



Office of the Special Coordinator
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial
pour le Liban

PRESS RELEASE

**United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly Visits
the Bekaa and Lebanon's Eastern Borders**

Bekaa, Lebanon

Thursday, 27 September 2012

United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly today visited the Bekaa Valley to examine the situation along Lebanon's borders with Syria and the conditions of displaced Syrians in that area. Today's visit was his first working visit to this part of eastern Lebanon, where over 34,000 Syrians have taken refuge.

Mr. Plumbly held meetings with Members of Parliament and local authorities from Baalbek and West Bekaa. He then met with representatives of the Lebanese army and security forces who briefed him on measures being taken to control Lebanon's 330-kilometer long border with Syria including recent successes in interdicting arms, and took him on a field trip to the border area. "I have been impressed by what I have seen of the dedication of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the border areas but remain seriously concerned by the impact of cross-border fighting and incursions, from whatever source," said Mr. Plumbly. "The United Nations has repeatedly underlined the importance of respect for Lebanon's borders." He welcomed government plans to strengthen the capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, and noted that the UN was already working with international donors to help improve border control.

Mr. Plumbly toured the border town of Arsal. Local representatives shared their views of some of the difficulties they face, in light of instability along the border and also in meeting the needs of thousands of displaced Syrians and returning Lebanese citizens. "The generosity and hospitality

demonstrated by the residents of Arsal and other communities during this time of need is extraordinary, truly praiseworthy, bearing in mind the socio-economic difficulties they themselves face,” Mr. Plumby said.

During his day-long trip, the Special Coordinator, accompanied by representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), met with displaced Syrian families at a community shelter and a women’s center in Arsal and heard from them about their difficult displacement and deep concerns. While noting the strong humanitarian support already extended by UNHCR and NGOs, Mr. Plumby said at the end of the day that the visit had underlined to him the very pressing need for additional support to address both the humanitarian needs of the displaced people and the local communities assisting them, reflected in the revised appeal launched today by UNHCR in Geneva.

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