



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. GENERAL MICHEL SLEIMAN  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON**

**AT THE SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION**

**OF THE**

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**Mr. President,**

I would like to congratulate you on your election as the President of the current session of the General Assembly, and to express my appreciation to the Honorable Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has accompanied relentlessly and carefully the development of the general situation in Lebanon through his consecutive statements and reports about the implementation of the international resolutions regarding my country, mainly UNSC Resolution 1701 whose implementation is thankfully overseen by the UNIFIL, in coordination with the Lebanese Army. Moreover, the Security Council's last Presidential Statement on July 10 of this year, has set an effective roadmap for what can be done by the international community to help Lebanon, namely to preserve its stability, promote its institutions, support its economy and army, and help it face the growing burden of the incoming Refugees from Syria. This is the core objective of the meeting of the "International Support Group for Lebanon", whose works shall be launched tomorrow afternoon, upon the invitation of His Excellency the Secretary-General.

**Mr. President,**

Many countries hereby represented have witnessed uprisings, civil wars or external aggression, and have long suffered from their repercussions. Nevertheless, most of them have managed, in variable periods of time, to overcome difficulties and reconstitute their national edifice.

As for the Lebanese, they belong to a long-standing civilization which was known, thousands of years ago, for creating the first advanced elements of the alphabet, and contributing to the constructive openness and communication across the Mediterranean between East and West, and among civilizations and cultures. With their capabilities and determination, those Lebanese will be able to assume the responsibility that lies upon their shoulders, in order to restore the glow of their country's vocation as a space for freedom and conviviality, and to consolidate their existence in the East, within a State which has embraced democracy since its inception, and has been keen, since its independence, to respect diversity within unity and preserve personal and public freedoms.

Through dialogue, they will continue to work on developing their political system, improving their democratic practices, with the required consensus about a new modern electoral law and clarification of the governing mechanisms, and without neutralizing the essence of the consensual formula upon which Lebanon has risen, and which stipulates the equal and balanced participation of all the society's components in running the public affairs. Article "J" of the Constitution's preamble has even considered that "there shall be no constitutional legitimacy for any authority which contradicts the pact of mutual existence." The Lebanese must also revert to their commitment to the "Baabda Declaration" which sets out Lebanon's disassociation from the negative fallout of the regional crises and the policy of axes; as they will have to agree upon a national strategy to exclusively defend Lebanon in the face of Israel's hostility and continuous threats, and to finalize the adoption of

administrative and legal measures that would enable them to benefit from their resources and sovereign rights to Lebanon's offshore gas and oil fields.

No matter how strong this commitment may be, the Lebanese still need the care and support of brotherly and friendly countries, in order to face the negative repercussions of the external conflicts and problems which are none of their making, but which still threaten their security and stability, and prejudice their socio-economic situation.

Not only do they look up to that assistance out of brotherly and friendly solidarity, but also based on the common responsibility thrust upon the international community as a whole, regarding the problems which pose a threat to regional and global security in general.

The major regional challenges that affect Lebanon negatively are:

The first challenge stems from the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon's security and economy. Despite the decision of disassociation agreed upon by the National Dialogue Committee through the "Baabda Declaration" which has become one of the United Nations' official documents, some conflicting Lebanese parties have been involved in the ongoing conflict on the Syrian territories. The Lebanese territories were also under violations and aggressions from the Syrian side of the borders. This involvement has coincided with terrorist bombings against civilians, in particular in the Southern suburb of Beirut and in the capital of the North, Tripoli, claiming the lives of tens of civilians and causing harm to hundreds of people.

As for the most pressing and biggest burden, which has begun to take an existential dimension, it derives from an unprecedented increase in the numbers of incoming Refugees from Syria, way beyond Lebanon's capacity of assimilation, exceeding one fourth of Lebanon's population. As you know, Lebanon is a country with an exiguous geographical area, limited resources and capabilities, and sensitive balances.

As it is not possible to impose on nations - and individuals - the "impossible" and what they are not able to do, it is important for me to reiterate, from this very rostrum, my call for your States to support the proposals I have already put forth, in order to ease this escalating burden, mainly axed around the following points:

- To provide sufficient funds, human and financial resources, efficiently, in order to put frames and regulations about the presence of the incoming Syrian refugees, meet their basic humanitarian and livelihood needs, noting that pledges undertaken at the meeting of the Donor States and Organizations which was thankfully hosted by the State of Kuwait on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2013 were fulfilled only partially.
- To consolidate frameworks and spaces to lodge Syrian Refugees on Syrian territories, in safe zones outside the reach of the ongoing conflict, knowing that the area of Syria is eighteen times that of Lebanon.
- To agree on holding an international conference on the issue of Syrian Refugees, which does not merely call for financial assistance, but rather begins to search for ways to share the burdens and numbers among States, based on common responsibility and in light of historical precedents. Indeed, the enlarged meeting convened by the High Commissioner of the United Nations High Commission for