

**UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON
(UNIFIL)**

Naqoura,
18 September 2006

PRESS RELEASE

French Defense Minister visits UNIFIL

On 18 September, the **Defense Minister of France Michele Alliot-Marie**, accompanied by the **French Ambassador to Lebanon Bernard Emie**, paid a visit to UNIFIL. She held meetings with UNIFIL **Force Commander Major-General Alain Pellegrini** and other officials at UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura.

The Minister was briefed on the operational situation in South Lebanon, on the continued withdrawal of Israeli Defense Forces and on the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the area. The Minister was also informed of the arrival of the new contingents to UNIFIL: from France, Italy and Spain.

*“I welcome this visit by the French Defense Minister to UNIFIL,” said **Major-General Pellegrini**, “It is an honor to receive her here in Naqoura, especially since France is one of the largest troop contributors to this Mission. The Minister had a chance to see for herself how this Mission is evolving, how it is being strengthened and what challenges UNIFIL will have to deal with in the future.”*

The French Defense Minister also visited an area outside Naqoura where she observed UN de-mining activities.

For further information, Please contact Alexander Ivanko, UNIFIL Spokesman, at (+961) 70 910064.