

### Written evidence submitted by the United Nations Association of the UK (UNA-UK)

#### UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE UK (UNA-UK)

1. UNA-UK is the UK's leading independent policy authority on the UN and a UK-wide membership organisation, supporting the work of the UN and its agencies. We campaign for a strong, credible and effective UN, promoting the principles of multilateralism and adherence to international law contained in the UN Charter. UNA-UK is independent of the UN system and receives no funding from it, allowing us to be critical of the UN's decisions and activities when we need to be and enabling us to call for the organisation to be reformed so that it is better equipped to fulfil its fundamental functions.

2. UNA-UK is non-party political. Our head office in London provides policy expertise to support the advocacy work of UNA-UK members. It maintains an ongoing dialogue with UK government ministers, parliamentarians and the media on issues relating to the UN and acts as the Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN.

#### UN'S ROLE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN DISPUTE

3. UNA-UK welcomes the launch of the Committee's first Global Security Inquiry, into the situation in the Middle East. However, we are concerned at the lack of mention in the oral evidence presented to the Committee of the positive and essential role played by the UN, currently and potentially in the future, in solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The UN is central to any solution, as shown by the fact that all parties to the dispute articulate their opinions and proposals through the language of UN Security Council resolutions.

4. The UN is a member of the diplomatic Quartet, described by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as playing "a vitally important framework role in further facilitating the peace process". Ban Ki-moon has stated that he wishes to "re-energize" the Quartet process. The UN is active in Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and in surrounding areas affected by this dispute, in the fields of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and peacemaking.

5. Three UN peacekeeping missions operate in the regions surrounding Israel:

- UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF): established in 1974 following the Israeli and Syrian forces' agreement to disengage from the Golan Heights. UNDOF supervises the implementation of the agreement and related ceasefire, with 1,042 troops and an annual budget of \$39.87 million.
- UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL): originally created following the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in March 1978, UNIFIL was strengthened in August 2006. Its mandate is to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon; restore peace and security and monitor the ceasefire; assist the Lebanese government and armed forces to restore effective authority in south Lebanon; ensure humanitarian access; and assist with the return of displaced persons. UNIFIL currently has 13,058 military personnel and an annual budget of \$350.87 million.
- UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO): created in 1948 as the UN's first peacekeeping operation, UNTSO's functions have varied according to changed circumstances. UNTSO's 152 military observers are available for immediate deployment and are currently attached to UNDOF and UNIFIL, as well as being stationed in Sinai. UNTSO has an annual budget of \$29.96 million.

6. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides education, healthcare, social services and emergency aid to over 4.4 million Palestinian refugees in 59 camps in the Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In 2006, UNRWA's total budget was \$569.85 million and the UK's contribution of \$27.09 million was the fourth largest of any state. Other UN agencies providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees include the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme, World Health Organization and the UN High Commissioners for Human Rights and Refugees.

7. The UN has an active role in encouraging peacemaking initiatives and negotiations between the parties. The Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process responds to requests from the parties to the dispute and supports negotiations and the implementation of political agreements. The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People provides a forum where non-governmental organisations can meet to discuss their own peacekeeping and humanitarian work.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

8. The UK, as a leading member of the EU and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, with historic ties to the region, needs to be at the centre of efforts to encourage a solution to the dispute. UNA-UK shares the view of the UN and the UK government that the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is fundamental to other conflicts in the Middle East and that its resolution would thus contribute to the handling of these other conflicts.

9. Multilateral political negotiations facilitated by the Quartet are the most appropriate means for engaging with all parties to the dispute. The Quartet should focus on the political horizons of a future settlement between all regional actors, based on the three principles of recognition of Israel's right to exist, commitment to non-violence and adherence to previous agreements between the parties. There should be no pre-conditions to the opening of negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority.

10. The Quartet should welcome the Arab Peace Initiative, described by Ban Ki-moon as "one of the important pillars of the peace process in the Middle East". The Quartet members should work constructively with other Middle East states, including the "Arab Quartet" of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

11. The UK government, acting within the UN and the EU, should do all it can to support the work of the Quartet and to engage with other disputes within the Middle East, including those involving Syria and Iran. The long-term aim to create a nuclear-free zone within the Middle East should be pursued actively.

8 May 2007

#### Letter to Chris Clark, United Nations Mine Action Service, Lebanon from the Committee Specialist

#### GLOBAL SECURITY: MIDDLE EAST

The Foreign Affairs Committee was pleased to be able to meet yourself and your colleagues in Lebanon earlier this year. The Committee was particularly interested in your analysis of the failure rates of cluster munitions, based on the work that you have carried out in Lebanon. I believe you told us that the rates were as follows:

"Dumb" cluster munitions: approximately 30% failure rate;

"Smart" cluster munitions: approximately 10% failure rate.

I would be most grateful if you could confirm whether we have recollected these figures correctly. Please do let us have your response in writing, as the Committee would like to be able to use the failure rates as evidence for its inquiry into the UK Government's policy towards the Middle East. The Committee would also welcome any further comments that you wish to make about the use of cluster munitions in Lebanon.

It would be useful to receive your written reply by 23 May 2007. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

8 May 2007

#### Memorandum submitted by CAABU (Council for Arab-British Understanding)

This submission looks generally at the current state of security in the region and focuses on how the UK has so far sought to handle this and suggest areas that need further examination.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

##### *The security situation in the Middle East*

1. The Middle East is experiencing several simultaneous actual or probable crises.
2. Iraq is the most dangerous immediate threat to regional security.
3. The Arab-Israeli conflict continues and chances for peace are limited. Additional clashes cannot be ruled out. The Palestinian Authority areas are facing an impending humanitarian disaster.
4. The fragmentation of ethnic and sectarian identities coupled with increased religious radicalisation poses a long-term risk to the region and beyond.
5. Any military attack on Iran would in all likelihood make the situation worse rather than better.
6. Anger with the West, particularly the US and the UK, is at a dangerously high level. There is little trust in what western politicians say.
7. The terrorist threat remains genuine. Al Qaida linked organisations and networks are active, increasingly effective, and successful in recruiting additional supporters and funds. There is an increased threat to British targets.
8. Political and economic reforms remain slow. The region requires significant extra economic growth to cater for a young population.