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ALC LEADERSHIP AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The American Lebanese Coalition's (ALC) President Dr. Joseph Gebeily and Vice President Mr. Joseph Hage along with a delegation from the WLCU accompanied by Mr. Walid Maalouf Chief of Public Diplomacy at USAID and former Congressman Ben Gillman paid a visit to United Nations Security Council members in New York on the day where more than a thousand demonstrators shouted "Syria out, Freedom to Lebanon, Implement 1559" in front of the United Nations building and marched afterwards toward the Syrian Embassy carrying Lebanese and United States flags.

The delegation of the ALC and WLCU leadership presented again, its support to UNSCR 1559 and asked the international community to be vigilant towards the obvious attempts of the Syrian regime to feign the implementation of 1559. A negative outcome will not only destroy Lebanon politically and economically but also affect the peace and stability in the Middle East. Therefore the delegation asks the Security Council to consider the following:

- Adhere firmly to the request of the complete withdrawal of all Syrian armed forces and intelligence apparatus from the Lebanese territories before the end of April 2005.
- Warn the Syrian regime of the dire consequences of promoting further acts of violence towards the opposition leaders and of arming and inciting its proxy agents in Lebanon in the hopes of re-igniting intra sectarian strife.
- Ask the current Lebanese President to expedite the consultations to form a transitional and partial government that will be able to guarantee the freedom and fairness of the upcoming parliamentary elections.
- Require that the Lebanese Army deploys on all the Lebanese territory including the border with Israel in compliance with UN resolution # 425.

After visiting the United Nations Secretary General the delegation visited the missions of France, USA, Argentina and Greece on Monday and Algeria, Romania, Russian Federation, Brazil and European Community on Tuesday.

At the United Nations the meeting was held with Ambassador Danilo Turk, assistant secretary general for political affairs, Mr. Mark Quarterman and Salman Shaikh political affairs officers. The UN officials are awaiting the

report of Mr. Tod Larsen to report to respond to the pressure of the Security Council. Mr. Larsen is on his way to Lebanon his report is due by April 18 but is expected earlier. The report should be clear and precise in answering to the Security Council requirement regarding the implementation of UNSCR 1559. Officials at the UN headquarters expect that any vague or incomplete answers given to Mr. Larsen will be reported as such. Anxiously awaited at the UN is the report of Mr. Fitzgerald on the Assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, this report short of showing clear evidence of who was behind the plot because of the tampering with the assassination site and other crime related materials, it is going to give a clear idea or probably a precise one on the perpetrators.

Dr. Gebeily related to the officials the security concerns of the civil society in Lebanon and the role that Syrian intelligence can play in releasing armed rogue elements among the population to incite violence that is why disarming all militias and organizations should be a priority during this transitional period and keep security in the hand of the Lebanese Army. Mr. Hage spoke about the consequences on the already crippled economy if the UNSCR 1559 is not implemented soon, the World bank already declared the Lebanese debt unsustainable and drastic measure are needed to put the economy back of the path of growth and now after the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri investors fled the country.

The French mission officials' did not elaborate much on the issues but made it clear that they will not accept anything less than the implementation of UNSCR 1559.

At the USA mission Ambassador Ann Paterson related to the delegation that the Lebanese issue is on the top of her agenda, she is working closely with French regularly to see that the 1559 will be implemented. The Ambassador assured the delegation that President Bush has Lebanon as one of his top priority. Feeling at home the delegation spoke openly about critical issues facing Lebanon in the short term and ways the American-Lebanese can assist their government to tackle those issues.

At the Argentine mission Mr. Mateo Estrémé, first secretary and assistant to the Ambassador informed the delegation that the Argentine government is following closely the development in Lebanon and waiting cautiously for the report of Mr. Tod-Larsen even though they are not optimistic that the report is going to show that UNSCR 1559 has been implemented therefore they would like to discuss further actions at the Security Council once the report is ready. Argentina supports the implementation of 1559 without reservations.

At the Greek Embassy Ambassador Adamantios (Dimis) Th. Vassilakis received the delegation with his staff and made them welcome, spoke about the historic ties between the two people and reiterated his support as to the implementation of UNSCR 1559. Greece supports the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon and will not spare any effort to encourage dialogue

That Monday March 7th more than a thousand Lebanese-American with some supporters gathered at the UN plaza and chanted the USA anthem, the Lebanese national anthem and many slogans demanding the Syrians to leave Lebanon, demanding freedom for the motherland. Cars and buses came as far as Washington DC, Boston, Virginia, Maryland, Pittsburg and some flew from all over the country to join the demonstration. Speakers from several organizing committee specially the ALC and WLCU took the stage and cheered the crowd. Mr. John Hajjar USA president of the WLCU cheered the demonstrators most and presented the distinguished speakers former Congressman Ben Gillman, former Congressman Joseph DioGuardi and Mr. Walid Maalouf among others.

Accompanied by the police of the city of New York the demonstrators raised a sea of Lebanese and American flags and marched toward Syrian Embassy. Media coverage included American TV stations local and national, Al Arabia TV crew was present, and reporters from several newspapers covered the event locally and internationally.

In front of the Syrian a full hour of chanting freedom, independence for Lebanon, Syrian out of Lebanon and the new slogan initiated by Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen “Bara Syrian Bara”

Tuesday morning started at the Algerian Embassy the meeting was with Ambassador Abdallah Baali, Ambassador Mourad Benmehidi and Counselor Larbi Djacta. The delegation presented the issues discussed with every member of the Security Council and found that the Algerian are very understanding to the situation in Lebanon following closely the developments of the independence uprising after the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. The Algerian Ambassador praised the Lebanese people for its courage to stand up for its rights and fight peacefully for the independence and noted that Algeria never accepted the Syrian presence in Lebanon and support its freedom and sovereignty unconditionally. Therefore the Algerian government, as member of the international community, stands for the implementation of UNSCR 1559 and is working with the Security Council to accomplish that goal.

At the Romanian Embassy Ambassador Gheorghe Dumitru was very hospitable, he wanted the delegation to feel at home. He cited the close ties Romania has with the Lebanese people specially the youth who studied in Romania and came back to invest, work and contribute to the development of his country. Like other members of the Security Council Romania support UNSCR 1559 and work closely with the United States to see that this resolution is fully implemented.

At the Russian Federation Embassy Ambassador Sergei Lavrov and Counselor Gleb Desyatnikov assured the delegation that they support UNSCR 1559 and the Russian foreign minister has stressed to his Syrian counterpart the importance of compliance with the resolution. The Russian Federation government understanding that statement made by the Syrian president on March 5th is the first step toward the full withdrawal in compliance with UNSCR 1559. To the contrary the Russian government will discuss the issue with other members of the Security Council and take position accordingly. While mentioning stability as first concern repeatedly the Ambassador mentioned that regardless of the abstention of Russia at the time of voting the resolution now has legal binding effects and should be implemented. The delegates requested from the Ambassador to ask his government to take advantage of its historical bilateral relations with the Syrian to help Lebanon regain its independence and sovereignty and help to establish relations based on respect and equitable terms between the two countries along with embassies and diplomatic relations.

At the Brazilian Embassy Councilor Joao Marcelo Galvao de Queiroz gave the position of his government that advocates the full implementation of UNSCR 1559 and emphasize the respect to the territorial integrity and the political sovereignty of Lebanon, the withdrawal of all foreign troops and the disarmament of militias. The councilor added that during his visit to Damascus Foreign minister Celso Amorin stressed to his Syrian counterpart the importance of compliance with resolution 1559 and encouraged the Syrian government to comply with the resolution and underlined the need of identifying means to implement it.
