

**Message by incoming**  
**UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Paolo Serra**  
**Transfer of Authority ceremony**  
**28 January 2012**

Honoured Religious Leaders,  
Your excellencies, Ministers of Defence of the Republic of Lebanon and Italy, Members of Parliament, generals and ambassadors  
Esteemed colleagues from the Lebanese Armed Forces and from other security departments,  
Respected Lebanese authorities,  
Fellow United Nations representatives,  
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to meet all of you today on the occasion of the Transfer of Authority ceremony.

I will take this opportunity to express my most sincere appreciation to the Government of Lebanon, the Lebanese Armed Forces, as well as the local authorities and the people of southern Lebanon, for their kind welcome to me as new UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander.

My gratitude also goes to the Secretary-General and to the personnel of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support of the United Nations, as well as the Government of Italy, for having placed such a high level of confidence in me. My gratitude to the troop contributing countries and their high representatives here today

A warm greeting to the civilian and military personnel of UNIFIL. I know you have come to UNIFIL with a unique set of skills and professionalism and I will count on your expertise and experience to fulfill my mission.

And in this regard I want to take this opportunity to underline some thoughts:

- What will change in UNIFIL? What will change is just the Commander. The mandate remains the same as laid down by the Security Council in resolution 1701.
- What will be the key elements of continued UNIFIL success? The answer lies in the continued commitment of all the parties to the cessation of hostilities and full respect of the resolution 1701.

In this context, the respect for the Blue Line by the parties and their cooperation in UNIFIL's effort to further the visible marking of the Blue Line is a process that can support the improving of the general security for the people of southern Lebanon who welcomed and host us here.

Last but not least I would like to underline the importance I attach to further developing our strategic partnership with LAF that must continue in order to achieve the common goal of peace and stability.

I am closing my remarks but I cannot do it without mentioning the great job done by General Asarta. Dear Alberto, I have very much appreciated your warm reception. It would not be easy for me to follow your footsteps. But rest assured that I will give my best, my complete commitment, to continue this joint effort to bring peace and stability to the region.

I am eager to work together with all of you

Thank you! Shoukran! Grazie!

Major general Paolo Serra  
UNIFIL HOM/FC