



# Security Council

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## Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 2 March to 16 May 2017

### I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the past three months, pursuant to the mandate contained in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent resolutions, most recently resolution [2330 \(2016\)](#).

### II. Situation in the area of operation and activities of the Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was maintained, albeit in a volatile environment attributable to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. This is notwithstanding a number of violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (Disengagement of Forces Agreement) of 1974, which are set out below. The Syrian Arab Armed Forces and non-State armed opposition groups engaged in exchanges of heavy weapon fire in the area of separation and the area of limitation on the Bravo side. Different armed groups, including the listed terrorist group Jabhat Fath al-Sham (formerly the Nusrah Front)<sup>1</sup> and the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army,<sup>2</sup> which pledged allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continued to exchange fire in the UNDOF area of operation. Inside the area of separation, the presence of the Syrian armed forces and military equipment, as well as any other armed personnel and military equipment other than that of UNDOF, is in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. As underscored again by the Security Council in its resolution [2330 \(2016\)](#), there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed in the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line that it observes. All incidents of

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<sup>1</sup> In July 2016, the Nusrah Front announced that it had changed its name to Jabhat Fath al Sham and declared that it had cut ties with Al-Qaida.

<sup>2</sup> The merger between the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade and Harakat al Muthana was initially announced on 12 April 2016. On 24 May 2016, open sources reported that both groups were now operating under the umbrella name of “Khalid ibn al-Walid Army”. The grouping is assessed as being ISIL-affiliated.



firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing of the ceasefire line by individuals, are violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In his regular interaction with both sides, the Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNDOF continued to call upon both parties to exercise restraint and prevent any miscalculations that might lead to an escalation of the situation. This was particularly the case when responding to incidents of spillover and retaliatory fire.

4. Military activity across the ceasefire line increased during the reporting period. On 13 May, UNDOF observed three armed Israel Defense Forces personnel in a vehicle in the area of separation in the vicinity of the Mount Hermon complex, which constituted a violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Two of the Israel Defense Forces personnel left the vehicle for approximately 10 minutes, after which all personnel and the vehicle returned to the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan).

5. There was one incident of spillover fire across the ceasefire line during the reporting period. On 21 April, United Nations personnel observed a high explosive impact approximately two kilometres north of United Nations position 22. An investigation team was allowed access to the site the following day, 22 April, by which time only basic evidence could be gathered. The evidence indicated that the impact was likely to have been caused by a round of 105 mm or 120 mm calibre from the Bravo side. UNDOF also observed that a M557 point detonating fuse was used.

6. According to Syrian officials, the Israel Defense Forces responded to the spillover fire with air strikes across the ceasefire line in the Khan Arnabeh region. UNDOF was unable to confirm the Israel Defense Forces air activity or firing across the ceasefire line. Syrian officials claimed that the Israeli retaliatory action halted an ongoing Syrian Arab Armed Forces military operation in the area of separation.

7. During the reporting period, open and government sources reported several additional alleged incidents of Israeli air strikes or air activity in the Syrian Arab Republic. UNDOF did not observe and is not able to verify the point of origin or point of impact of any of the reported air activity described below. On 17 March, open sources reported that Israel Defense Forces aircraft entered Syrian airspace and proceeded to strike targets in the general area of Tadmur (Palmyra); it was also reported that in response, anti-aircraft missiles were fired, with some media outlets suggested that an Israel Defense Forces aircraft was shot down. The Israel Defense Forces subsequently confirmed the operation but denied that one of their aircraft had been hit. It was also confirmed that the firing of anti-aircraft missiles had triggered an anti-rocket alert system in Israel. On 19 March, it was reported that an air strike killed an individual in Khan Arnabeh in the area of limitation on the Bravo side. Open sources reported that the strike was carried out by an Israel Defense Forces unmanned aerial vehicle. On 21 March, it was reported by open sources and confirmed by the Israel Defense Forces that an Israel Defense Forces unmanned aerial vehicle had been shot down in the Qunaytirah area. On 23 April, open sources reported an Israel Defense Forces strike at a Syrian National Defence Forces training camp approximately two kilometres from Camp Faouar that killed three individuals and wounded two others, reportedly in retaliation for spillover fire, that had occurred on 21 April. On 27 April, open sources reported that Damascus Airport had been the target of air strikes by the Israel Defense Forces. In all cases, it was reported by the media that the targets were Hizbullah or associated parties.

8. The berm, or earthwork, in the area of separation remained a concern for UNDOF throughout the reporting period. The berm is over 2 kilometres long and appears to be facilitating movement in the corridor between Hamidiyah al-Jadidah

and Jubbata al-Khashab. The berm crosses the ceasefire line in at least one location and is used by armed groups, thus making the area of separation a target for the Syrian Arab Armed Forces. This continues to have the potential to draw fire, particularly indirect fire, closer to the ceasefire line and the technical fence. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed an increasing trend of incidents of operational activity being conducted by armed groups in close proximity to the technical fence and the ceasefire line. On 21 and 26 April, a self-propelled howitzer, along with six armed elements and support vehicles, fired five high explosive rounds into areas controlled by the Syrian Arab Armed Forces. The firing position was located in the vicinity of former United Nations position 60A, in close proximity to the technical fence. Syrian authorities noted that there had been civilian casualties in Khan Arnabeh and that the Syrian Arab Armed Forces were constrained in their ability to respond because of the risk that any spillover fire would draw the usual response from the Israel Defense Forces.

9. UNDOF assesses that military operational activity by armed groups, including the practice of firing in close proximity to the ceasefire line and the technical fence, is a deliberate attempt to avoid retaliatory fire from the Syrian Arab Armed Forces. This activity serves to attract fire towards the ceasefire line, placing civilians and United Nations personnel on the Alpha side at increased risk.

10. Crossing of the ceasefire line by civilians, primarily shepherds, from the Bravo side to the Alpha side continued to be observed daily. Instances of interaction between Israel Defense Forces soldiers and individuals from the Bravo side continued during the reporting period. Such interactions were observed on 15 March in the vicinity of the Alpha gate and Camp Ziouani, and on 20 April in the vicinity of United Nations observation post 54.

11. Relative to the previous reporting period, there has been a significant increase in interaction between Israel Defense Forces soldiers and individuals from the Bravo side, including from the Bayt Jinn pocket on Mount Hermon. UNDOF observed 16 interactions between the Israel Defense Forces and unknown individuals during the reporting period, occurring on four occasions in February, three in March, eight in April and on one occasion in May. The interactions followed a similar pattern and occurred in the same general vicinity on Mount Hermon, close to an Israel Defense Forces position. Unknown individuals, armed and unarmed, accompanied by mules, approached the Israel Defense Forces position and were met by and interacted with Israel Defense Forces personnel. In some instances, personnel and supplies were observed to have been transferred in both directions. On all occasions, the unknown individuals and mules returned to the Bravo side. The movement of unarmed unidentified persons with unloaded mules was observed by UNDOF personnel on 28 March and 8 May.

12. From its observation, UNDOF cannot confirm or verify the nature of the interaction described in the paragraphs above. The Israel Defense Forces have stated that the interactions were of a humanitarian and medical nature.

13. As previously reported by UNDOF, there is a concern that such interaction heightens the risk of clashes between the armed groups and the Syrian Arab Armed Forces, including on Mount Hermon, and this poses the risk to United Nations personnel of indirect fire. On 5 May, Observer Group Golan personnel heard warning shots, then small arms rounds were fired in their direction by two unidentified individuals in the vicinity of the Mount Hermon complex. UNDOF assessed that the shots were intended as a warning to stop its personnel from observing the area. Such activity highlights the risk in the operational environment on Mount Hermon.

14. On 30 March, following medical treatment in Israel, a civilian shepherd, who had been injured on 5 January in a mine incident in the vicinity of United Nations observation post 73, was transferred back to the Bravo side in cooperation with representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross. In coordination with the Israel Defense Forces, UNDOF transferred the individual from the Alpha side across Mount Hermon to the Bravo side. Throughout the operation, the injured shepherd remained under medical observation by an UNDOF Medical Officer. He was then transferred to the Syrian authorities. The shepherd continued his rehabilitation in Damascus, and has since returned to his home and community in Hadar. UNDOF commended the humanitarian spirit in which both parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement acted in order to achieve the successful conclusion of the incident.

15. In the context of the ongoing Syrian conflict, combat in the northern part of the area of separation and limitation on the Bravo side continued in the vicinity of Hadar and Tall al-Hamariyah, also known as the “Castle”, which remains contested. During the reporting period, combat also continued in the Bayt Jinn pocket, consisting of the towns of Bayt Jinn, Mazra’at Bayt Jinn and Mughur al-Mir.

16. The Mount Hermon complex remained stable throughout the reporting period, with the exception of the firing incident of 5 May described in paragraph 13 above. The level of transborder movements of unidentified individuals increased as the weather conditions improved, with two instances recorded in March, three in April and four in May.

17. In the central part of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side, military combat remained at low levels between armed groups and the Syrian Arab Armed Forces, albeit with consistent reports of direct and indirect firing. Firing continues to be observed along the front lines in the vicinity of Syrian Arab Armed Forces positions towards positions held by armed groups in south Gharbiyah, Qunaytirah and Umm Batinah and the contested area of Samdaniyah.

18. In the southern part of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side, which remain for the most part under the control of non-State armed groups, clashes continued between the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army on the one side and the Free Syrian Army and Jabhat Fath al-Sham (formerly the Nusra Front) on the other. Significant spikes in military activity were observed on 20 February and again on 8 May in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

19. UNDOF protested all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that it observed to both parties, including the presence of unauthorized equipment in the area of separation and firing into the area of separation. The Head of Mission and Force Commander reminded the parties of their obligation to abide by the terms of the Agreement and to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground.

20. During the reporting period, United Nations personnel on four occasions observed persons on the Bravo side unearthing and removing mines in close proximity to United Nations positions. On 11 February 2017, United Nations personnel at temporary observation post 4 observed a civilian picking up objects from the ground in the vicinity of the Charlie gate. The individual collected the items in a white box and returned to the area of separation. On 14 February, United Nations personnel at observation post 53 observed three persons digging up mines from the ground and then proceeding towards Kudnah. On 11 and 19 March, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed several persons who appeared to be civilian shepherds searching the ground and digging up items.

21. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed seven locations where 487 tents and other structures appeared to have been set up for internally displaced persons in the area of separation and in its proximity. The number of people in the camps could not be ascertained and appeared to fluctuate. As a result of the closure of the established crossing point at Qunaytirah between the Alpha and Bravo sides since late August 2014, UNDOF remains unable to facilitate, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, humanitarian crossings, including for students, between the two sides.

22. Since its temporary relocation from a number of positions in September 2014, and pending its full return to the area of separation, UNDOF has continued to maintain visibility of the area of separation and the ceasefire line from its positions on Mount Hermon, Camp Faouar, position 80, in the southern part of the area of separation, and position 22, on the Alpha side. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) military observers in Observer Group Golan, who are under the operational control of UNDOF and maintained five fixed and four temporary observation posts along the Alpha line. The focus of the activities of Observer Group Golan was on continuous static observation and situational awareness. Observer Group Golan-Damascus resumed operations on Mount Hermon on 8 May, following mine clearance operations by UNDOF.

23. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied the inspection teams. Inspections in the area of limitation on the Bravo side remained suspended because of the security situation. As in the past, UNDOF faced several instances of restriction of its freedom of movement; however, UNDOF, through its engagement with the Israel Defense Forces, endeavours to reduce the delays and challenges experienced by United Nations personnel in crossing through the technical fence to United Nations observation posts and positions.

24. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed 155 mm artillery weapons on the Alpha side within 10 kilometres of the ceasefire line on 21 February and 28 and 29 March. Repeatedly throughout the reporting period, United Nations personnel observed a multiple-rocket launching system and Iron Dome systems at locations within the 20 kilometre zone in the area of limitation on the Alpha side.

25. UNDOF, in consultation with both parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation to assess whether the conditions on the ground permitted an incremental return to vacated positions in the area of separation. In this regard, the UNDOF leadership conducted reconnaissance missions to former United Nations positions and observation posts on the Bravo side on 2 April and 8 May, visiting Camp Faouar, observation post 71, position 10, observation post 72 and position 25 in Khan Arnabeh and observation post 56 in Jaba. The UNDOF Force Commander also continues his frequent visits and inspections of Camp Faouar and Mount Hermon on the Bravo side.

26. During the reporting period, UNDOF continued to make progress towards the limited return to Bravo side operations in line with the phased UNDOF plan. Work in the current phase of the plan, phase 1, has continued to progress satisfactorily since 14 November 2016, when UNDOF re-established an initial presence at Camp Faouar, and conditions have steadily improved in line with the mission support plan. Building of key infrastructure and accommodation has continued. From an operational perspective, the security and defence of the Camp have been continuously practised, and all deployed elements have been integrated into a cohesive and effective component with clear command and control. Seven armoured

personnel carriers were deployed to UNDOF on 24 March. This is a positive development; the armoured personnel carriers form an integral part of the enhanced force protection and mobility required for current UNDOF operations, particularly in position 80 in the southern part of the area of separation.

27. Since the commencement of phase 1 in November 2016, no adverse reaction to the return of UNDOF to Camp Faouar has been perceived. There has been no increase in combat or threat surrounding the Camp, and no deliberate actions have been taken by any armed group to threaten the presence of UNDOF on the Bravo side. This positive assessment is tempered by the continuation of low to medium levels of military activity in the areas of separation and limitation during this period. The Mission will continue to monitor the situation so as to ensure force protection and the safety and security of UNDOF personnel.

28. From 31 March to 6 April, a planning team from United Nations Headquarters visited UNDOF to develop jointly with the Mission options for progressing the incremental return to activities on the Bravo side. This included the development of options for mobile patrolling by the new mechanized infantry company that is expected to deploy to UNDOF in July 2017 and the finalization of a list of security, military and logistics/support requirements. Conditions permitting, the next phase (phase 2) will commence in July 2017 and will include, over a period of six to eight months, an initial phase of limited patrolling by the mechanized infantry company from Camp Faouar into the northern part of the area of separation. The movement of the UNDOF and Observer Group Golan headquarters from Damascus to Camp Faouar, as well as the movement of the Force Reserve Company from Camp Ziouani to Camp Faouar, are envisaged in phase 3. That phase will also involve the refurbishment of physical infrastructure and security preparations for the reoccupation of select observation posts. A more mobile concept of operations with heavier reliance on modern technology is required in view of the prevailing and fluid security situation. The plans envisage an increase in the UNDOF troop strength from 828 currently to 990, representing 150 troops of the mechanized infantry company and 12 additional staff officers. The plans also consider the requirements for the reoccupation of observation post 52, including in terms of situational awareness and security aspects. Observer Group Golan military observers would not be deployed at observation posts on a permanent basis until such time that adequate accommodation is in place and security conditions allow. During his visit to UNDOF from 7 to 12 May 2017, the Military Adviser of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat reviewed the plans for the continued incremental return of UNDOF and visited the areas intended to be patrolled and the observation posts that are planned to be reoccupied.

29. UNDOF continued to resupply its positions on Mount Hermon and Camp Faouar from Damascus. UNDOF convoys between Damascus and United Nations positions were conducted almost daily and with an UNDOF security escort, accompanied by a liaison officer from the Syrian Arab Armed Forces. UNDOF continued to carry out contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts and to update its contingency planning for the relocation and evacuation of United Nations personnel on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, as well as in Damascus. The implementation of risk mitigation, including force protection measures recommended in the military capability study of UNDOF, continued at observation posts, positions and the operational base at Camp Ziouani.

30. As at 15 May, UNDOF comprised 832 troops, including 30 women. Troops are currently deployed from Bhutan (2), Czechia (3), Fiji (301), Finland (2), India (195), Ireland (136), Nepal (191) and the Netherlands (2). In addition, 77 military

observers from UNTSO, including eight women, assisted the Force in carrying out its tasks.

### **III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)**

31. In its resolution 2330 (2016), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to implement immediately its resolution 338 (1973), decided to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, until 30 June 2017, and requested the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement resolution 338 (1973). The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), will be addressed in my report on the situation in the Middle East, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session pursuant to Assembly resolutions 71/24 on the Syrian Golan and 71/25 on Jerusalem.

32. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. The Syrian conflict is further reducing the prospects for their resumption and for progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

### **IV. Financial implications**

33. The General Assembly, by its resolution 70/279, appropriated the amount of \$47.7 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. As at 18 May 2017, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNDOF amounted to \$16.8 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$1,613.5 million. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 January 2017, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2016, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

### **V. Observations**

34. I note with concern the recent escalation of military activity across the ceasefire line. In particular, the incident of spillover fire and Israeli retaliatory action on 21 April, as well as other strikes reportedly conducted by the Israel Defense Forces in the Syrian Arab Republic, has the potential to escalate tensions and jeopardize the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. While the majority of the alleged Israel Defense Forces air strikes were reported to have taken place outside the UNDOF area of responsibility, the increase in military engagement between the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement is a serious cause for concern. I encourage the members of the Security Council to support efforts to sensitize both parties and regional stakeholders to the risks of such escalation and the need to preserve the long-standing ceasefire.

35. As previously reported by UNDOF, the Israel Defense Forces hold the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic responsible for any spillover fire incidents to the Alpha side, regardless of the point of origin of the fire. It remains critical that

the parties maintain their liaison with UNDOF in the first instance to prevent any escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. It is not acceptable for UNDOF to be reliant on open sources to determine the extent of a deliberate violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In addition, the violation of the ceasefire line by the Israel Defense Forces on 13 May increased tensions. For its part, the United Nations will maintain its efforts to ensure that the long-standing ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic continues to hold.

36. I remain gravely concerned by the prevailing security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, its impact on the Syrian population and its implications for the stability of the wider region. The continued fighting on the Bravo side between the Syrian armed forces and armed groups, and between different armed groups, including listed terrorist groups, such as Jabhat Fath al-Sham, and ISIL affiliates, such as the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, in the southern part of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side, as well as the firing of missiles by the Israel Defense Forces across the ceasefire line, jeopardize the long-term ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and continue to significantly affect the UNDOF area of operation.

37. The presence of the Syrian armed forces and unauthorized military equipment in the area of separation are violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The continued use of heavy weapons by the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the ongoing Syrian conflict is disturbing and continues to significantly impede the successful implementation of the UNDOF mandate. I note that while there is a reduction in the levels of firing in the northern part of the UNDOF area of operation, listed terrorist groups and other armed groups continue to maintain control over significant sections of the areas of separation and limitation in the UNDOF area of operation on the Bravo side. The established crossing between the Alpha and Bravo sides remains closed.

38. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. I call upon all parties to the Syrian conflict to cease military actions throughout the country, including in the UNDOF area of operation, and to remove all military equipment and all armed personnel from the area of separation.

39. The Israel Defense Forces should refrain from firing across the ceasefire line. The firing of missiles across the ceasefire line by the Israel Defense Forces has the potential to escalate tensions between the two sides. The continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on the Alpha side is also of concern.

40. Interaction between the Israel Defense Forces and unidentified individuals from the Bravo side, including in the area of Mount Hermon, has the potential to lead to clashes between armed elements and the Syrian Arab Armed Forces. I reiterate my call to both parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement regarding the requirement to maintain stability in the area. All military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor pose a risk to the ceasefire and to the local civilian population, in addition to the United Nations personnel on the ground. I call upon all parties to take all measures necessary to protect civilians.

41. As UNDOF consolidates its presence at Camp Faouar and continues its efforts to intensify its operations in the area of separation, it remains critical that the safety and security of United Nations personnel be assured. The circumstances under which the troops and military observers are operating remain complex and challenging, and require continued vigilance and risk mitigation measures. I renew my call on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to fulfil its primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. I also renew my call on countries with

influence to strongly and urgently convey to the armed groups in the UNDOF area of operation the imperative to cease any action in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, bearing in mind that such actions also jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel, and to respect the freedom of United Nations personnel to carry out their clear and important mandate safely and securely. The safety and security of United Nations personnel must be ensured.

42. Both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic have stated their continued commitment to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and support for the presence of UNDOF in calling for a return to vacated positions in the area of separation. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation remains a priority for the Mission. In the next phase, conditions permitting, the deployment of a mechanized infantry company in July 2017 will enable UNDOF to commence limited patrolling from Camp Faouar into the northern part of the area of separation. I count on the continued cooperation of both parties with UNDOF in order for the Mission to advance its planning for the incremental return to operations and positions in the area of separation. As a matter of priority, the technology and equipment necessary to enhance the UNDOF observation of the area of separation and the ceasefire line, and to improve force protection, remain critical. At the same time, the parties must continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

43. It is equally important that the Security Council continue to bring to bear its influence on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate in a safe and secure manner and freely. As long as the area of separation remains militarized and the presence of armed groups and/or the Syrian Arab Armed Forces continues, UNDOF will only fulfil its mandate in a limited manner. It is essential that this issue be addressed by the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and in the wider framework of the Syrian political process. Furthermore, the reopening of the established crossing point at Qunaytirah would benefit the ability of UNDOF to implement its mandate. It is also necessary for UNDOF to continue to have at its disposal all means and resources necessary for it to return fully to the area of separation, conditions permitting.

44. The confidence and commitment of troop-contributing-countries in UNDOF remains a key factor for the Mission's ability to carry out its mandate. I continue to count on the support of troop-contributing countries as UNDOF proceeds with its planning, including in relation to the augmentation of required capabilities, in preparation for the envisaged increased operations in the area of separation. I am grateful to the Governments of Bhutan, Czechia, Fiji, Finland, India, Ireland, Nepal and the Netherlands for their contributions, their commitment and their resolve. I am also thankful to the Member States contributing military observers to UNTSO.

45. I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential, and all the more so under the prevailing circumstances. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a further period of six months, until 31 December 2017. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel has also expressed its agreement.

46. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Jai Shanker Menon, and the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership, who continue to perform the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council with efficiency and commitment under challenging circumstances.

# Annex

