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Finland's EU Presidency

General Assembly  
Sixty-First Session  
Third Committee  
UNITED NATIONS  
The human rights situation arising from the recent Israeli military operations in  
Lebanon

Statement on behalf of the European Union

H.E. Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox  
Ambassador  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations

New York, 22 November 2006

(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

\*) Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

At the outset, we would like express our sincere appreciation to the delegation of Lebanon for their constructive cooperation on this draft resolution. Despite the constructive dialogue with the Lebanese delegation and notable improvements in the text, the European Union feels that the circumstances that led to the outbreak of the hostilities have not been fully addressed. We have therefore abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

The EU remains committed to the protection and promotion of the human rights of all individuals and maintains that both parties to the conflict have an equal responsibility to do everything possible to protect civilian populations and to refrain from actions in violation of international humanitarian law. The European Union deplores all loss of civilian life during this conflict, both as a result of the Hezbollah rocket attacks on Israel as well as the Israeli military operations in Lebanon. We reiterate our call for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers.

The European Union continues to be committed to support the legitimate and democratically elected government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, its efforts to stabilise the situation in the country, and to enhancing the reconstruction process in the perspective of the Paris Conference in January 2007.

In light of the brutal assassination of Lebanese Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel, which we have condemned in the strongest terms, the European Union calls all countries in the region to refrain from any violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and from any interference in Lebanon's internal affairs, in accordance with UNSC resolutions. We encourage all Lebanese parties to reach consensus and to resume the process of national dialogue.

In order to be able to build long term and sustainable results, we must ensure that violence will not reoccur. The political aspects and the root causes of the crises must be dealt with. In that regard, the European Union is determined to support the full implementation of UNSCR 1701. We call all parties in the region to comply with the resolution.

The EU will continue to assist the Lebanese government in meeting its humanitarian and environmental needs and in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. We remain deeply concerned about the well being and safety of all Lebanese civilians, in particular children.

We underline the need to provide firm support to Lebanon's Government in the reconstruction efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.