on 5 August], ... the Islamic Resistance [had] bombed open lands in the vicinity of the Israeli occupation sites in Shab’a Farms with dozens of 122 mm rockets”. In a speech given on 7 August, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah added: “our response yesterday was linked to the direct Israeli air raids on South Lebanon that took place for the first time in 15 years.”

31. In identical letters dated 6 August addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([A/75/988-S/2021/711](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, on behalf of the Ministry of National Defence, denounced what the Ministry said was the shelling of Lebanon by Israel on 4 and 6 August and two raids carried out by Israeli warplanes on Lebanese territory on 5 August, adding that Lebanon condemned the Israeli attacks, which it considered to be hostile acts and clear violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

32. In identical letters also dated 6 August addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/710](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel stated that, on the same day, Hizbullah had fired a barrage of 19 rockets at Israel, and that the attack had come only two days after three additional rockets had

been fired towards Israel from Lebanon. In a statement issued on 8 August, I expressed deep concern about the recent escalation between Lebanon and Israel across the Blue Line, including rocket fire into Israel and return air strikes and artillery fire into Lebanon.

33. In a speech given on 7 August, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah stated that, “while the resistance group was returning from carrying out its operation through Shuwayya, [it had been] intercepted by some people” and that “four [of the resistance members had been] handed to the Lebanese Army”. The Lebanese Armed Forces said in a statement that it had “detained four people who [had] launched the rockets and seized the launcher used in the operation”. On 7 August, the four individuals were released by the General Prosecutor of Lebanon, pending trial. In a speech given on 7 August, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah denounced the interception as an attempt to incite sectarian tensions and stated that the perpetrators of violence against the Hizbullah fighters concerned “should be investigated by the security agencies and held accountable by the judiciary”. In identical letters dated 12 August addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/725](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel stated that “[t]he release of the four terrorists clearly smack[ed] of politics, and underline[d] the extent of Iran’s and its proxy, Hezbollah’s, domination of local government and power in Lebanon. Moreover, such an act of impunity serve[d] only to encourage further attacks on Israel.” In identical letters dated 27 August addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/758](#)), the Chargé d’affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran categorically rejected “all unfounded allegations of the Israeli regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran contained in documents [S/2021/710](#) and [S/2021/725](#)”.

34. On 8 August, Patriarch al-Rai stated during a sermon that “we cannot accept [...] that one party take the decisions for peace and war outside the decision of the State and the national decision-making that is entrusted to two thirds of the Cabinet members”. He added: “we call upon the army, which is responsible with the international forces for the security of the south, to control the entire territory of the south, to strictly implement resolution 1701 [(2006)] and to prevent the launching of missiles from Lebanese territory [...], not out of concern for Israel’s safety, but rather for the safety of Lebanon”.

35. The Palestine refugee community continued to be affected by the deteriorating socioeconomic situation in the country, with severe shortages of fuel and electricity in refugee camps. Tensions between refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) increased, with many protests leading to the forcible closure of UNRWA offices. UNRWA worked to secure the water supply in the camps and provide additional cash assistance to the refugees. However, as needs outstripped the capacity of the Agency to meet them, with an expected funding shortfall of its programme budget of approximately \$100 million in 2021, protests against the Agency continued.

36. There has also been an increase in violent incidents in general in refugee camps, including drug-related, domestic and other instances of violence. Clashes erupted on 6 June inside Rashidieh camp, reportedly resulting in the deaths of two persons and in six people being injured. On 3 and 17 July, in Beddawi camp, personal disputes escalated into shooting, reportedly resulting in the deaths of a Syrian woman and a 13-year-old Palestinian girl. On 27 August, in Ein El Hilweh camp, an attempted assassination and subsequent armed clashes resulted in one fatality.

37. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps also continued. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 in the context of the national dialogue, and confirmed at subsequent sessions, to disarm Palestinian militias outside the camps

within a six-month period, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country.

III. Observations

38. I welcome the formation of a new government of Lebanon. The people of Lebanon are struggling with a deepening crisis and hardship. I urge the new Government to implement a tangible reform agenda that addresses the needs and aspirations of the Lebanese people and that includes the timely holding of legislative elections. The United Nations will work with the Government in that regard. I encourage Lebanon to ensure the full participation of women across all sectors of government, as well as in the forthcoming elections.

39. An impartial, thorough and transparent investigation into the explosion in the port of Beirut, in line with the Lebanese people's demand for accountability, remains of the utmost importance. I also reiterate the need for a thorough and transparent investigation into the killing of Lokman Slim.

40. Tackling the grave socioeconomic situation is essential not only for the sake of the citizens of Lebanon and for its stability, but also because the crisis leads to an erosion of State institutions, which opens up space for non-State actors to fill the void. I am also concerned about the security impact of the overlapping crises. The security services are faced with ever more numerous demands to which they are not always able to respond, and they are under increasing logistical and financial pressure. In that context, the material support provided by the international community to the Lebanese Armed Forces is critical to preserve their role as guarantor of the stability of the country. I appreciate the support already provided by several Member States to security services and encourage others to do the same.

41. Security incidents that have taken place between Lebanon and Israel offer a vivid reminder of the risks posed by the maintenance of weapons outside of State authority and the continued presence of armed militias in Lebanon. I strongly condemn the firing of rockets from southern Lebanon into Israel. I also condemn the fire from Israel, in particular the air strikes into Lebanon on 5 August. Those incidents could have easily jeopardized stability across the Blue Line and led to renewed conflict.

42. The widespread presence of weapons outside the control of the State, the existence of armed militias and rocket launches such as those mentioned above continue to undermine security and stability in Lebanon and are in violation of resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#). The self-acknowledged maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern.

43. I call again upon all parties not to engage in military activity in or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). It is critical that the Accords be preserved and implemented by all to avoid the spectre of renewed confrontation among Lebanese citizens and to strengthen the institutions of the State. All parties concerned must contribute to efforts to reinforce the institutions of the Lebanese State.

44. The Lebanese State should increase its efforts to achieve a monopoly over the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout its territory. I continue to urge the Government and the armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building

paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State and in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

45. Calls from sectors of the Lebanese population for the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) and for rejecting the possession of arms outside State institutions indicate that the maintenance of weapons by Hizbullah remains a divisive issue within Lebanese society.

46. The continued, self-acknowledged involvement of Hizbullah in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is not only in breach of the disassociation policy and the principles of the Baabda Declaration of 2012, but also carries a risk of entangling Lebanon in the regional conflict and poses risks to the stability of Lebanon and of the region. Furthermore, it demonstrates the failure of Hizbullah to disarm and its refusal to be accountable to the very State institutions that the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) was intended to strengthen. The reported involvement of Hizbullah and of other Lebanese elements in fighting elsewhere in the region remains of concern.

47. Countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah should encourage the disarmament of the group and its transformation into a solely civilian political party, in accordance with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004) and in the best interests of Lebanon and of regional peace and security.

48. I strongly condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as they undermine the credibility of Lebanese security and State institutions and give rise to anxiety among the civilian population. The repeated alleged use of Lebanese airspace by the Israel Defense Forces to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply concerning, owing to the risk that it poses for regional stability. I renew my calls for Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to cease immediately its flights over Lebanese airspace.

49. It is essential that donors continue to provide funding to UNRWA, including in support of its request for cash assistance to address the deteriorating economic situation, exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, in Palestine refugee camps, so that it may continue to perform its essential role and deliver services. The role of the Agency in maintaining stability in Palestine refugee camps is more critical now than ever and vital to the dignity and security of Palestine refugees. Such efforts are without prejudice to the need for a just resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

50. As the Special Tribunal for Lebanon concludes its proceedings, I trust that Lebanon will ensure that those who are behind terrorist acts are held accountable in its domestic courts, in line with its obligations under international law.

51. I count on the continued commitment of the Government of Lebanon to its international obligations, and I call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The United Nations will continue its efforts towards the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.