



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

*Provisional*

**9712**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 28 August 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

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*President:* Mr. George . . . . . (Sierra Leone)

*Members:*

Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Gaouaoui
China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France . . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Guyana . . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan . . . . .	Mrs. Shino
Malta . . . . .	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Buanahagi
Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
Slovenia . . . . .	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 24 July 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/567)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

#### **Letter dated 24 July 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/567)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Israel and Lebanon to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2024/634, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2024/567, which contains the text of a letter dated 24 July 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): We are greatly concerned about the situation in the region, particularly along the Blue Line. Tensions are ongoing. There is a real risk of an open war. We have joined forces with our regional and international partners to prevent a regional conflagration, and we continue to call on Iran and the groups it backs to refrain from attacks, which would further exacerbate current tensions.

Under the circumstances, it is the Council's responsibility to work to ensure that the actors on the ground end hostilities along the Blue Line. To that end, the Council has two invaluable tools at its disposal, namely, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the framework set by resolution 1701 (2006). That being the case, France has proposed to the Council that UNIFIL's mandate be renewed for 12 months, as it was in previous years. We have proposed that its mandate be renewed unchanged, at a time when

the Blue Helmets are coming under fire and doing outstanding work under extremely difficult conditions. Through this draft resolution (S/2024/634), we have called for the full implementation of the framework accepted by all — resolution 1701 (2006) — including, therefore, a restoration of a full cessation of hostilities. We have asked all actors to take immediate measures to work towards de-escalation.

In an inclusive and collective spirit, we endeavoured to listen to all stakeholders, including those outside the Council — troop contributors in particular — throughout the mandate renewal process. We kept in close contact with everyone throughout. France is working on the ground to identify the conditions for an agreement for the restoration of a cessation of hostilities in line with resolution 1701 (2006). France has made concrete proposals to Israel and Lebanon on that basis.

As the draft resolution submitted for a vote today states, it is also necessary that, within the framework of the current mandate, the Secretariat ensure that UNIFIL is ready to adjust its activities in support of any de-escalation efforts. It goes without saying that we stand ready to work in the future to ensure that the Council takes the action required, should an agreement be reached along the Blue Line, including in relation to UNIFIL.

**The President:** I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*In favour:*

Algeria, China, Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

**The President:** The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2749 (2024).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): In 2006, following intense fighting between Israel and Hizbullah, the Council adopted resolution 1701 (2006). While Hizbullah launched sporadic attacks against Israel in the years since, quiet had largely been maintained along the Blue Line for 18 years.

However, that stability was shattered on the morning of 8 October, when Hizbullah initiated a barrage of rocket attacks on Israel and armed terrorists subsequently infiltrated Israel from across the Blue Line in the aftermath of Hamas's brutal and unprecedented terrorist attack on Israel. Hizbullah made the escalatory decision to bombard communities in northern Israel. And for the past 11 months, it has done so on nearly a daily basis. It is wrong that the Council has yet to condemn Hizbullah for those repeated destabilizing actions, and we regret that a small minority of members blocked the Council from doing so in this mandate renewal.

Hizbullah's violent attacks put Israeli and Lebanese civilians at risk. They jeopardize Lebanon's stability and sovereignty. Lebanon should not be a haven for terrorist organizations or a launchpad for attacks against Israel. There is no dispute that Iran, in clear violation of the arms embargo in resolution 1701 (2006), provides Hizbullah with the majority of the rockets, missiles and drones that are fired at Israel. And let us be clear: Israel has a right to defend itself against Hizbullah's attacks. No member of the Council, facing a brutal terrorist organization on its border, would tolerate daily attacks and the displacement of tens of thousands of its own people. The United States supports Israel's right to defend itself, and we will keep working for regional stability. The path to stability does not just end in a restoration of calm along the Blue Line. It ends with a comprehensive understanding relating to the Blue Line that has real implementation mechanisms. Only that will allow displaced residents on both sides of the Blue Line to return to their homes with security and safety. And to achieve that, we are clearly going to need a strengthened UNIFIL at some point to help with implementation.

More immediately, extending UNIFIL's mandate, which resolution 2749 (2024) does, supports our goal of regional de-escalation, which is now more important than ever. We do not want to see conflicts intensify and spread, and most important, the people of the region do not want that either. Specifically, UNIFIL plays an important role in monitoring activity along the Blue Line and promoting stability. And it supports local communities by facilitating humanitarian access and providing much-needed resources and training. UNIFIL's liaising capabilities are also integral to mitigating the risk of miscalculation and preventing further escalation.

Going forward, we must address the ways in which Hizbullah and other malign actors in Lebanon prevent the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), constrain UNIFIL's ability to operate freely and threaten United Nations peacekeepers' safety and security. And we must push for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including by establishing an area south of the Litani River that is free of any armed personnel, assets or weapons, other than those of the Lebanese Government and UNIFIL. It is imperative that UNIFIL be able to freely monitor and report any actions contrary to resolution 1701 (2006), which requires full freedom of movement and access to sites of concern, which Hizbullah deliberately obstructs. Without that access and attendant reporting, the Council cannot have a full and accurate understanding of the situation along the Blue Line and the threats that Hizbullah poses to regional security and stability. It is vital that the Council continue to support UNIFIL by taking measures to address those attempts to constrain UNIFIL's ability to fully execute its mission.

The extension of UNIFIL's mandate today ensured that an important pillar of stability in Lebanon will remain in place and will be able to perform its important functions. It should help to support the hard work of diplomacy ahead of us — diplomacy that the United States will continue to lead on the ground, in coordination with other members of the Council and partners in the region.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): Let me first thank France for its efforts in guiding us to consensus today.

With the situation on the Blue Line the most precarious it has been for years, we cannot overstate the importance of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to calming the situation on the border. That is why we voted in favour today. We commend the United Nations troops and staff of the mission, who are working in such difficult circumstances, risking their lives to fulfil the mandate. Near daily exchanges of fire across the Blue Line have killed and injured civilians. United Nations peacekeepers have been wounded, too. That is deeply concerning, and we welcome the mandate's call for all parties to protect civilians in accordance with international law and to take all measures to respect the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers.

Over the weekend, my Minister for Foreign Affairs spoke with Lebanon's Prime Minister, Mr. Najib

Azmi Mikati, and Israel's Strategic Affairs Minister, Mr. Dermer, to reassure them of our support for security on both sides of the Blue Line. But while the United Kingdom is supporting Lebanon's security and stability through its Government and armed forces, Iran is sowing further conflict and chaos by supplying advanced weaponry to Hizbullah. We urge Iran to stand down their proxy, and we call on Hizbullah to de-escalate immediately. Only a political solution can deliver the peace we so desperately need. As my Minister for Foreign Affairs said earlier this month, a widening of this conflict is in nobody's interest — the consequences could be catastrophic. One miscalculation is all it takes. All parties must therefore engage immediately with diplomatic efforts based on the principles set out in resolution 1701 (2006).

**Mr. Camilleri** (Malta): Malta voted in favour of this resolution (resolution 2749 (2024)) to renew the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). We welcome its adoption, and we thank the penholder, France, for all its efforts and engagement over the past few weeks.

Entering those negotiations, Malta worked constructively to achieve a text that would allow for a swift renewal of UNIFIL's mandate. The Security Council has always stood in unity with, and support of, the mission. Today's vote reflects the Council's interest in continuing to do so, particularly in these challenging times.

Malta remains deeply concerned about the intensifying exchange of fire across and beyond the Blue Line. Last weekend's developments further underline the fragility of the situation and the possibility that large-scale hostilities may quickly erupt. The full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and an immediate return to a cessation of hostilities remain essential. The conflict in Gaza continues to inflame the region. Restraint and de-escalation must remain our priorities. We wholly support all international efforts aimed towards that, including through ensuring a permanent and immediate ceasefire to the conflict in Gaza.

In conclusion, we commend the work of UNIFIL to maintain calm and to preserve security and stability in the region. We have a common interest in seeing UNIFIL, to which Malta is also a troop-contributing country, succeed.

**Mrs. Blokar Drobič** (Slovenia): We would like to start by thanking the penholder, France, for its efforts

and able steering of the negotiations to come to a balanced text. We welcome the consensual adoption of resolution 2749 (2024).

Slovenia remains extremely alarmed about the hostilities along the Blue Line. Just this week, we were reminded about the very real threat of a massive escalation. We are deeply alarmed about the intensity of exchanges and a possible miscalculation that would drag the wider region into a full-blown war. The rhetoric related to this crisis is troubling. Slovenia therefore underlines its call for the restoration of a cessation of hostilities and the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety. We are appalled by the loss of civilian lives and the heavy impact on civilian infrastructure and civilians, many of whom have been displaced. We underscored the need to respect international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. All civilians must be protected at all times and by all parties.

Slovenia expresses its full support for the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Its efforts are critical, and its presence serves as a vital stabilizing factor. We thank all troop-contributing countries for their contribution to the stability of the region. We join the call on all parties to ensure the safety, security and freedom of United Nations personnel. The inviolability of United Nations premises must be respected at all times. We welcome the work of UNIFIL, including through its operations and its continuous communications with all actors. The parties must use the UNIFIL liaison and coordination mechanism and the good offices of international actors and fully engage in de-escalation. It is essential that diplomatic efforts remain the primary avenue to address that crisis and the one in Gaza.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking France for its excellent drafting work during this complex negotiation process. I also thank all the delegations for their willingness to find solutions. Switzerland welcomes the unanimous extension of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for an additional year. That unanimous adoption sends an important message to the region and, in particular, to the parties concerned. It demonstrates that the Council is aware of its responsibility to contribute to a long-term solution to the conflict, in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006).

Switzerland reaffirms its full support for UNIFIL, including in its capacity as a troop-contributing country through the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. Every day, UNIFIL personnel carry out important work under difficult conditions. We thank them and recall in that respect that all parties have an obligation to ensure the safety of UNIFIL personnel. Many of them have been injured, and that is unacceptable.

Switzerland is extremely concerned by the escalation of violence on both sides of the Blue Line, which has already claimed numerous civilian victims and displaced tens of thousands. We strongly call for a return to a complete cessation of hostilities on both sides of the Blue Line and for the parties to immediately recommit to implementing all the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). Moreover, all parties must abide by their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Diplomacy alone can lead to a lasting solution. Switzerland supports all ongoing efforts in that regard.

**Mr. Gaouaoui** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking the penholder for the text that it submitted, which we adopted today, on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Algeria expresses its satisfaction with the unanimous adoption, which makes clear the importance of the UNIFIL forces and the Council's unity in calling for and supporting an end to the hostilities and the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety. Algeria voted in favour of the text adopted today because of the role of the Force in maintaining peace and security, not only in Lebanon but throughout the entire Middle East. Our region is at a critical and dangerous juncture as a result of the brutal aggression against the unarmed Palestinian people, in particular in the Gaza Strip, threatening to plunge the Middle East into a regional conflict whose repercussions will be felt farther afield.

My country once again calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. We stress that the crises in the region are interconnected and that, in order to prevent the region's descent into a broader regional conflict, Israel's brutal killing machine targeting the Palestinian people must be stopped. Moreover, the tensions along the Blue Line and the Israeli occupier's systematic attacks on Lebanese sovereignty confirm once more the need to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006), in particular

with regard to the full withdrawal from occupied Lebanese territories.

In conclusion, my country believes that the main reason for instability in the Middle East is the occupation of Arab territories and that the end of that occupation is the condition for peace and security in the region.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea extends its appreciation to France for its efforts as the penholder in crafting a balanced resolution (resolution 2749 (2024)). As a long-standing troop-contributing country to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Republic of Korea voted in favour of the resolution to renew the mission's mandate for an additional 12 months. That extension is crucial, especially at this volatile juncture. Indeed, the extension provides the predictability and continuity necessary for UNIFIL to fulfil its vital mission of monitoring the cessation of hostilities and helping to ensure humanitarian access to the civilian population.

The current escalation also makes the adoption of this resolution timelier than ever. That was once again exemplified last Sunday, when multiple rocket launches and air strikes occurred around the Blue Line. We therefore anticipate UNIFIL's continued efforts to de-escalate tensions through the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). In that connection, we reaffirm our strong commitment to ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers at all times, as underscored in today's resolution.

The Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to once again call on all parties to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) and immediately cease hostilities. The escalating conflict endangers the fragile stability in the region, and any miscalculation could have devastating consequences. All stakeholders must actively engage in diplomatic efforts to restore stability and bring the situation back from the brink.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): Guyana welcomes the adoption of this resolution (resolution 2749 (2024)), which ensures that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will be able to continue its critical work through August 2025. We wish to thank France for its constructive efforts during the course of the negotiations to consider the views of the host State, Lebanon, and those of all Council members.



Our vote in favour of this resolution is a recognition of the indispensable role of UNIFIL in providing some level of security and stability to the people of Lebanon. We also know that UNIFIL is a critical partner in the efforts to de-escalate tensions along the Blue Line, especially during this time, when such tensions have significantly increased — not least because of the war in Gaza.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the men and women who staff UNIFIL. Their service, under constant threat of injury, or even death, must be applauded. The Council must remain united in support of their efforts to execute their mandate. We also encourage the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to continue to work closely with UNIFIL.

Guyana is committed to remaining a constructive partner in the ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring lasting stability to Lebanon and the wider region. We encourage all parties to move beyond this period of heightened derision and mistrust and, with the support of UNIFIL, to return to diplomatic engagement to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and, ultimately, a lasting peace for the people of Lebanon.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of the resolution extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) (resolution 2749 (2024)). We appreciate the efforts of France, the penholder, to promote consensus among Council members. The resolution just adopted reaffirms the Council's clear political commitment to supporting the complete cessation of hostilities and a permanent ceasefire and sends a clear political signal to stop the cycle of violence and call for peace and stability.

Against the backdrop of the continued escalation of tensions between Lebanon and Israel, this resolution is therefore all the more necessary and important. We expect the parties to effectively implement the resolution, cease hostilities, resume dialogue at an early date and make efforts to achieve a lasting peace. We expect the international community to play a constructive role in achieving a ceasefire and ending the violence. The diplomatic mediation process must be objective and impartial, starting from promoting a de-escalation of the situation as the point of departure, fully accommodate legitimate concerns of all parties concerned and facilitate arrangements acceptable to

all parties. The principles established in resolution 1701 (2006) must be observed, and the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Lebanon must be respected.

Over the years, UNIFIL has made great contributions to maintaining peace and stability near the Blue Line and in the region at large. We welcome the 12-month extension of the UNIFIL mandate and hope that UNIFIL will continue to abide by the three principles of peacekeeping, including the consent of the parties concerned, fulfil its primary responsibility of ceasefire monitoring and make great contributions to maintaining the stability of Lebanon and Israel. As one of the major troop contributing countries to UNIFIL, China stands ready to work with the international community to continue to support UNIFIL in performing its duties and continue contributing to peace stability in Lebanon.

**Mrs. Shino** (Japan): We are deeply concerned about the situation across the Blue Line and the high risk of an eruption into a wider regional conflict. We once again call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint to prevent further escalation.

Our deepest concern is for the civilians who have been affected by the tensions on the ground. Civilians must be protected under international humanitarian law.

The unanimous renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) demonstrates the strong will and commitment of the Council to bringing stability to the region. Given the challenging situation today, UNIFIL's role is even more important in supporting the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the restoration of the cessation of hostilities across the Blue Line. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that all necessary measures should be taken to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel, who are operating in an especially difficult environment.

In conclusion, we thank France, as the penholder, for its tireless efforts to strike a sensitive balance in the text, encouraging the Council members and other stakeholders to unite in pursuing a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution in the region.

**Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be very brief. Ecuador voted in favour of renewing the mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) as a matter of course, as we are in agreement with everything it contains and wish to

acknowledge the dedicated work that UNIFIL performs amid conflict and escalation and in incredibly sensitive security conditions.

UNIFIL's contribution is essential to promoting a de-escalation of violence along the Blue Line and to countering its adverse effects on the civilian population. UNIFIL's efforts towards the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) is also key to containing violence and promoting peace and security in the region.

Lastly, Ecuador appreciates the work undertaken by France as penholder in securing the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate for one year with due consideration for the positions of all stakeholders concerned. It now rests with us to ensure the implementation of resolution 2749 (2004), which the Council just adopted.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted in favour of France's resolution on renewing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for one year without any amendments (resolution 2749 (2024)). We value the French penholder's efforts to strike a balance between members of the Council and the text of the resolution and also to take on board the priorities of Lebanon, which is hosting the peacekeepers, thereby confirming the resolution's acceptability — a key condition under the guiding principles of peacekeeping. We are convinced that, by adopting the document, the Council is sending a strong signal to all parties involved about the need for a full ceasefire, general de-escalation along the Blue Line and strict compliance by the parties — Israel and Lebanon — with resolution 1701 (2006), which sets the objectives of a permanent cessation of hostilities and a long-term solution.

We express our full support for UNIFIL, which is playing a key stabilizing role amid a dangerous upsurge in tensions along the Lebanon-Israel border area. We are receiving daily reports about intense exchanges of fire along the Blue Line and Israel's violations of Lebanese air space, including military flights over Beirut aimed at intimidating the civilian population. The increase in political assassinations is also a cause for concern. As the resolution states, such actions pose a direct threat to the security of United Nations peacekeepers stationed in southern Lebanon. The presence of peacekeepers reduces the risk of the outbreak of a full-scale armed confrontation, which would have the gravest

consequences. We are in favour of strengthening UNIFIL's coordination with the Government and the army of the Republic of Lebanon, including to ensure the protection and security of United Nations personnel on the ground.

It is clear that the current military and political escalation is inextricably linked to the general lack of resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the unprecedented escalation in Gaza. We stand ready to engage in close cooperation with partners and like-minded individuals to continue striving for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the launching of a comprehensive peace process, which would achieve an overall normalization of the situation in the Middle East.

We find it regrettable that, throughout the whole process of negotiation on the resolution, Israel's allies in the Council introduced amendments aimed at diluting the resolution's principled provisions on a ceasefire and Lebanese sovereignty, including in the Israeli-occupied areas. That has once again highlighted who provoked the current sharp escalation in the Middle East by preventing the adoption of Council draft resolutions that would have made it possible to effectively stop the bloodshed and to finally secure the release of hostages and forcibly detained persons, establish safe humanitarian access to Palestinians in need and lay the groundwork for relaunching the peace process on a two-State basis, thereby guaranteeing that effect is given the fundamental rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone reaffirms its commitment to promoting international peace and security and averting a full-scale war in Lebanon and a possible regional conflagration. In line with that end state, on 19 August, Sierra Leone welcomed the request from the Government of Lebanon and the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a further period of one year, in full accordance with resolution 1701 (2006), its wording and provisions, without any amendments to its mandate, its concept of operations and its rules of engagement.

Today we voted in favour of resolution 2749 (2024) to extend the mandate of UNIFIL from 31 August 2024 to 31 August 2025. We are of the view that the role of UNIFIL remains relevant, and the renewal of the mandate

for 12 months is now more important than ever before, given the prevailing circumstances on the ground. Events since 7 October 2023 have only underscored the importance of the UNIFIL mission. UNIFIL continues to engage with authorities on both sides of the Blue Line in seeking to mitigate against miscalculation and avoid further escalation. UNIFIL utilizes its liaison channels, coordination mechanisms and public statements to urge a return to a cessation of hostilities and to underscore the need to avoid an impact on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Sierra Leone voted in favour of the resolution in line with our principled position, and we make the following observations.

The full implementation of all relevant Council resolutions, including resolution 1701 (2006), is key to peace, security and stability in Lebanon and the region. There is a need to address the violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Lebanon and Israel; to support full respect for the Blue Line and for the cessation of hostilities in line with resolution 1701 (2006), as well as a need to respect the safety and security of United Nations personnel and the inviolability of United Nations premises, the freedom of movement of peacekeepers, international law and the protection of civilians and civilian objects.

While we recognize that there are concerns regarding UNIFIL's mandate, Sierra Leone is of the firm belief that protecting the mandate's integrity against a backdrop of escalating violence and uncertainty is a more important issue for the Security Council. We truly believe that this text is balanced and provides an appropriate response to the situation on the ground. We therefore thank France for its consistent efforts in preparing this balanced text to help bridge the gap among Council members.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone remains dedicated to the pursuit of peace and security in Lebanon and Israel. Our vote in favour of resolution 2749 (2024) signifies our commitment to seeing UNIFIL continue to successfully fulfil its mandate.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

**Mr. Hachem** (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, and all the members of the Security Council for the tremendous efforts made to approve the one-year extension of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). I also

commend the penholder, France, which made possible the adoption of resolution 2749 (2024) during this difficult time for the Middle East region. I commend the positive attitude adopted by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, which voted in favour of the resolution this year, and I would also like to thank the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the elected member representing the Group of Arab States, for its authentic Arab stance.

Today's unanimous vote is irrefutable evidence of the international community's interest in Lebanon. It is a clear message from the Council in favour of stability and a ceasefire. It is a sign of hope for all Lebanese who reject war, violence and destruction and want to give peace a chance. They are counting on the Security Council and on Lebanon's many friends to help to achieve a cessation of hostilities and to implement resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety. In that regard, I must stress the importance of the pivotal role of the United States of America and its Presidential Envoy, Mr. Amos Hochstein, in seeking a sustainable solution and stability along international borders. Any understanding or arrangement that will be agreed on by all interested parties in future will be reflected in UNIFIL.

We must commend the sacrifices made by UNIFIL's leadership and personnel. As we pay tribute to them, we affirm Lebanon's commitment to ensuring their security and safety and to facilitating their mission. We extend our thanks to the 49 troop-contributing countries.

Let us work together, not only to stop the escalation but also to achieve a ceasefire, resolve the remaining points of contention regarding the borders and withdraw from all occupied Lebanese territories. Let us work together to implement international resolutions and activate initiatives and good offices in order to reach sustainable solutions and a just and comprehensive peace. Only then will Lebanon have secure borders, which will lead to stability for the border villages and their inhabitants.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Danon** (Israel): The renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) this year by the Security Council is not an ordinary renewal. It takes place under extraordinary circumstances. After the watershed event of 7 October 2023, on 8 October 2023, Hizbullah launched an



unprovoked attack against Israel across the Blue Line, in a flagrant breach of resolution 1701 (2006) and in the service of the Ayatollah regime in Tehran. Since then, more than 8,000 rockets have been launched from Lebanon into Israel. More than 300 explosive uncrewed aerial vehicles made in Iran and more than 1,500 anti-tank missiles have been launched against my country. More than 60,000 Israelis living in the north of Israel have had to leave their homes. Forty-six Israelis have been killed, including 12 innocent children in Majdal Shams, who were murdered by a Hizbullah rocket. More than 300 Israelis have been wounded. Communities are targeted daily, and 180 million square metres of forests and woods have been burned. Hizbullah's attacks are part of a border conflict with the head of the snake in Tehran. Ayatollah is attacking Israel from seven fronts. It is the chief source of instability in our region, and the international community should show resolve against that dangerous regime.

The past few months have proven what Israel has been saying for years to be correct — that Hizbullah has been breaching resolution 1701 (2006) constantly and that it built a huge arsenal of rockets in south Lebanon, south of the Litani River, under UNIFIL's nose. Most of those rockets were amassed in villages in south Lebanon, in homes, in mosques, near vital infrastructure, near UNIFIL posts and in open areas, in woods and bushes, all in areas that Hizbullah described as private properties. That is an important term to remember — private properties — because Hizbullah does not allow UNIFIL to enter those private properties. Just this week, when Hizbullah launched more than 300 rockets, missiles and explosive drones against Israel, Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah openly admitted that most of those rockets were launched from south Lebanon, from within UNIFIL's area of operation.

It is important to stress that 90 per cent of the rockets and missiles fired at Israel this week by Hizbullah were launched from civilian areas in south Lebanon. Allow me to share two pictures. The first is from the village of Blida, in southern Lebanon, and the red dots that can be seen in the picture are the places from where the rockets were launched into Israel. It was 160 metres from a gas station — the gas station can be seen here in blue. It was 220 metres from a school. That is what they are doing — they are placing the rockets in civilian communities. The other picture that I want to share shows a UNIFIL facility in southern Lebanon, near the village of Hanouiyeh. The red dots that can be

seen in the picture are the rocket launchers, which we can see once they are being launched into Israel, and this one is 150 metres from the UNIFIL base. And I ask: will it be reported by UNIFIL that the launchers were placed there? I can share with those who are interested dozens of similar pictures that we have in our possession, which show that they are placing rockets next to UNIFIL bases.

Despite what I just described, the text of the UNIFIL mandate renewal that the Council just adopted does not address the core problems surrounding the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). It seems that the Council is still trapped in the pre-7 October 2023 era — the misconception of guarding artificial stability, turning a blind eye to Hizbullah's massive military build-up and ignoring the constant erosion of resolution 1701 (2006). Let me start with the basics. I read carefully the resolution (resolution 2749 (2024)) just adopted by the Council. The word "Hizbullah" does not appear, not even once, in the text of the mandate renewal. It is as if there are other forces there. Why not name it? Who is there? The Council can name Israel, it can name Lebanon and it must name Hizbullah.

That simply absurd fact symbolizes the deep problem in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006): the fear of talking about the breach of the arms embargo; the fear around the protection of UNIFIL's force because of Hizbullah's constant intimidation; and the desperate attempt to sustain artificial stability at all costs while ignoring Hizbullah's massive military buildup. That reality must change if we wish to create long-term and sustainable stability along the Israeli-Lebanese border. Let us call a spade a spade.

Moreover, it is unacceptable that this resolution puts both sides on equal footing, calling for both to de-escalate. There should have been a clear distinction between Israel and Hizbullah. There should have been a strong condemnation of Hizbullah, which is the sole party responsible for the current escalation. The burden of proof here is on the Lebanese Government and Hizbullah, not on Israel. In addition, the text does not devote appropriate attention to the core problems of resolution 1701 (2006).

First, it does not address the breaches of the arms embargo on a daily basis by Iran and Hizbullah. Hizbullah is transferring weapons to Lebanon by land, sea and air, including through Beirut airport. Yet there is not one word about it in this text.

Secondly, the text fails to clearly note that there should be no arms south of the Litani River, other than those of the Lebanese Army. Neither the Radwan Force nor anything from Hizbullah's arsenal should be present south of the Litani River. Hizbullah must not be allowed to build military compounds using private property as an excuse to deny access to the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL.

We thank the troop-contributing countries and UNIFIL for their contribution in trying to maintain peace and stability along the Blue Line. UNIFIL is working under complex circumstances and in proximity to a terror organization. We are aware of that. However, UNIFIL should also draw serious conclusions from the current escalation, which has exposed the failures of that Force that Israel has alerted the Council about in the past few years.

I will give the Council a few examples. UNIFIL must report. We do not expect them to fight Hizbullah. We will defend ourselves, but they must report the realities on the ground and not hesitate to describe clearly the problematic situation. Over the past two years, Israel has revealed many pieces of evidence that Hizbullah and the Radwan Force are building military compounds along the Blue Line under the cover of the so-called green non-governmental organization that they have named Green Without Borders. It sounds so nice, evoking care for the environment, but it is not that. It is a camouflage. Green Without Borders is the name of Hizbullah's compound next to our border, and it was not reported by UNIFIL. They have used it to deny UNIFIL forces access to that location.

Another example that all Council members remember is what happened in the Druze village in Majdal Shams. UNIFIL and the Department of Peace Operations would not say where the missile came from, despite the fact that UNIFIL has the means to establish where that missile was shot from. That must

change. UNIFIL's deployment in the area is important, but it should be much more robust. There should not be private property that UNIFIL cannot access.

I say to the State of Lebanon and to our colleagues who represent the Lebanese Government that it is their responsibility to ensure that there are no weapons in south Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Lebanon must deploy significantly greater LAF forces to south Lebanon. Lebanon needs to decide if it wants to be a hostage in the hands of Hizbullah and Iran. It must decide if it wants to be a functioning State that provides security to its citizens and its neighbours, or to become a failed State controlled by Iran. We know that many people in Lebanon are hostages in the hands of Hizbullah and oppose this war. We also know that many Lebanese chose to leave the country this summer out of fear of escalation because of Hizbullah's actions. Lebanon must make that choice and cannot hide behind UNIFIL.

Israel is determined to return its civilians to their homes in the north and to have a stable border with Lebanon. We prefer the diplomatic solution, and we thank all those who have worked tirelessly to bring about such a solution, especially the United States. But let me be clear: time is running out. Israel will not tolerate such a reality for much longer. If diplomacy fails, we will use all the necessary means to restore calm and stability to the north of Israel. As we have shown recently, we have the capabilities, and we will not hesitate to use them if diplomacy does not work. We demand immediate change. A unified international community against the Ayatollah's regime will be an important deterrent to its dangerous behaviour. The first step should be the Council's designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hizbullah as terrorist organizations.

*The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.*