

2ND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

**Statement by Mr. Artak Apitonian,
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia
Geneva, August 11, 2006**

Mr. President,

Six years ago the Government of Israel pulled out its forces from South Lebanon. Two words could describe the prevailing attitude on both sides of the border at that time - relief and hope. Relief from the exhausting long-standing warfare, and hope that with some effort, with petite rapprochement, ~~the sides could turn over this page of the conflict~~, the sides could turn over this page of the conflict. Instead, today we witness the revisiting of one of the chapters of the conflict in the Middle East – a conflict in which it is very difficult to track down who retaliates to whom and for what.

Mr. President,

Armenia deplores the loss of civilian lives on all sides. We are seriously concerned about the continuing escalation of Israeli military actions in Lebanon, which has claimed a considerably high number of innocent civilian lives.

We particularly denounce the use of such disproportionate, excessive force, which effectively results in a collective punishment of civilians and destruction of vital civilian infrastructure and utilities. The targeting of the residential areas resulted in a significantly high number of casualties among civilians, third of which are children.

Almost third of the Lebanese population is displaced. With no safe entry to Lebanon by land, sea and air, with the south of the country totally sealed off, the humanitarian situation is swiftly degenerating into a catastrophe.

We share the grief of the people of Lebanon and are strongly committed to contributing our share of humanitarian assistance in order to alleviate the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Lebanon. The Government of Armenia has already dispatched humanitarian medical supply to the Lebanese Government. We will continue to closely follow the humanitarian situation and the needs in Lebanon.

Mr. President,

Armenia calls for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities by all sides to end the tragic loss of civilian life. We urge an immediate effect of all necessary measures to protect the population against the consequences of war and to open humanitarian safe corridors in order to ensure the distribution of relief assistance and to alleviate the dire economic and social conditions of affected people, especially those displaced or cut off in the South.

We call for an early Security Council resolution, negotiated and acceptable to all the sides of the conflict. We encourage all the parties involved in the negotiations to spare no effort in reaching prompt agreement to halt violence and bring peace to the land and peoples of Lebanon and Israel.

Thank you.