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Letter dated 5 July 1985 from the Permanent Representative
of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the text of a note addressed to you by the Lebanese Government (see annex) concerning the announcement by the United States of America of its decision to take legal and practical measures to isolate Beirut International Airport, with the request that you have the note circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 38 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council, it being understood that the Lebanese Government reserves the right, if necessary, to call for a meeting of the Security Council.

(Signed) Rachid FAKHOURY
Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations

* A/40/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

On 2 July 1985, the Government of the United States of America announced that it intended to take legal and practical measures to isolate Beirut International Airport, to call upon foreign airlines to suspend their flights to Beirut, to prevent Lebanese aircraft from using American airports and to urge other States to take similar measures. The American Government justified this position on the grounds that it represented a response to the hijacking of the American aircraft that took place recently.

The Lebanese Government regrets this course of action and considers that it constitutes a step that will have negative consequences for both Lebanon and the United States of America, to say nothing of the fact that it may further complicate matters rather than provide the elements required for a solution. The Lebanese Government considers that the following matters should be taken into consideration:

1. That the hijacking of the aircraft was only another manifestation of ongoing conflicts in Lebanese territory, and that all should regard it from that viewpoint and place it within the context of those conflicts. For more than 10 years, the Lebanese have been subjected to all kinds of suffering and hardship which, in their ferocity and impact, go far beyond the seizure of an aircraft or the kidnapping of a number of passengers.
2. As it has previously announced, the Lebanese Government condemns and censures interference with civil aircraft and the kidnapping of innocent people. It nevertheless considers that the recent occurrence in this domain has political roots and political underpinnings and is not merely a criminal or terrorist act, as depicted by certain of the mass media. In fact, the demands of the hijackers stem from political positions that some may share or reject but which are nevertheless a part of Lebanese and Middle Eastern political reality. This is to say nothing of the fact that the demand for the release of the Lebanese civilians detained by Israel without legal cause is a legitimate demand, as the United States of America has itself asserted.
3. The American Government's ignoring of this political aspect and its considering the hijacking merely as a terrorist act represent a regrettable blindness to the roots of actions of this kind and to the political positions that give rise to them. In fact, many Lebanese consider that the United States of America has persistently and obstinately chosen to turn a blind eye to Israeli practices in Lebanon, regardless of the degree of violence or arrogance that such practices attain. The United States of America has used its right of veto in the Security Council even where Lebanon's request was restricted to a call for the application of international law in order to prevent Israel from killing and driving out the civilian inhabitants of southern Lebanon. It has also adopted the Israeli position in an absolute and inflexible manner in the international forums and in its bilateral contacts, even when it was a matter of the self-evident rights of the Lebanese. It has decided to reallocate the assistance earmarked for the financing of the reconstruction programmes in Lebanon to other countries in spite of the fact that it is acquainted with Lebanon's economic situation and its pressing

need for such assistance. It has taken no active initiative to ensure the release of those detained in Israel in spite of its acknowledgement that their seizure and removal to Israel constitute a clear violation of international law. It is not surprising that the accumulation of such positions and their persistence should lead to the creation of a feeling of bitterness among many groups of the Lebanese people, motivating some of them to undertake desperate and violent acts with regard to which the position of the Lebanese State has, at the time in question, been clear and unequivocal. It has clearly affirmed its rejection and condemnation of practices of this kind, in spite of its understanding of their roots and causes.

4. It must be clear that the foregoing does not constitute a justification of such acts, but is rather an attempt to understand their roots and to find the best way to handle them and to eliminate them. The Lebanese Government condemns such acts but considers that the most successful way of confronting them lies in understanding their political roots and dealing with them on that basis. Undoubtedly, the adoption of a policy characterized by a greater degree of justice, fairness and balance would constitute a major input in this field, particularly if such a policy took into consideration the interests of all the peoples of the region without exception and, in particular, the interests of the Lebanese people whose territory has been violated by successive wars.

The handling of the hijacking must not be characterized by vengeance, pressure or irate reaction, but should consist of a rational examination of the policies to which the hijacking may be considered to have been a protest and a resolution of the political problem that it really reflects.

5. Isolating Lebanon and preventing its two national airlines from operating normally cannot have a positive and useful result since such measures amount to a reaction that is out of proportion, in terms of its impact and its magnitude, to the harm caused by the hijacking. Such a response is also tantamount to punishing a Government that has condemned and censured the hijacking, a people that took no part in it and companies that were in no way involved in it. The American response is not proportionate to the damage caused and does not punish the true perpetrators; rather it burdens an entire people with responsibility for a mode of action which it does not adopt and for acts in which it has no part. These considerations place the American response in total contradiction to the most elementary norms of international law. The kidnapping and the introduction of weapons into the aircraft did not take place at Beirut International Airport. Furthermore, the aircraft landed at Beirut, after having landed at other airports, in spite of the opposition of the Lebanese authorities. In fact, the only impression that the adoption by the United States of America of such a response will create is that the American Government has chosen to punish innocent groups and innocent companies in order to avoid facing a reality that it will sooner or later have to address, and that is the fact that Israel's policy in Lebanon has given rise to deep resentments in the hearts of certain groups among the peoples of the region and that some of this feeling, for obvious reasons, extends to the United States of America.

6. The Lebanese Government is making efforts to control the security situation at Beirut International Airport and is prepared to take part in any international initiative aimed at combating acts of whatever kind contrary to international law. It also considers that the violation of international law by States is more serious than such violation by irregular groups. It further considers that the sovereignty of Lebanon is complete and indivisible and requests the international community to bolster that sovereignty and not to be drawn into supporting decisions adverse to that sovereignty.

7. In the context of the foregoing, Lebanon reserves the right, if necessary, to call for a meeting of the Security Council.
