



U.S. Support for Lebanon's Early Recovery

Ambassador Randall L. Tobias, Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance & USAID Administrator

Remarks at the Conference for Lebanon's Early Recovery
Stockholm, Sweden
August 31, 2006

As Prepared For Delivery

On behalf of the American people, thank you Prime Minister Persson, Foreign Minister Eliasson, and Minister for Development Cooperation Jamtin for organizing this conference. And we are all especially grateful that Prime Minister Siniora is here today. He is the unwavering advocate for the Lebanese people, and his continuing leadership will be crucial as they seek to recover and rebuild their country.

From the outbreak of this conflict, in both words and deeds the United States expressed its desire to mitigate the humanitarian hardships that conflict brought to the people of Lebanon. First, we sought to bring about an enduring cessation to the conflict.

We worked closely with our colleagues on the Security Council to pass UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Our efforts at humanitarian relief and reconstruction must support its underlying goals—changing the unstable status quo that precipitated the conflict; strengthening Lebanon's sovereign, democratic government; and ensuring lasting peace and security for the entire region.

The response to humanitarian needs in Lebanon has truly shown the international community's willingness to respond. Within days of the outbreak of violence—a team effort, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, UN agencies, and the NGO community—began operating in southern Lebanon, providing much-needed medical treatment, evacuating the injured, and saving lives under dangerous conditions. With support from the American people, the United States Government was among the donors who provided relief in the early days of the crisis.

We must build upon the work completed to date and support Lebanon's efforts to build a stable, peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future. As the independent Government of Lebanon exercises complete sovereignty and authority over its country and transitions into a long-term program of reconstruction and development, there will be a new dawn for the people it represents.

While the seeds of hope grow with each passing day, as the Lebanese Government has pointed out, much remains to be done. Today, we reiterate the United States' commitment to reinforcing democracy by supporting the Lebanese Government's efforts to meet the needs of its people through early recovery and reconstruction.

Last week, President Bush announced more than \$230 million in humanitarian, reconstruction and security assistance to Lebanon to support the rebuilding of people's lives, livelihoods, and communities—more than \$55 million of which is already on the ground in Lebanon. The United States will also be leveraging the private sector and other economic incentives to support Lebanon. We welcome the Government of Lebanon's early recovery plan, and we will join the UN, international organizations, NGOs and donors to help realize its goals.

The pledges we are making here today—including our own \$230 million commitment—must be more than numbers. We, as donors, must continue to work with the Government of Lebanon to identify ways we can support its priorities. And, once identified, we must move quickly to disburse funds in order that our good intentions quickly translate to action on the ground.

Through the actions of the United States government, the American people have demonstrated their generosity in Lebanon's hour of need, in six key areas—all identified as vital needs by the Lebanese Government. We are beginning to put into action the additional resources President Bush announced last week.

In Jbeil, the United States will rebuild the Fidar Bridge, restoring a vital link in Lebanon's coastal highway that is considered a lynchpin in the movement of traffic for commuters, industry, and tourism. This bridge is essential in the movement of emergency cargo shipments between the ports of Tripoli and Beirut, and a nerve center for the transportation and shipping industries, as well as an important connector for several roadways linking north Lebanon to the most heavily impacted areas in the South.

In the South, the United States is supporting road repairs from Marjeyoun to Nabatyeh—which are not only helping remove debris from roads vital to recovery, but injecting cash into the local economy through cash-for-work programs that benefit thousands.

Across Lebanon—from Tyre to Tripoli—the United States is already assisting thousands of people whose homes were damaged during the conflict, with tens of thousands of additional families slated to receive assistance in the coming months. Some are being reimbursed for materials needed to make quick repairs. Others will receive materials, such as tarps, for temporary repairs. For the elderly, infirm, or wounded among them, we are procuring materials and hiring local workers to assist them. For families whose homes were severely damaged, we are providing a warm, dry room, with a kitchen and toilet while they make permanent repairs to their property.

As we provide support for the Lebanese people to continue repairing their homes, the United States is also helping them ready schools for their coming school year. In Marjeyoun, for instance, we are helping remove debris, repair structural damage, and clean up schools in El Kham and Andaisse. Similar efforts are under way in Baalbek, Hasbaya, Sidon, Tyre, and Beirut. In the South, schools receiving support include the Lebaa School and the Saydoun School.

In communities that rely on the fishing industry, the conflict took a toll. Today, the United States is providing livelihood kits—including nets, hooks, and other materials—to thousands of fishermen along the coastline, from Tripoli to Nakoura, whose equipment was damaged or destroyed, and where recovery hinges on getting the fishing industry back up and running.

With U.S. assistance, local fishermen are also helping clean up the oil spill. Through cash-for-work programs, these fishermen are not only receiving income to meet immediate needs, but are supporting shore-based cleanup in Beirut (at the Port of Raouche) and Batroun—which is vital to getting Lebanon's tourism industry back on its feet.

Today's conference is an important step toward Lebanon's full recovery. We again extend our thanks to the Prime Minister and the Government of Sweden for taking the initiative to bring us together. Because together, we can help Lebanon create the conditions necessary for its people to get back to work, its children to get back to school,

and its communities to thrive.

A democratic, secure, and prosperous Lebanon is in the best interest of the entire global community. Indeed, it is our best defense against the recurrence of instability and war. The United States dedicates itself to this outcome and asks that the other participants in this conference do so as well.

Thank you very much.

Released on August 31, 2006

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.