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## **PRESS RELEASE** **30 YEARS OF UNIFIL**

Naqoura, Lebanon – The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) today observed the 30th anniversary of its peacekeeping presence in southern Lebanon.

Peacekeepers representing the 25 different national contingents that make up UNIFIL, participated in a ceremony held to mark the occasion at the Mission headquarters in Naqoura. UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano and a representative of the Lebanese Army laid wreaths at the UNIFIL cenotaph. Attending were representatives from the Lebanese armed and security forces, local mayors and community officials, as well as senior diplomats.

*“I think that this commemoration is an appropriate occasion to reaffirm once again the full commitment of UNIFIL to perform its duties in close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces,”* Major-General Graziano said.

He said that since its inception in 1978, UNIFIL has gone through various phases. *“But UNIFIL’s goal towards maintaining peace and stability in south Lebanon has never faltered and has always maintained its momentum towards bringing normalcy in the area despite the many challenges.”*

UNIFIL was created by the UN Security Council resolutions 425 and 426 of 19 March 1978, to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, restore international peace and security and assist the Lebanese Government in restoring its effective authority in the area.

Following the July/August 2006 war, the Security Council, by its resolution 1701 of 11 August 2006, enhanced the Force and decided that in addition to the original mandate, it would, among other things, monitor the cessation of hostilities, accompany and support the Lebanese Armed Forces as they deploy throughout the south of Lebanon as Israel withdraws its armed forces, and extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.

UNIFIL currently comprises around 12,500 troops, supported by over 1,000 civilian international and local staff. This includes about 1,500 naval personnel of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force deployed along the Lebanese coast, at the request of the government, to support the Lebanese navy in preventing any illegal transfer of arms or related material into the country.

Since 1978, 270 UNIFIL peacekeepers have lost their lives in the line of duty, 12 of them just during the last year. The UNIFIL Force Commander said: *“I dedicate this day to recall and honour their memory.”*

To mark this historic occasion a photo and video exhibition was organized to illustrate 30 years of UNIFIL presence in the south of Lebanon.

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