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PRESS RELEASE

UNIFIL ESTABLISHMENT DAY

Naqoura, Lebanon – The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) held a ceremony at the Mission headquarters in Naqoura to mark the 31st anniversary of its peacekeeping presence in southern Lebanon.

Peacekeepers representing the 30 different national contingents that make up UNIFIL participated in the event. Attending were representatives from the Lebanese armed and security forces, local mayors and community officials, as well as senior diplomats.

UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano and Brigadier-General Abed El-Rahman Shehaitly representing the Lebanese Armed Forces Commander laid wreaths at the UNIFIL Cenotaph in memory of fallen peacekeepers. Representatives of the national and international staff of UNIFIL also laid a wreath at the Cenotaph.

“UNIFIL in close coordination with the Lebanese army is doing its utmost to ensure security in the area at all times,” Major-General Graziano said. “Our troops actively monitor developments through permanent positions, temporary observations posts and by conduct of ground and air patrols on a daily basis,” he added.

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 900 naval personnel of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force deployed along the Lebanese coast, at the request of the government of Lebanon, to support the Lebanese navy in preventing any illegal transfer of arms or related material into the country.

Since 1978, 275 UNIFIL peacekeepers have lost their lives in the line of duty.

For further information, please contact the following at the UNIFIL Public Information Office:

Spokesperson Yasmina Bouziane

Tel.: +961 1 827 037 (office); +961 7092 6950 (cell)

Fax: +961 1 827 016

Email: bouziane@un.org

View the UNIFIL website: <http://unifil.unmissions.org>