



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
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Security Council Briefing on the situation in the Middle East 17 January 2025

Greece's Statement delivered
by HE Ambassador Evangelos Sekeris,
Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, New York

Thank you Mr. President,

I would like to express my gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, **Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix**, and the Head of Mission and Chief of Staff of UNTSO, **Major General Patrick Gauchat**, for their valuable contributions to the issue at hand.

Mr. President,

In a world trapped in the vortex of regional tensions and increasing instability, peacekeeping missions often operate in areas where simply there is no peace to keep. They carry out their mandated tasks in a dangerous environment. They try their best to make a real difference in places where reality is beyond comprehension.

Yet, the ongoing tensions in the wider region of the Middle East have not left the Blue Helmets untouched. A deeply regretful fact if we take into account the loyalty, devotion and commitment of the peacekeepers in the restoration of peace and security, both in Lebanon and Syria.

Mr. President,

On developments in Lebanon, the election of Mr. Joseph Aoun as the new President in combination with the designation of Dr. Nawaf Salam as the new Prime Minister presents a unique opportunity to restore political unity in a country tormented by instability for years. In this moment of optimism, we commend today's visit to Lebanon of the Secretary General of the United Nations, a visit of solidarity with the Lebanese people, as the Secretary general himself referred to it. My country, Greece, stands ready to play a strong role in this new, promising chapter. After all, our Prime Minister, Mr. Mitsotakis, was the first EU leader to visit Beirut since the November 26 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah.

It is beyond doubt that the ceasefire agreement has created a positive momentum, a spark of hope in overcoming 13 enormously difficult months of hostilities. Hence, the parties should not let this impetus slip through their fingers. UNIFIL, a peacekeeping mission which has been playing a constructive role in monitoring the cessation of hostilities is key for the full and sustainable implementation of the ceasefire and, ultimately, a long-lasting peace in the region.

At the same time, the commitment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to extend their control over all Lebanese territory is remarkable. Greece stands ready to support the LAF in this prominent task, in accordance with the SC Resolution 1701 (2006). However, the cooperation between the LAF and UNIFIL is equally important on the way towards the restoration of peace.

Mr. President,

On the peacekeeping front, slightly to the east of Lebanon, another peacekeeping mission holds the keys to the door of peace: UNDOF. In this case, the Blue Helmets have been trying to help both Syria and Israel to close the chapter of conflict for years, while maintaining the ceasefire and supervising the implementation of the Disengagement Agreement.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that, similar to the current positive dynamics in Lebanon, another important challenge is the achievement of an inclusive political transition in Syria. In this regard, Greece supports the unity, independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria and the creation of conditions for an inclusive political transition ensuring the protection of human rights and of members of religious and ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, Greece expresses its full support to UNDOF and calls on all parties to respect the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

There is no question that, in the wake of these momentous developments in both countries, UNIFIL and UNDOF constitute a collective investment in regional peace, security and stability. An investment worth protecting, given that the peacekeepers remain steadily committed to the protection of civilians even at the risk of their own lives. In this vein, Greece is deeply concerned over the targeting of UNIFIL and UNDOF in the last few months.

In concluding, Mr. President,

In line with its principles, Greece calls on all parties to refrain from any actions putting the Blue Helmets in danger. After all, when push comes to shove, the peacekeeping missions represent a pillar of stability, unity and peace in a region lured in repeated sequences of instability, division and discord for decades. Even though their success is never guaranteed, they can achieve what others cannot and they can deal with conflicts, which others cannot or will not address.

I thank you.