



Remarks With Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Rome, Italy
July 26, 2006

FOREIGN MINISTER D'ALEMA: Representatives of Italy and United States, United Nations, Canada, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Jordan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, European Union and the World Bank met today in Rome along with representatives of Lebanon. Building on the September 19, 2005 ministerial-level Lebanon Core Group meeting in New York, the Lebanon Core Group and other countries concerned for the fate of Lebanon met today to express the international community's deep concern about the situation in Lebanon and the violence in the Middle East, to enjoin urgent and substantial humanitarian assistance and to discuss concrete steps that would allow a free, independent and democratic Lebanon to exercise effective control over all of its territory. The Lebanon Core Group and the other participants to the Rome conference are committed to helping the Lebanese Government to address the political, economic and security challenges that it face.



The participants pledge their united determination to work in partnership with international community to provide immediate humanitarian relief to the people of Lebanon, expressing deep concern for civilian casualties and suffering, the destruction of civil infrastructures and the rising number of internally displaced people. Calling Israel to exercise its utmost restraint, they welcome Israel's announcement of humanitarian corridors to Lebanon, including for humanitarian flights into Beirut International Airport and within Lebanon that can allow for the rapid delivery of relief aid and call for their immediate operation.

The Rome conference participants expressed their determination to work immediately to reach with the utmost urgency a cease-fire that put an end to the current violence and hostilities. The cease-fire must be lasting, permanent and sustainable. The Rome conference affirmed that the fundamental condition for lasting security in Lebanon is the government's full ability to exercise its authority over all its territory. The participants note that a framework of international decisions, including the G-8 statement of July 16th, United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425, 1559 and 1680, the Lebanese national framework embodied in the Taif Accords and 1949 Armistice Agreement represent the principles that govern the international community's efforts and the responsibilities to help support the government and people of Lebanon.

The participants called for the full implementation of these relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Taif Accords, which provide for the deployment of Lebanese armed forces to all parts of the country and the disarming of all militias. An international force in Lebanon should urgently be authorized by -- under a UN mandate to support the Lebanese armed forces in providing a secure environment. The Rome conference pledged its support for Lebanon's revival and reconstruction. The participant today agreed to the convening of an international donor conference to assist with the revival of Lebanon's economy and called for the provision of reconstruction assistance to the Lebanese Government with special attention on the southern part of the country.

In addition, the need for a meeting of partner countries to discuss a joint approach to security assistance for the Lebanese armed forces and security services was widely supported. Participants finally agreed that any lasting solution to Middle East tensions must be regional. They expressed their full commitment to the people of Lebanon, Israel, and throughout the region to act immediately with the international community toward the goal of a comprehensive and sustainable peace.

The document -- the statement -- will be distributed at the end of the conference. I give the floor to Kofi Annan.

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I think the Foreign Minister has indicated that the nature of the discussions through the chairman's summary, and I think it is important that as we leave this meeting we continue the urgent effort to help bring peace and stability to that region. It is important that we get a political framework that will buttress whatever understanding that we reach eventually through the Security Council and through discussions with countries involved. It is important that we work with the countries of the region to find a solution and that should also include Iran and Syria.

It is important that we get early and quick contributions for the international force that may eventually be sent to the region to help stabilize southern Lebanon, to allow Lebanon -- the Government of Lebanon time and space to prepare its own troops and be able to extend this authority throughout the country and to bring on the governmental authority all the weapons and guns in the country. As the -- is said in a location not too far away -- one gun, one authority.

And I would hope that as we move forward, not only would we agree on the political settlement, we will take immediate action to assist on the humanitarian front and some of you know that I did -- I have asked the Council to consider urgent action on cessation of hostilities. And this group has also endorsed the need for urgent action to stop the hostilities so that we can move into the longer-term mold and be able to deploy troops.

I think we will pause here and maybe give the floor to my other participants.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, thank you very much. And first, thanks to the Government of Italy for arranging this conference, to you, Foreign Minister D'Alema, and to Prime Minister Prodi, who joined us earlier. I think that it goes without saying that this extraordinary gathering of the international community shows our deep concern about the situation in Lebanon, in northern Israel, in the region. We heard a very impassioned appeal from the Prime Minister of Lebanon, who I think put a human face for all of us on the suffering of his people. And I would just like to say, Prime Minister, we thank you for your steadfast leadership in these difficult days for Lebanon.



It is also the case that we talked about how to move forward, and not just to talk about it but indeed to take action to move forward. We are all agreed that we want most urgently to end the violence on a basis that this time will be sustainable, because unfortunately this is a region that has had too many broken cease-fires, too many spasms of violence followed then by other spasms of violence. And we do have a way forward.

We know that the international community made a pledge to the people of Lebanon when we passed Resolution 1559 that we would help Lebanon, the Government of Lebanon, to establish its authority fully within its country as a sovereign state without the interference of its neighbors and as a state that could fully exercise its control throughout its territory and that would have a complete -- would have complete control over any means of violence. In other words, that there would not be militias but rather one authority and one gun. We recommitted today to that pledge to the Lebanese people. We are also making urgent efforts to deal with the humanitarian situation in Lebanon and we will continue to work with the United Nations and with all to alleviate the suffering of the Lebanese people.

Let me say in closing that there is much work to do and everyone has a role to play. We all committed to dedicated and urgent action to try and bring about an end to this violence that, indeed, would be sustainable and that would lead the Lebanese Government with the prospect of full control of its country. This is very important. We cannot -- and I heard it many, many times during this conference -- we cannot return to the status quo ante.

In that regard, I am glad that the Secretary General is going to use his good offices in whatever way that he can to try and gain an understanding from other states that they have responsibilities, too. Syria has responsibilities under 1559 which it, in fact, has not exercised and we ask that they do. And we are also deeply concerned, as we have said, about the role of Iran. So it is indeed high time that everyone make a choice. We can have and the people of Lebanon deserve a stable, democratic, fully sovereign Lebanon at peace with itself and at peace with its neighbors. Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER SINIORA: Thank you very much. I'd like to start by expressing my gratitude and thanks on my behalf and on behalf of the Lebanese, for Prime Minister Prodi for arranging to have this meeting to be convened here in Rome. Thanks for Minister D'Alema and Secretary Rice and the -- Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, for giving assistance for such a meeting to be held. I would like to express our thanks as well for everyone who really participated in this important conference.

We came in here to present our case in Lebanon. For the past 15 days, we are being pounded every day, and scores of people are dying every day and scores are really being injured. And the country is being cut to pieces so that really to bring the country to its knees, and that's what's happening. That was an opportunity to present our case to all those who are in the conference and really wanted to express our demands that for so many years part of country is still occupied which is represented by the Shab'a Farms, which still occupied by Israel and there other things there. There are some of our detainees that are being still held in Israeli prisons. And Israel, up to now, is denying to give Lebanon the maps for the land mines that it has planted during the time when it was occupying that part of Lebanon.

Israel, for the past few days, has been making this aggression against Lebanon. And I'd like to remind you this is the seventh during 30 years, the seventh aggression and the seventh occupation that Israel is exercising against Lebanon. We really wanted on the one hand to really ask the participants to provide the humanitarian relief assistance, which is important, and to provide all other assistance that is in this respect but more. We wanted a cease-fire, an immediate cease-fire.

I think this matter has -- was discussed quite amply in the discussion. We made some progress in terms of really handling all the issues, but that was our expectations. I think there is a lot to be done in the coming period, that we have to work together in order to arrive at a cease-fire that can really protect Lebanon, that can really arrange for Lebanon to get back its territory. And that would allow the Lebanese Government to prevail all over Lebanon and whereby no weapons in Lebanon outside the legitimate authority in Lebanon and ultimately, that it will be bound by the armistice agreement that was made in 1949 and which is really mentioned in the Taif agreement.

These are the things that Lebanon hoped to achieve. I think, as I said, we have already made some progress which is thanks to everybody and everyone who has participated in this conference. And I think from there we have to remove so that -- to reduce the sufferings of the Lebanese. As I said, the more we delay the cease-fire, the more we are going to witness more are being killed, more destruction and more aggression against the civilians in Lebanon. This is the thing that I believe we have all to work together with the support of the United Nations in order to get to that thing as soon as possible.

QUESTION: (In Italian.)

FOREIGN MINISTER D'ALEMA: (In Italian.)

QUESTION: Thank you very much. James Rosen with Fox News representing the U.S. media. Forgive my bedraggled appearance. I think the beautiful weather in Rome is better enjoyed outdoors than inside.

I first have a question that I would like each of you to address, and then just one for Secretary General Annan. Will the multinational force in Lebanon be deployed before Hezbollah is disarmed?

And Secretary General Annan, I would also like you to address your statement of last night in which you effectively accused the Israelis of deliberately killing four U.N. personnel. Do you believe a statement like that enhances your role as an honest broker of peace?

SECRETARY RICE: What we've agreed upon is that there should be an international force under a UN mandate that will have a strong and robust capability to help bring about peace, to help provide the ability for humanitarian efforts to go forward and to bring an end to the violence.

The Prime Minister himself has said that there must be one authority over military force. And the international community will support the Lebanese Government and work with the Lebanese Government in achieving that element of Resolution 1559. I think the mandate of the security forces will be discussed over the next several days. We also have asked that those meetings be held urgently so that that force can be put together. It is an important element of not being in a situation where we return to the status quo ante.

PRIME MINISTER SINIORA: Well, our position is that we've asked for the assistance that can empower the Lebanese Government to prevail over all its territory and to become the real authority and sole authority in the country. And this has to really be quite sustainable, because as I have mentioned that we cannot afford anymore to have this situation to recur. So that is the thing that will be discussed in the coming few days so that to really see what form, what mandate and how this can really meet the requirements of Lebanon and in what form. So this is something that will be discussed in the coming few days.

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: I don't want to say anything about the force. I think the (inaudible) a full answer. But as to your second question, let me say that I hope you read my statement and read it very carefully, because when you quote pieces in a press conference it has to be accurate. The statement said "apparently deliberate target." You dropped the word "apparent." I think it's important in this.

Let me say that I have had the chance to talk to the Prime Minister of Israel this morning. He definitely believes it is a mistake. He has undertaken to investigate, and I have suggested we do a joint investigation. And he has expressed his deep sorrow at what happened, and we accept that. But you need to look at the events of yesterday. The shelling of the UN position, which is long established and clearly marked, started early in the morning and went on 'til after 7:00 p.m. when we lost contact. And our general and troops were -- people on the ground were in touch with the Israeli army warning them, please be careful, we have positions here, don't harm our people. And many calls went up until this happened. And you can imagine the anguish of the soldiers and the men and women, unarmed military observers, who were down there in the service of peace.

And as I said, we await the investigations, end of the investigation, and I am grateful for the Prime Minister for what he said, and we accept his words. But do quote correctly next time, please.

QUESTION: (In Italian.)

SECRETARY RICE: Let me just note that three very important regional states were here: Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, staunch supporters of the Lebanese Government. In fact, the Saudi Government has announced an enormous aid package for the Lebanese people and to help to stabilize the Lebanese Government. So let us be very clear that there was and, indeed, continues to be regional participation in these efforts.

The question is whether Syria, which has obligations under Resolution 1559, intends to exercise those obligations in a way that leads to a fully sovereign Lebanon that can, indeed, control all of the means of -- all of the armaments in its country. That is the question for the Syrian Government. And let me just say what I said the other day; we do actually have diplomatic relations with Syria. We continue to have a Chargé in Syria. But it's not a question of talking to Syria; it's a question of whether Syria is prepared to act.

As to Iran, you know that there's a long history to the relationship -- the issues with the United States and Iran. I'll just say that I hope that those who have influence and

can impress upon the Iran the necessity of not using extremist forces, not being involved with extremist forces that threaten to destabilize not just Lebanon, but the entire region.

QUESTION: Prime Minister Siniora (off-mike.)

PRIME MINISTER SINIORA: I'm sorry, I did not answer.

SECRETARY RICE: He didn't answer.

PRIME MINISTER SINIORA: I did not answer yet. I did not answer the question. Well, let me say something about -- Hezbollah, as you know, is a Lebanese party that's represented in the Lebanese parliament and Lebanese -- and represented as well in the Lebanese Council of Ministers. And as you know, we have been expressing all the time that we want to liberate what's left of the Lebanese territories which still occupied by Israel. Hezbollah played a very important role in the liberation of the territories that were occupied by Israel.

Now in this process that we are really drawing, that we want to have these territories that are still being occupied to be liberated and this will put, in fact, the process in the right track so that we can lead towards the state to be in full control of all the Lebanese territories. And this would lead, as well, that no other armed groups in Lebanon to be there. So this is a situation that ultimately will lead us to the state to be in full control of all its territories and no weapons other than what's being held by the legitimate authority.

QUESTION: Prime Minister Siniora, I'm an Israeli journalist from (inaudible) and I am not -- I hope I'm not embarrassing you by my direct question. If you were in Ehud -- in Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's shoes, would you react differently to the abduction of two Israeli soldiers inside the territorial of Israel? And are you calling for the disarm of Hezbollah in order to reach a lasting cease-fire? Thanks.

PRIME MINISTER SINIORA: Well, that's a good question. I believe that everybody has realized that there has been crossing across the blue line. But the action of Israel really shows that -- as if Israel has already a well-prepared plan for reaction. And the retaliation is definitely, by the judgment of all concerned, is disproportionate with what has happened.

Now, I believe if I were, let's say, in the position of Mr. Olmert, I would really move directly towards solving the real problems. Let me tell you, throughout the past years, did any of the actions that Israel committed over the years bring additional security and safety to Israel? Not at all. It did not bring, at all, any safety or security. What brings security and safety is the ability of Israel to really build good relations with its neighbors. And how this can be done is really going through the peace process, to see how we can build peace between Israel and the Arab countries, on the basis of what really was offered by the Arab countries in the Arab summit in the year 2002. This -- what can really put an end to the hostilities and the war in the Middle East.

Otherwise, things will continue, which will move from one hostility to the other, from one crisis to the other. The Arabs, they have made that point and they are serious and I think it's high time for Israel to realize that this is the real way how to really make peace in that region. It is actually historic deeds -- would require historic men. And I think these deeds are really waiting for historic men to do it. I think the Arabs, they have done it. They have said what they want. They said they want peace. It is high time for Israel to really solve all these issues, starting with Lebanon, to give Lebanon back the occupied territories of Shab'a and to really solve the problem of Gaza and the West Bank, to go back to peace that it really means. This is how you can -- how the Israeli leaders can protect the Israelis, how they can really raise their children in prosperity and in peace in that region.

QUESTION: (In Italian.)

FOREIGN MINISTER D'ALEMA: (In Italian.)

QUESTION: I'm (inaudible) from Al-Jazeera. Madame Secretary, you gave yesterday -- I mean, before you started your visit to the Middle East, you said cease-fire wouldn't be possible without the right political circumstances. Do you still think the same? And you came yesterday from Israel and you met Prime Minister Siniora at night. Did you bring anything new from Mr. Olmert?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I have made very clear that I seek urgently to get an end to these hostilities, an end to this violence. We all want this urgently. We have to be effective. It means that we have to have a plan that will actually create conditions in which we can have a cease-fire that will be sustainable. We're going to work very, very hard to do precisely that. I think many of the elements in this statement show the way forward to getting an end to the hostilities, getting an end to the violence.

I am -- have had discussions with Prime Minister Siniora and with his government. I have also had discussions with Prime Minister Olmert and his government. I think you will understand if I keep those discussions between me and Prime Minister Siniora and between me and Prime Minister Olmert. The goal here is to see how the United States can contribute to an end to this violence so that the Lebanese people and, indeed, the Israeli people can live in peace.

Thank you very much.
2006/T19-7

Released on July 26, 2006

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.