



Situation in the middle east Account of the telephone conversation between M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, and Mr Kofi ANNAN, United Nations Secretary-general

Paris, 17 August 2006

On 17 August, President Chirac spoke by phone to Mr Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, about the Middle East situation. He confirmed that France would play her part in bolstering UNIFIL as foreseen in UNSCR 1701.

He reiterated that the mission, the rules of engagement and the means of this force remain to be specified, along with the sharing of its constituent contingents, which must reflect the commitment of the entire international community.

In the immediate term, the Lebanese army must be able to deploy in the southern part of the country. UNIFIL backing, as provided by UNSCR 1701, will obviously be essential to ensuring the rapidity of this deployment.

President Chirac told the United Nations Secretary-General first of all that France was prepared to maintain her air and naval forces off the Lebanese coast. From the outset of the crisis, these forces, numbering 1,700 troops, have been able in particular to provide support for UNIFIL.

To respond to the urgent need to deploy the Lebanese army, President Chirac also announced that France, who is already present within UNIFIL, will immediately double her current contingent by about 200 troops, thus bringing it to 400. This proposal will be presented during this evening's meeting in New York.

President Chirac also told the Secretary-General that France was prepared to assume command of the enlarged UNIFIL.

Beyond this initial emergency, the discussions in New York will have to confirm the availability of the various nations to contribute to a bolstered UNIFIL, in order for it to be able to carry out all of the missions assigned to it by the Security Council./.