

Dear all,

I am very pleased to be here among you today. I am especially grateful for the presence of the Spanish Minister of Defence, the Italian Deputy Minister of Defence, and delegations from other troop contributing countries whose support is essential for our activities and operations.

I am also honored by the presence of the Lebanese Defence Minister Murr and of General Kahwaji, Chief of the Lebanese Armed Forces. I hope, today marks the beginning of a strong cooperation between us. Last but not least, let me acknowledge the presence of the Director of our Strategic Military Cell in New York, who brings with him all the support that UN headquarters continue to have for our Mission.

A Lebanese friend of mine told me once that God sent me to this great land for a good and long term reason...

And here I am again...

Here we are together again...

When I completed my mandate as Commander of UNIFIL's Sector East from December 2008 to April 2009, I replaced the expression "Good bye" by a "See you soon" or "Ila liká". I had a very good time. It was great to participate in this mission and I had a feeling that I will be coming back to this generous land, with its rich culture and friendly people.

Although I was here for only 4 months, this period was enough for this country to have a special place in my heart, to become part of my history, and now, with my new responsibilities, part of my future.

During the time I was here, I had a very good relationship with all participants in the mission, not only with my commander and the soldiers of different forces under my command, but also with the civilian as well as religious and military authorities, with the population and with the media. Thank you everybody.

At this point, I would like to thank the Secretary General of the UN, the Spanish Government and the Spanish Armed Forces for choosing me for this mission. My special gratitude to general

Graziano, the outgoing Force Commander, who supported most of my initiatives and who guided me and taught me a lot about this mission....., Claudio, I wish you the very best for the future.

My vision for UNIFIL is to help maintain the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon while increasing dialogue and cooperation between the two countries, and by taking effective control of the area of operations in close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces in order to avoid any incident.

From my point of view, the desired end state is to establish sustainable peace and stability in southern Lebanon but this is a political problem that cannot be solved only by UNIFIL. Nevertheless, our mission is to contribute to creating the necessary conditions to make it possible. Of course, the tactical operations to control the area are the most visible tool but they are not enough, we need to transmit the idea of a permanent peace.

So far, UNIFIL has been a successful mission taking into account that since August 2006 and except for a few incidents, there have been no direct confrontations between Israel and Lebanon. We are here to monitor the cessation of hostilities and to help the parties reach a permanent peace and we are determined to do it.

In this spirit, I shall do my very best to ensure the successful implementation of our mandate in southern Lebanon, relying on my own experience in commanding units as well as on the support and advice of all of you, who have already been serving in UNIFIL with dedication and professionalism.

Now let me address all personnel under my command, soldiers and civilians. In my opinion, there are several ground rules to follow to succeed in our mission and I ask you to keep them in mind for the future. The essential ones are as follows.

- To accomplish all our duties, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1701. We have to keep our mandate clearly in mind when carrying out our tasks.**
- To have scrupulous respect for our Rules of Engagement.**
- To respect the different cultures and religions.**
- Not to be biased when dealing with the parties.**
- To be willing to help everybody.**
- To establish good communication with all our partners.**

- To show exemplary behavior and good conduct.

In conclusion, don't forget that we are blue helmets, that we represent the United Nations, and that our example is the best way to win the hearts and minds of the population and the parties.

Now let me address the media. During my time as Sector East Commander, my relationship with you was excellent. We had a very good communication, especially with the journalists in my area of responsibility. UNIFIL needs you, because you put words and images to all our activities. You know that all UNIFIL contingents do their best to bring peace to this beautiful region. Your opinions and articles are very useful to us to gain the support of the population and for the success of our operations. You can count on me to share information and I hope that I will be able to count on you for good reporting!

Finally, I want to remember and honor all the peacekeepers who have died in the service of peace since UNIFIL was created in 1978. So far, 275 blue berets have given their lives to bring peace to this region. Their sacrifice must encourage us and motivate us to do our best when carrying out our tasks, with responsibility and commitment in order to avoid any kind of incident.

Thank you very much and the best for all of you.