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**PRESS RELEASE**

**UNIFIL FORCE COMMANDER TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY CEREMONY**

Naqoura, Lebanon – The formal ceremony marking the transfer of command of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon took place today between Major-General Alain Pellegrini (France) and his successor, Major-General Claudio Graziano (Italy). The ceremony took place in front of a cenotaph, dedicated to fallen UNIFIL peacekeepers, located within the mission's headquarters in the southern Lebanese coastal town of Naqoura.

Major-General Pellegrini, who has been UNIFIL Force Commander since 13 February 2004, extended his appreciation to colleagues in peacekeeping, the Lebanese Army and to the communities in southern Lebanon.

*"We have come through some difficult days together. I leave with the conviction that we have together laid new foundations for a solid and, I hope, lasting stability,"* said Major-General Pellegrini.

The incoming commander expressed his appreciation to Major-General Pellegrini and underscored his own determination to ensure that UNIFIL accomplishes the job with which it is tasked.

*"I am taking command of a well established and strong mission that is in good shape,"* said Major-General Graziano, *"UNIFIL has in recent months successfully transformed itself to meet new challenges and is ready to face them. I pay fulsome tribute to Major-General Pellegrini for his leadership."*

Dignitaries attending the ceremony included Lebanese officials, Lebanese Army officers, Ambassadors of troop contributing countries, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Lebanon, as well as senior officials of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and UNIFIL.

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