



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

Provisional

8606th meeting

Wednesday, 28 August 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Moriko
	Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Germany	Mr. Schulz
	Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	South Africa	Mr. Mabhongo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Twenty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2019/632)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2470 (2019) (S/2019/660)

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19-26430 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Twenty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2019/632)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2470 (2019) (S/2019/660)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, to participate in this meeting.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert is joining today's meeting via video tele-conference from The Hague.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/632, which contains the twenty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), and document S/2019/660, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2470 (2019).

I now give the floor to Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: I would like to begin by recalling the historic importance of the Security Council's visit to Iraq on 29 June. On that day in 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) declared its so-called caliphate. While that is a grim memory, during the Council's visit we instead celebrated Iraqi freedom and sovereignty and saluted the enormous sacrifices made in the fight against ISIL. The Council delivered important, well-received assurances of its continued support to Iraq and its people. That was highly appreciated by many in Iraq.

It may be unusual to immediately switch to funding concerns but, with the Council's well-received assurances in mind, I feel the need once again to share our concerns regarding the continued underfunding of both the Funding Facility for Stabilization as well as the humanitarian response plan, with gaps of over \$300 million and \$500 million, respectively.

If the Council will allow me, therefore, I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere hope for the ongoing and generous support of the international community. Progress has been made, but the road ahead is long and complex. Right now, due to the continued underfunding I just mentioned, Iraq's post-conflict humanitarian programming is being hindered. For example, vital health-care services are being suspended, schools for the internally displaced are being shuttered and food distribution cycles are being interrupted. Moreover, around 1.6 million internally displaced persons are still desperately awaiting better times, are still waiting to return to their homes in safety and dignity.

Do not get me wrong: without a doubt, lots of good work has been done. Thanks to the many donor contributions, houses, roads, bridges and power lines have been rebuilt, to name but a few examples. And yes, 4.3 million people have returned home, but the pace has slowed, and outstanding needs are most acute in the health, electricity and water sectors.

Understandably, donors have been asking the Government of Iraq to demonstrate shared ownership by taking part in the financing of this work. I am pleased to report that, moments ago, the Government signed a cost-sharing agreement to begin making its own contributions to the Funding Facility for Stabilization.

Let me also briefly refer to the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, which took place almost a year and a half ago. The Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme is being implemented throughout the country, and resource mobilization efforts have yielded almost half of the required funding so far. We will continue to encourage development partners to fund the programme, particularly through the United Nations trust fund.

Returning to politics, Iraq's leadership is hard at work building on the progress made to date. As discussed during the Council's visit to Iraq, painting a grim picture is never a goal in itself. More importantly, it is not justified. Also, we cannot simply judge the

current situation without putting it in the context of Iraq's past. Decades of trouble continue to impact the present, and we have not seen the end of it yet. It is equally important, however, not to sugar-coat the current circumstances. We can all agree on Iraq's great potential, but perseverance is key to making the most of that potential.

Clearly, one cannot expect the Iraqi Government to create miracles overnight in dealing with the legacy of the past and the many challenges of the present. The harsh reality is that the Government needs time to fight the many narrow partisan interests and to deliver.

Just as essentially, political parties and other actors need to arrive at a common understanding that the country's interests should be prioritized above all else. Ultimately, it must be clear that a Government cannot act alone. It is a joint responsibility.

As the Council knows, the federal Cabinet is now fully formed aside from the Ministry of Education. Significant progress has been made on senior appointments to parliamentary committees. The Kurdistan Regional Government is also up and running, with the critical resources portfolio still to be filled. I note that three ministers of that Regional Government are women, as is the Speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. At the federal level, unfortunately, not a single woman has not yet been appointed.

The good news is that the progress in the both Government formation processes in both Baghdad and Erbil has created a positive momentum to advance negotiations between the two capitals, as also demonstrated by the establishment of a high-level joint committee.

I cannot deny that the expectations are high, in particular on key files, including Kirkuk, Sinjar and revenue-sharing. On the latter, it is important that all parties acknowledge that, instead of counterproductive annual budget battles, a comprehensive, lasting agreement is far more productive. It goes without saying that I am always ready to offer the good offices of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in order to advance discussions towards consensus, followed by action.

Regarding Kirkuk, I am very encouraged by the goodwill demonstrated by all parties involved to finally address the normalization of the situation in Kirkuk.

As for Sinjar, again earlier this month I travelled to the region, where, unfortunately, I continued to witness great devastation and slow progress on the ground. Rival security actors and the lack of a unified administration remain the main obstacles for progress. That situation also greatly restricts humanitarian action. I therefore continue to appeal to all those feeling challenged, the federal and Kurdish authorities in particular. Indeed, it is high time to put aside partisan interests to bridge differences and to place without further delay the needs of the people first.

Turning to the economy, the Government is increasingly recognizing the urgency of reform, notably in broadening the revenue base beyond hydrocarbons and in increasing the role of the private sector in areas ranging from infrastructure development to job creation.

Discussions at the senior-most levels focus on enhancing governance, better managing oil revenue, protecting the investment environment from corruption and reforming the banking sector to pave the way for more foreign direct investment and public-private partnerships. That is becoming more urgent, especially as a higher budget deficit looms with rising expenditures and oil price volatility. Within that context, we encourage the Iraqi Government to accelerate its structural reform, fostering macroeconomic and financial stability, as well as promoting sustainable, inclusive growth.

In terms of regional politics, we continue to operate in a perilous context. Yet the Iraqi leadership must again be commended for its unwavering commitment to multilateral diplomacy. With great dedication, Iraqi leaders are tirelessly engaging regional and international actors to ensure that their country is a meeting ground for stability, not a venue for proxy conflicts. How right they are. With that in mind, we should be lucid and recognize that current tensions could well deal a huge blow to all national and international endeavours to rebuild a stable and prosperous Iraq. We must therefore spare no effort in avoiding that prospect.

I am also very encouraged by the Government's determination to bring all armed actors under State control. Recent orders have been met with broad support across the political spectrum. That is good news, but we are in the early days of implementation and the next phase will prove crucial. Clearly, zero tolerance for any armed actor outside State control is the way forward.

Further work on security sector reform will be necessary, as an effective, efficient and financially sustainable security sector is critical to protecting Iraq against existing and emerging threats. With the Ministers of the Interior, Defence and Justice in place, I sincerely hope that the Government will now speed up the reconfiguration of its national security architecture in terms of structure, capabilities and resources.

Also important is the rapid enactment of the joint security mechanism. It will pave the way for joint operations along disputed boundaries. Inadequate coordination will continue to give Da'esh a margin of manoeuvre. In other words, enhanced operational performance on the ground between the federal and Kurdish regional forces is not a nice to have but a necessity.

Within the context of domestic security, I would also like to commend the bravery of Iraqi security forces. In the aftermath of ISIL's territorial defeat, they continue to hunt down the remaining ISIL fighters, for example within the framework of Operation Will of Victory, carried out throughout the country in the past weeks.

The issue of returning ISIL fighters, including their family members, from Syria to Iraq continues to pose major challenges. Unfortunately, we still have no clarity on numbers, a start date, screening/security arrangements and/or hosting facilities upon return. As I have stressed before, if not suitably addressed, this issue has the potential to impact not only Iraq but also the wider region and far beyond.

Also important to note is the fact that issues of due process and accountability cannot be limited only to the courtroom. A structured dialogue is required to precisely define how the Government of Iraq will handle this process, which will in turn inform the modalities of United Nations assistance.

I would also like to emphasize the paramount importance of robust safeguards for detention, due process and fair trials. Complying with human rights obligations would not only demonstrate commitment to justice and accountability, but it is also a necessary building block for reconciliation and social cohesion. What is more, it would reduce the risk of history repeating itself. We are well aware that a variety of grievances, including unfair trials and detainee abuse, have been exploited by ISIL to fuel its violent agenda. Whether we like it or not, at this moment in time, too

many communities continue to feel marginalized. As a consequence, many people remain vulnerable to extremist messaging. For me that was one of the most important reasons to establish a permanent presence in Mosul. I am pleased to report that our Mosul office will open its doors in early September.

Unfortunately, as discussed before, rampant corruption is not being wiped out at once. As I said last time (see S/PV.8531), achieving tangible results is crucial. A recent call to lift the immunity of members of Parliament accused of corruption could be a move in the right direction. But again, the final result is what ultimately matters.

With regard to the elections, the Iraqi Council of Representatives recently amended the Governorate Council Electoral Law. I must say that certain provisions are of great concern, as they could lead to the disenfranchisement of many otherwise eligible voters. In addition, the transparency and accountability of electoral institutions and processes are not sufficiently guaranteed at present. While the elections expected in April 2020 are critical and overdue, I have made it clear that free, fair and credible elections are key to the revival of public trust. In other words, UNAMI will continue to highlight the importance of guaranteeing the right of universal suffrage and the need for the transparency and accountability of institutions and processes — all key to the inclusiveness and credibility of the elections.

With your permission, Madam President, I would now like to turn to the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. I am pleased to report a significant breakthrough. Samples of human remains exhumed in March from a burial site in Iraq's Muthanna governorate have now been confirmed as belonging to some of the Kuwaitis we have been seeking. DNA analysis is continuing on additional human remains. I can also confirm that, earlier today, more than 40,000 Kuwaiti books belonging to the Amiri and national archives were handed over by the Government of Iraq to the Kuwaiti authorities.

In that context, as always, I would like to commend the ongoing constructive cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the invaluable assistance of the Tripartite Commission. I truly hope that the recent discoveries will finally bring some relief

to the families of the missing, to whom we extend our deepest sympathies.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that Iraq's daunting challenges neither arose overnight nor are solely the product of Iraqi actions. As such, they will not be resolved tomorrow. In other words, Iraqis must press ahead in unity and, just as important, with an engaged international community by their side.

The President: I thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for another informative briefing on the gains of the Government of Iraq in increasing stability and prosperity for its people.

To achieve the enduring defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and successfully stabilize those areas formally under its control, all communities in Iraq must feel secure. Security depends on removing destabilizing armed groups from liberated areas and replacing them with professional security forces that are responsive to Baghdad and enforce the rule of law. We strongly support the full implementation of Executive Order 237, announced by Prime Minister Al-Mahdi in July, which seeks to bring all popular mobilization forces under the exclusive control of the Government of Iraq.

As the Council knows well, the United States has long been concerned about Iran's malign activities and its destabilizing impact on the region, including in Iraq. Recent events have demonstrated that our concerns are well-founded. Iran's sponsorship of destabilizing armed groups in Iraq, operating outside Government control, undermines Iraq's sovereignty and threatens the safety of civilians. We call for those destabilizing armed groups to be removed from civilian centres and replaced with professional security forces that are responsive to Baghdad and responsible for enforcing the rule of law.

United States forces operate in Iraq at the invitation of the Iraqi Government. We support Iraqi sovereignty and have repeatedly spoken out against any potential actions by malign actors inciting violence in Iraq. The Government of Iraq has the right to control its own internal security and the responsibility to protect itself

against the corrosive effects of armed groups whose actions jeopardize Iraq's recovery and regional stability.

We welcome progress on Government formation but note, as the Special Representative has, that none of the Cabinet positions and only two positions on parliamentary committees are filled by women. We urge the Government of Iraq to appoint qualified female candidates to senior decision-making positions.

Continued action on anti-corruption measures is essential for long-term stability and economic growth in Iraq. We urge the Government of Iraq to strengthen its efforts going forward.

We welcome the continued cooperation between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on provincial council election preparations scheduled for next April. The amendments to the electoral law passed in July by the Council of Representatives are a significant step forward in preparing for those elections. We urge the Government of Iraq to expand and expedite its efforts to register eligible Iraqi voters with the biometric voter registration system in order to prevent disenfranchisement. Also important to the long-term stability of Iraq is the commitment by, and ability of, the country's leaders to deliver essential civil and social services to its people, including health care, education and infrastructure.

Such efforts will help restore public trust in Government institutions and are crucial to paving the way for stability and prosperity for all Iraqis. We continue to prioritize restoring key services and infrastructure in areas liberated from ISIS control. Additional donations are urgently needed for the Funding Facility for Stabilization of the United Nations Development Programme and, as we announced earlier this year, the United States will contribute \$100 million to that effort. We encourage other members of the international community to also step up and do their part. We welcome today's announcement by the Government of Iraq of its \$33 million pledge.

Regional integration is a prerequisite to securing a peaceful and prosperous future for Iraq. Kuwait and other Arab neighbours have paved the way in recent months. We welcome and support UNAMI's role in that effort, including the signing earlier this month of a memorandum of understanding between UNAMI and the Government of Iraq to establish the Iraq Reconstruction and Recovery Trust Fund, in support of

Iraq's own recovery and development framework. That is a positive step towards urgently addressing Iraq's immediate humanitarian stabilization responses and longer-term development needs by the international community, including improving the fulfilment of international pledges from the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, held in 2018.

We support continued efforts by the Government of Iraq, UNAMI and the International Committee of the Red Cross to address the unresolved issue of Kuwaiti missing persons and property from the first Gulf War. The recent discovery of human remains in Samawah and efforts to positively identify them are a step towards reconciliation and healing between Kuwait and Iraq. We commend ongoing efforts to improve relations between Baghdad and Erbil. We note with concern, however, the continued disagreements over oil authorities and revenue-sharing and urge the Iraqi Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resolve those issues as quickly as possible.

Support for threatened religious and ethnic communities remains a top priority for the United States. Iraq's diverse diversity is critical to its richness and strength as a nation. We encourage UNAMI to continue engaging those communities across Iraq. We urge the Government of Iraq to make urgent progress in support of them, including by preventing armed groups from blocking their return to their homes and villages.

As Iraq continues to make progress, efforts to stabilize areas liberated from ISIS, urgently address the plight of internally displaced persons and ISIS family members and further integrate Iraqis into the surrounding region must all be accelerated. With UNAMI's continued engagement, those efforts can help steer Iraq towards a bright, prosperous and stable future.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): First of all, let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing. She has Germany's full support, as does the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Germany also continues to stand by the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people.

Since 2014, Germany has contributed more than €1.7 billion, and we remain committed to supporting Iraq. As the Special Representative pointed out, a lot has been done and much has been achieved but, at the same time, it is true that stabilization, recovery and reconstruction can succeed only if all actors — including

the Government of Iraq, of course — intensify their efforts and extend their financial support. In that context, we very much welcome the signing of a cost-sharing agreement by the Government of Iraq so as to ensure it contributes its share to the funding requirements, as mentioned by the Special Representative in her briefing.

We also welcome the fact that the formation of the Government has almost been achieved. We trust that Iraq's political leaders will use the momentum that has now emerged in order to fill the remaining vacancy. As we heard today from the Special Representative, at the federal level, not a single woman has been appointed to a leadership position yet. We would encourage the Iraqi Government to appoint women to senior decision-making positions, too.

Given the near completion of its formation, the Iraqi Government can now focus on its main task of implementing the necessary reforms, reconciliation, enhancing the provision of public services, addressing the basic needs of all its citizens and improving the lives of all Iraqis. Germany welcomes the steps taken by the Iraqi Government and the Parliament so far, and in the fight against corruption in particular. We urge all relevant parties to continue their efforts in the fight against corruption, which is crucial to building viable and responsive State institutions and reviving trust on the side of the public, as well as potential foreign investors. We also welcome the decision taken to strengthen State control over all armed forces and call for the implementation of those decisions.

With regard to the relationship between the capital and the Kurdistan Regional Government, we also welcome the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the positive developments regarding relations between Baghdad and Erbil. We call upon both sides to further improve relations between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government in order to find sustainable solutions for the outstanding unresolved issues, in particular with regard to oil and revenue-sharing.

Accountability is a prerequisite for reconciliation and for the return of the almost 2 million remaining internally displaced persons in Iraq. There can be no sustainable peace or successful post-conflict recovery without justice. That includes accountability for sexual and gender-based violence and a survivor-centred approach in line with resolution 2467 (2019).

Let me also reiterate our full support for the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its Special Adviser, Mr. Karim Khan. The work to be undertaken by the Investigative Team will be vital for the effective prosecution of ISIL crimes. It is crucial that all judicial proceedings be fully in line with standards of due process and fair trial guarantees in accordance with Iraq's international human rights obligations. That includes the fair treatment of alleged ISIL defendants and their families.

Regarding the regional aspects mentioned by the Special Representative, and on a more general note, we need to avoid further regional escalation. It is essential to conduct further work on de-escalation and the reduction of regional tensions. We need to maintain dialogue, in particular among regional partners. Such dialogue and de-escalation are also crucial for Iraq's own stability. Therefore, we commend the Iraqi Government for its active engagement and constructive role in that regard.

Before concluding, let me say a final word on the issue of climate and security. Iraq is one of the countries in the Middle East that is most prone to climate change-related security risks, such as those triggered by prolonged heat waves, increased rainfall variability and extended periods of drought. Since May, 40,000 acres of farmland have been on fire, causing the death of 13 civilians. Those fires were mostly caused by extreme hot and dry weather conditions. We would therefore encourage UNAMI to focus its regional dialogue not only on energy, the environment, water and refugees, but also on the adverse effects of climate change on the ecology and, consequently, the stability of the region.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her valuable and comprehensive briefing. The State of Kuwait appreciates and supports the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in accordance with its mandate and pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We have reviewed the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/632) on the progress made in fulfilling the mandate of UNAMI, including developments related to the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives,

Kuwait's bilateral relations with the Republic of Iraq have seen continued positive developments.

Steps have been taken by the leaderships of both countries that reflect the concepts of fraternity and neighbourliness. The bilateral visits at the highest level that have taken place, including a visit by the Amir of the country, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in June, as well as meetings of joint bilateral committees, are an important indicator of the promotion of such cooperation and the closing of an old painful chapter and the opening a new one of productive partnership, which will translate into the resolution of outstanding issues.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein regime, the State of Kuwait has provided all kinds of support and assistance to the brotherly Iraqi people, in spite of the circumstances that hindered us from doing so in the past and while realizing our deep-rooted interests. We look forward to promoting them by seizing promising opportunities to elevate our relations so as to bring about the progress and prosperity that our friendly peoples aspire to.

In that regard, we commend Iraq's commitment to implementing all of its remaining outstanding international obligations towards the State of Kuwait in accordance with the relevant Council resolutions. We stand ready to provide support and assistance to accelerate the implementation of such obligations, in particular with regard to humanitarian commitments related to the remaining missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals since the liberation of the State of Kuwait in 1991. Two hundred and thirty-six of the 605 missing persons have been identified.

The suffering of the families of missing hostages continues, but we hope that the fates of those remaining missing persons will soon be resolved, given the latest developments in the exhumation and analysis of the remains of missing Kuwaiti nationals. We hope that more potential burial sites will be identified so as to eventually be able to bring closure to this humanitarian issue. Kuwait, for its part, has spared no effort to lend support to the efforts made. We believe that it is possible to make progress if we intensify actions and implement the agreed programmes and plans. We urge Iraq to continue its constructive cooperation with the Tripartite Commission and its technical subcommittee under the leadership of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). We appreciate and commend the important role of the ICRC in that respect.

With regard to missing Kuwaiti property, in particular the national archives — the whereabouts of which are still unknown — progress is still limited. We welcome the efforts of the Iraqi authorities, which handed over 42,000 books to the State of Kuwait this morning, of the nearly 120,000 books that were owned by the National Library and the University of the State of Kuwait, under the supervision of the United Nations. We hope that cooperation continues in order to restore the property seized during the Iraqi occupation, especially the national archives.

We have also followed developments in Iraq with great interest. There has been significant progress recently at the security, political and economic stability levels, despite the challenges that Iraq has been facing. We witnessed that progress at first-hand during the visit to Iraq co-chaired by Kuwait and the United States of America at the end of June. We are cognizant that the coming period is important for Iraq to surmount the challenges it is facing. However, we are confident that Iraq is moving with steady steps towards meeting its aspirations in order to avoid relapsing into the turmoil of the past.

We reaffirm our support for the Iraqi Government in implementing its reform programmes. That requires collective efforts to promote national reconciliation among Iraqis of all backgrounds in order to prioritize the public interest, address corruption, improve the quality of public services and enforce security with a view to restoring Iraq to its well-deserved position at the regional and international levels. We welcome the role of UNAMI in supporting those efforts in line with its mandate.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait stands ready to continue working in cooperation with Iraq during this stage in order to support efforts at rebuilding and reconstruction, as well as offsetting the destruction in Iraq pursuant to the outcomes of the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, which was held in Kuwait. We encourage all countries that participated in the Conference to honour their commitments. We look forward to cooperating and coordinating with the Iraqi Government towards establishing a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of those commitments so as to meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and for the valuable work she, together

with her team of professionals, is doing at the helm of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

First, with regard to the political aspect, we acknowledge the recent progress made in terms of the appointment of the Ministers of Defence, the Interior and Justice, thereby achieving an almost complete Cabinet. However, we regret that no woman has been selected for any of those posts, despite the fact that there were two women candidates for the Ministry of Education. In the same vein, we also welcome the agreement on the establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government. We applaud the appointment of three women to ministerial posts and, for the first time, of a woman to the presidency of the regional parliament. We believe that those significant advances on the political front will allow the authorities to finally implement their Government plan aimed at promoting the stability, development and security of the Iraqi people.

We hope that efforts to improve the relations between the federal Government and the Kurdish Regional Government will continue and that the two will be able to definitively iron out their differences with regard to oil revenues and security-related arrangements, including the abolition of customs control points. Similarly, we welcome the initiative to take measures to attract investment to the country as this is a fundamental tool for boosting economic growth and job creation and, consequently, the population's quality of life.

Concerning the security aspect, we understand that the resurgence of terrorism in Iraq poses an obvious threat to the peace and security of that country and the region. Therefore, we find the vibrant anti-terrorism campaign rolled out by the national authorities commendable but believe that greater regional and international cooperation is necessary in order to combat terrorism and prevent it from regaining its past momentum.

As for the humanitarian aspect, we would like to appeal to the national and local authorities alike to work in a coordinated manner and to improve the bureaucratic processes for allowing humanitarian organizations to deliver in a timely manner the aid required by millions of people who remain displaced. In addition, we would like to highlight the commendable work of the Mine Action Coordination Centre in mitigating the dangers of explosive remnants of war in Iraq. We also applaud the integration of women in demining activities, and

the fact that there is an equal representation of men and women in the composition of the teams.

With regard to unresolved matters with Kuwait, we are pleased to note the steps taken as a result of the investigations following the excavations carried out in Samawah district last March. We acknowledge the efforts of the members of the Tripartite Mechanism to move forward on the search for prisoners and missing persons reported by Kuwait and the return of human remains, assets and the national archives.

In conclusion, we are concerned that tensions among certain countries, including in the region, are setting Iraq up as a stage for clashes between those countries. Accordingly, we encourage those countries to reflect on their position and make concrete efforts to defuse the tensions and restore the desired stability.

Mr. Moriko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes this briefing on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and congratulates Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, for her informative briefing on the latest developments and continuing challenges to peace and stability in Iraq.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the spirit of compromise that has prevailed in the Iraqi political class and has made it possible to fill the vacant posts of the Ministers of Justice, the Interior and Defence. Côte d'Ivoire encourages Iraqi political actors to continue along that path with a view to appointing a consensus choice to head the Ministry of Education, whose mission is crucial, particularly in war-affected areas. Forming a complete Government should make it possible to meet basic social needs, especially in the areas of health, education, water and electricity. The election of the chairs, vice-chairs and rapporteurs of the parliamentary committees, an essential cog in the institutional machinery, is also to be welcomed.

My country urges the Iraqi authorities to ensure that the gender dimension is effectively taken into account in their peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, with regard to the particularly alarming humanitarian situation in some regions of Iraq, my country would like to urge the international community to pursue its efforts to mobilize the necessary resources to finance the 2019 humanitarian response plan, amounting to \$701.2 million, of which only 41.1 per cent has been raised so far.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the cooperation between the federal Government and the Kurdish Regional Government and hopes that dialogue will be maintained in order to find mutually satisfactory solutions to the issues of oil resource sharing and Kurdistan's debt.

Concerning the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which remains active despite its military defeat, my country calls for substantial support to be provided to the Iraqi forces in terms of capacity-building. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the constructive cooperation between the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, UNAMI and the Government of Iraq. In my country's view, it is imperative to enforce the principle of accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh, in keeping with the provisions of resolution 2379 (2017), in order to guarantee victims' rights through fair proceedings. In addition, Côte d'Ivoire calls for continued cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait in order to find a definitive solution to the issue of missing Kuwaiti nationals and the return of seized assets.

Given the multifaceted challenges facing Iraq, my country would like to reiterate its call to the international community to continue its support for the Iraqi Government in its post-crisis reconstruction efforts.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its full support for UNAMI and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for their continued commitment to peace, long-term stability and development in Iraq.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by thanking Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing.

Iraq is at a crossroads in its history. Much progress has been made, but many challenges remain. Belgium welcomes the establishment of the federal Government, now nearly complete. To meet the many challenges, Iraq needs a strong and inclusive Government, supported by robust institutions and well-functioning public services. Belgium also calls for the appointment of women to decision-making positions.

Belgium encourages the Government to continue its efforts to implement its programme. Executive Order 237, which stipulates that the popular mobilization forces should be under the exclusive control of the Government, is an important step forward in particular.

Belgium looks forward to the rigorous implementation of that order by all parties concerned. Moreover, as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Belgium encourages the Government of Iraq to develop, sign and implement an action plan on this issue, with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). That would be a significant step towards delisting Iraq from the annex to the Secretary-General's annual report.

We also welcome the Government's efforts in the fight against corruption. Other important challenges remain, namely, the economic situation and the business environment. Providing basic services to the population and creating jobs are important factors to ensure the continued support of the people. The apparent calm in the south of the country, compared to recent years, is a positive development, but continued attention is needed. In addition, given the strong influence of the effects of climate change on Iraq and its population, it is desirable that UNAMI step up its role in that area.

As Iraq looks to the future, reconciliation is of paramount importance. That must continue and families must be allowed to return to their communities and resume normal lives. We support UNAMI's important mission to promote justice and the protection of human rights.

Lastly, the security sector and its reform remain a challenge for the Iraqi authorities. Although the Islamic State has been defeated militarily, the causes that allowed it to develop remain. We must therefore do all we can to prevent the re-emergence of the terrorist group.

Finally, Iraq and its people can only flourish anew in a context of domestic and regional stability. The fundamental principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity should guide actions. To that end, we call for the joint commitment of the region and the international community.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her insightful briefing.

We begin by highlighting the progress towards the full establishment of the federal Government in Iraq, with the recent appointment of the Ministers of Justice, the Interior and Defence. That demonstrates that it is possible to find political points of convergence, which

is the responsibility of all parties, as mentioned by the Special Representative.

However, we are concerned that the appointment for the Ministry of Education is still pending. It is desirable that the post be taken up by a woman, which, we believe would positively contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Iraq. We recall that this aspiration was voiced by the mission that visited Iraq at the end of June, during which the Council reaffirmed its full commitment to the country's reconciliation and stabilization process and that of the region as a whole.

We welcome the fact that the political process is also accompanied by efforts aimed at Iraq's reconstruction, particularly with regard to promoting investment in basic infrastructure and reviving the economy. We therefore welcome the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations to establish the Iraq Reconstruction and Recovery Trust Fund, which will help best channel the funds pledged by the international community at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq and attract new investments. That must go hand in hand with the Government's firm commitment to combating corruption.

We also believe that the support of the international community is crucial to combating the terrorist activities of the remaining members of Da'esh, including ensuring accountability for the atrocity crimes committed. We therefore join others in our support for the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, whose work will not only bolster the fight against impunity but also contribute to the reconciliation of the country.

We also welcome the issuing of Executive Order 237, concerning the popular mobilization forces, so that the fight against the Da'esh remnants can be carried out jointly, with a centralized framework and officers fully committed to the vision of the State.

We also commend the readiness of the Iraqi Government to contribute to regional stabilization efforts and to the establishment of a conflict-free space by fostering friendly relations and overcoming tensions through dialogue with neighbouring States. In that connection, we welcome the progress made with regard to the property, national archives and Kuwaiti missing persons, on the basis of joint cooperation between the two countries.

We conclude by highlighting the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in all these processes, especially its initiatives to involve Iraqi youth in efforts to promote peace and development, and in its contribution to the necessary humanitarian work in the country.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, for her insightful briefing, which provided a comprehensive update on developments in Iraq, as well as on the work of all the teams of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which I particularly commend.

I would first like to stress the importance of working to consolidate the current positive momentum in Iraq. That is one of the main conclusions of the Council's visit to Baghdad at the end of June. The continued efforts of the Iraqi authorities to open a new chapter in their country's history should be welcomed and encouraged. That is why, following the elections, which strengthened the democratic process in Iraq, appointments to three of four vacant federal Government ministerial posts is another positive step. We also welcome the latest appointments to head the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The Prime Minister's issuance of Executive Order 237, which aims to strengthen State control over the popular mobilization forces, also supports the stabilization process. The order's provisions must now be implemented to be effective. The positive political momentum must continue in order to meet the expectations of the Iraqi population, particularly with regard to public services, and to improve the investment climate, within the framework of a united, federal and democratic Iraq that respects all its constituents. In that regard, we encourage Baghdad and Erbil to continue their discussions with a view to sustainably resolving the remaining points of disagreement.

Consolidating those gains is essential now that Iraq is at a crossroads, which means that Iraq must be vigilant and take action with regard to at least four points, which are challenges that Iraq must overcome but for which it can also count on our assistance.

My first point concerns the challenge that the current regional tensions represent for stability in Iraq. Priority must therefore be accorded to de-escalation through dialogue. We must spare no effort to ensure

that Iraq does not revert to becoming another theatre of a broader regional confrontation and risk jeopardizing all the progress made in recent months. In that regard, France fully supports the efforts of the Iraqi authorities to facilitate regional dialogue and strengthen balanced diplomacy. France recalls its commitment to respecting the sovereignty and integrity of Iraq.

My second point concerns the threat that Da'esh continues to pose to the stability of Iraq at a time when it is reorganizing through clandestine cells. In particular, there is an urgent need to reach security and governance agreements in disputed territories where the terrorist group is taking advantage of the political and security vacuum to re-establish itself.

Thirdly, the stabilization and reconstruction of the country, as well as genuine national reconciliation, remain crucial to the long-term stabilization of the country. In that regard, France welcomes the signing of an agreement between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations on the establishment of a fund to disburse contributions towards the reconstruction of Iraq announced at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018, and we call on the Iraqi authorities and all our partners to honour the commitments they made at the Conference. The reconstruction process stalled in 2019; we must work to revive that momentum.

Lastly, particular attention must be accorded to the areas liberated from Da'esh, as well as to creating the necessary conditions for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons to their places of origin. The Iraqi-led stabilization and reconstruction process for the benefit of the Iraqi people is necessary to ensure a lasting victory against terrorism and foster reconciliation among the various sectors of the Iraqi population. Finally, I welcome the attention that the Government of Iraq is willing to devote to the fight against corruption and call on it to redouble its efforts to that end.

In that context, international partners must stand alongside the Iraqi authorities more than ever. The Security Council's unanimous support for the Iraqi authorities is key to supporting Iraq at this critical juncture. The Council's first visit to Iraq in June was an important milestone in that regard. The international community must also continue its support, in particular to meet the country's humanitarian, stabilization and reconstruction needs.

I also wish to reiterate France's support for the work of UNAMI and the Special Representative in supporting the Iraqi authorities, in particular the Mission's efforts to promote the active participation of women in the public arena, human rights and dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil. We fully endorse the priorities set out by the Special Representative. The announcement of the opening of the Mosul office next month is also encouraging news.

In conclusion, for its part, France will continue to fully support the Iraqi authorities, first, in the area of security, given the threat posed by Da'esh, and, secondly, in the area of humanitarian concerns and stabilization. That is the purpose of our nearly €1-billion loan for reconstruction and our work to strengthen Iraqi State institutions.

France will also continue to work towards achieving lasting and inclusive reconciliation. The fight against impunity is a crucial factor in that regard, and that is the purpose of our support for the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, whose mandate will be renewed in September. It is also important to shed light on the fate of missing persons, including during the Gulf War, in accordance with resolution 2107 (2013).

Lastly, I recall that, in the autumn, France will hold another follow-up conference on the Paris Action Plan, which was adopted at the 2015 International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for her very detailed, clear and comprehensive briefing this morning.

Despite the progress observed since the successful holding of last year's elections, Equatorial Guinea continues to be concerned about the difficulties that have delayed the formation of a new Iraqi Government this year. However, in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/660), we note with satisfaction the recent consultations among Iraqi political leaders which helped to move the process forward with new appointments in almost every ministerial departments to be filled. We hope that, in the same spirit of collaboration and cooperation, the

Minister of Education will be appointed as soon as possible in order to fully conclude that process.

The completion of the formation of the Iraqi Government is a necessary step for the new Executive to restore the trust and support of the Iraqi people. The Government will now be able to focus fully on implementing its programme to improve basic services, promoting reconstruction and economic development and fostering a secure environment.

In order to firmly support the country's current approach towards development and avoid the mistrust of the Iraqi people, it is necessary to carefully manage the country's revenues and resources. In that regard, we welcome the continued focus of the Government of Iraq on combating corruption and enhancing transparency, as demonstrated, for example, by publicly reporting on the implementation of the Government's programme. However, the Supreme Council for Combating Corruption, which has an important role to play in that regard, should be further strengthened.

We highlight the appointment of three women Ministers in the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government, which is a very significant development. We therefore encourage the political leaders of the Kurdistan region to take this opportunity to fill the vacancies in the remaining Ministries and focus on implementing the priorities of the Regional Government, as well as further improving its relations with Baghdad through dialogue.

With regard to the security situation, we condemn in the strongest terms the asymmetric attacks that the remaining elements of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continue to carry out on the population and the security forces in various parts of the country. We commend the Iraqi security forces that have conducted large-scale clearance operations in the liberated areas by arresting or neutralizing terrorist fighters, defusing improvised explosive devices and exposing ISIL hideouts, tunnels and weapons caches.

It is also important to take measures to stop terrorists from returning to places already liberated and to provide a secure environment so that all those displaced by terrorist activities can return safely to their homes. Those responsible for atrocities and terrorist crimes must be held accountable and face justice, without which genuine reconciliation will be difficult. The reintegration of former combatants is also a subject that requires careful analysis in order to

find a definitive solution to what is a very delicate and complicated issue for the entire region.

The ongoing regional tensions remains a cause for serious concern, in particular with regard to their possible impact on Iraq. In that regard, we encourage Iraq, its neighbours and international partners to take concrete steps towards and continue addressing existing problems and disputes in the region through dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

Regarding the funding shortfall of \$335 million of the \$701 million needed to implement the 2019 humanitarian response plan and stabilization efforts, we encourage the international community to continue to support humanitarian work, which is extremely important for those most in need.

With regard to the issue of missing Kuwaitis, third-country nationals and Kuwaiti property, we await the results of the DNA analysis of the human remains exhumed in Samawah to determine whether or not they are indeed those of missing Kuwaitis. The exhumation of those remains is a significant step forward and revives the hopes of finding answers for the families of the missing. A satisfactory solution to that issue would have a very positive effect on strengthening relations between Iraq and Kuwait.

Lastly, I would like to pay tribute to UNAMI, and particularly to its Head, for the considerable efforts to support Iraqi authorities in completing their long list of reconciliation projects in the country.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for the work she has done and for her briefing.

Recently, thanks to the joint efforts of all parties, Iraq has maintained overall security and stability. Progress has been made on the formation of the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The processes of national reconciliation and reconstruction have been advancing steadily. The Council conducted its first visit to Iraq in June, thereby providing firm support to Iraq for its efforts to ensure economic recovery, peace and stability, national reconciliation and reconstruction. In the spirit of mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, Iraq is developing friendly relations with all neighbouring countries and strives to ease regional tension. In that regard, China would like to express its appreciation.

China welcomes Iraq's handover of the human remains of Kuwaitis exhumed from the Samawah burial site and expects the two sides to continue close cooperation on the matter. In the meantime, Iraq remains at a critical stage of consolidating counter-terrorism results, achieving peace and stability and taking forward national reconstruction. All parties should fully respect Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and firmly support the efforts of Iraq.

First, support for Iraqi efforts to consolidate its counter-terrorism results and safeguard its national security must continue. Although Iraq has made tremendous sacrifices in the international fight against terrorism, it continues to face the threat posed by terrorist remnants. Efforts should continue with a view to settling the issue of internally displaced persons in Iraq, in the light of the conditions and reconstruction process in the country. Iraq's handling of foreign terrorist fighters and their dependants deserves strong support. The international community should fully respect the jurisdiction of Iraq and support the country in bringing terrorists to justice in accordance with its relevant domestic law. The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant should conduct its work according to its mandate and in close consultation with the host Government.

Secondly, support for inclusive political dialogue and the national reconciliation process in Iraq should continue. China welcomes enhanced relations between the federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, looks forward to the conclusion of an agreement on oil revenues, income distribution and security arrangements as soon as possible, and welcomes the constructive role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in that regard. The international community should support and facilitate the inclusive reconciliation and harmonious coexistence of all Iraqi parties, in line with the fundamental interests and development needs of all Iraqi people. That will also have a positive effect on regional peace and stability.

Thirdly, vigorous efforts should be made to facilitate Iraq's economic recovery and expedite its reconstruction. China commends the Iraqi Government for its commitment to improving its business environment to actively attract foreign investment and for issuing its first report on the implementation

of the Government's national development plan for the period 2018-2022, which helps promote economic reconstruction and development. China welcomes the memorandum of understanding signed by UNAMI and the Iraqi Government to establish the Iraq Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Trust Fund, in support of the Government's recovery and development framework. The international community should fulfil its commitments in earnest and continue to provide support for Iraq's efforts to explore a development path compatible with its national conditions.

China supports any and all efforts that help maintain peace and stability in Iraq, combat terrorism and supports UNAMI in continuing its work according to its mandate. China will continue to actively participate in Iraq's reconstruction in sectors, such as energy and infrastructure, under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. To the best of its abilities, China will provide assistance to Iraq for its economic and social development and help Iraq achieve peace, stability and development.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): First, let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and for the excellent work that she and her team are doing on the ground in Iraq. She has our full support.

We particularly welcome the announcement of the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to establish the trust fund to support the recovery and development efforts of the Government of Iraq. We also welcome Iraq's own decision to contribute to the Fund. It will be important for the new Trust Fund to work in cooperation with the World Bank's Iraq Reform and Reconstruction Fund, which will, in turn, support Iraqi-led priorities in that area.

The Iraq issue is very different from other Middle East issues on the Council's agenda. The key challenge for us and for UNAMI is how we can best support Iraq as it seeks to rebuild and strengthen the State following the defeat of Da'esh. I agree very much with all of the priorities that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General set out today in her intervention. I would like to touch briefly on three of them.

First, the Special Representative highlighted that 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain in Iraq, all of whom have complex and acute

needs. Finding a sustainable solution for those people is a concern for all of us. We welcome the work that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is doing to support the Government of Iraq to enable the voluntary return of IDPs. We think that providing displaced people with basic services should continue to be a focus of the Government of Iraq, supported by UNAMI, in the coming months. We encourage the Government of Iraq to expedite the provision of identity documents to those people, especially to those who have no documents at all, including children.

Secondly, other speakers today have emphasized the need for a stable and accountable security apparatus in Iraq — both to prevent the resurgence of terrorism and to provide greater security for Iraqis who wish to return home. Like the United States, Peru and others, we very much welcome Prime Minister Adil Abd Al-Mahdi's executive order to bring the popular mobilization forces under State control. We look forward to the implementation of that order. UNAMI's focus on security sector reform should continue to support the Government of Iraq in ensuring that people feel safe to return home and that all members of the security services are held to account by the Government of Iraq.

Thirdly, I want to touch on the importance of building strong, independent State institutions, which will be vital to ensuring future stability in Iraq. I particularly welcome UNAMI's focus on tackling corruption and, like others, I welcome the fact that the ministerial positions of defence, justice and the interior have been filled. That is an important step forward. However, we share the concerns of almost all the speakers today about the lack of women represented in ministerial positions. We hope that will soon change and that the Government of Iraq will ensure the broadest possible representation of women and minorities across ministerial positions.

With regard to strengthening institutions, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General also touched on the relationship between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Baghdad. We welcome the announcement of Mr. Nechirvan Barzani as President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq and, in particular, we welcome President Salih's attendance at the inauguration. We commend the efforts of both President Salih and Mr. Barzani to tackle outstanding issues, in particular those relating to oil revenues.

Turning briefly to the question of Kuwaiti missing persons and property, we very much welcome the Special Representative's announcement today on the good news about the confirmation of Kuwaiti missing persons following DNA testing. We also welcome UNAMI's support for that work and the decision by the United States to share the analysis of satellite imagery with those concerned. We have every confidence that the Government of Iraq will remain engaged on this issue. We look forward to the results of the 110th subcommittee meeting of the International Committee of the Red Cross, to be held on 25 September on this vital issue.

In conclusion, Iraq has made great progress in recent years, especially in the military defeat of Da'esh. But Iraq continues to face significant challenges — both domestically and regionally — as it seeks to guard its stability and independence in an unstable region. It is therefore vital that the Council and the international community remain engaged in supporting the Government of Iraq as it tackles these challenges and steers the country towards fulfilling its huge potential.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): Let me first of all, to extend our sincere thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her very comprehensive briefing. In response to the briefing, Indonesia would like to underscore three points.

First, with efforts owned and led by the Government and the people of Iraq, supported by the regional and international communities, Iraq is on the right track towards a democratic and prosperous future. The Security Council's first-ever visit to Iraq, in June, demonstrated the international community's support for the country's post-conflict recovery and reconciliation efforts. Indonesia also commends Iraq's active endeavours to strengthen relations with neighbouring countries. That indicates Iraq's good intentions to build a principle of good-neighbourliness. Regional cooperation indeed plays a crucial role in economic development and national stability.

Brick by brick, ranging from the formation of its Cabinet to combating corruption and from strengthening the environment for investment, the rule of law to security sector reform, we believe that the Iraqi Government will be able to respond to the needs and the demands of its people. Those efforts should continue, and the United Nations Assistance Mission

for Iraq (UNAMI) plays a crucial role in supporting them. We would like to voice our continuous support for UNAMI and the Special Representative. We hope that the appointment of Cabinet ministers will be completed soon, with the inclusion of appointments of women in senior decision-making positions.

Secondly, we recognize the complex challenges facing stabilization and rehabilitation in Iraq. The security situation remains fragile, as the remnants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continue to attack the Iraqi people and security forces. In that connection, we support the Iraqi security forces anti-terrorism campaign, supported by international efforts, to combat ISIL. We also support the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL in close collaboration with the Iraqi Government. We stress once again the importance of international cooperation in combating terrorism and its cells.

We also support the Government's efforts as part of its security sector reform to issue an executive order to bring the popular mobilization forces exclusively under State control. If implemented, the Government will have the ability to manage and control weaponry and the circulation of arms, which would hopefully improve the security situation.

We also recognize the challenge faced by the Iraqi Government in managing the approximately 1.7 million internally displaced persons in the country. In that connection, it is important that the humanitarian assistance programme remain funded and the issue remain on the international community's radar.

Thirdly, on the issue of the repatriation and return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains, we are happy to note that Iraqi authorities handed over the remains of Kuwaiti citizens from Samawah on 8 August. We hope that contributes to the healing process of the families of those missing persons. With developments in technology and the persistent efforts of the Tripartite Mechanism, couple with the good intentions of both Governments to continue their cooperation, we are finally witnessing an important breakthrough in advancing this important file. We also applaud UNAMI's continuous efforts in that regard. We encourage the Iraqi Government to continue its constructive engagement with the relevant parties to resolve the remaining issues.

Mr. Mabhongo (South Africa): First, we would like to thank the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her comprehensive briefing this morning. We would like to address the following three points in our statement today, the political situation, the security situation and the situation of women and children.

Regarding the political situation, South Africa supports the mandate of UNAMI as it promotes the strengthening of the Government of Iraq and its subsequent electoral processes. We also welcome the appointment of the Ministers for Justice, Defence and the Interior. That serves to highlight the fact that, despite political challenges, Iraq is strengthening its democracy.

South Africa supports the drive for an inclusive Government that will bring together all the diverse sectors of Iraqi society into governance structures. National reconciliation and unity in Iraq are vital to avoiding future challenges resulting from the fracturing of Government policies and actions. We would like to urge the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to deepen their cooperation in order to bring about a greater sense of peace and stability in Iraq. That would benefit several areas of society, especially in the efforts to rebuild and provide services to the Iraqi people.

On the security situation, we believe that peace and security is fundamental for Iraq to develop its infrastructure, grow its economy and provide basic services to all of its citizens. In that regard, South Africa supports the full consolidation of the Iraqi army's control over its territory and welcomes the continued support for the efforts of the Government to eradicate the threat posed by Da'esh.

Thirdly, on the situation of women and children, we note the improved situation — according to a recent report by UNICEF — in terms of the number of internally displaced persons. We believe that is a positive development that shows that Iraq is recovering from years of conflict and instability. We would also like to suggest the use of the Peacebuilding Commission to support the efforts of the Government, specifically with regard to institution-building and post-reconstruction and development.

In conclusion, we are encouraged by the commitment of both the Governments of Kuwait and

Iraq, in their sustained joint efforts, to locate the missing Kuwaiti and other nationals, as well as missing Kuwaiti property. We are encouraged by positive developments in that regard, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/632). We hope both countries can work together with the relevant United Nations institutions to resolve any outstanding issues on this matter.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her useful briefing.

The Russian Federation consistently advocates strengthening stability and security in the Republic of Iraq. The principal role in that process must be played by the Government and the people of Iraq. The new Iraqi authorities still have a great deal to do in order to secure the positive momentum building within the country's political situation. In that connection, we welcome the steps taken in the formation of the Iraqi Government, including recent appointments to key ministerial positions. We hope that process will be concluded in the very near future, as we believe that it will contribute to overcoming all domestic political differences.

We note the focus of the Iraqi authorities on modernizing the country's financial sector and improving its investment climate. We believe that strengthening stability in Iraq is of major significance for the entire region of the Middle East. We therefore believe that it is important that the international community support the authorities' focus on rebuilding the economy and developing the social sector and agriculture. We note the role of UNAMI in helping national authorities take a focused approach to national reconciliation and rebuilding the country's economy.

We welcome and applaud Baghdad's consistent policy in maintaining good neighbourly relations with regional partners. We note in particular the focus and efforts of Iraqis and Kuwaitis in restoring historical justice with regard to what we refer to as the Iraq-Kuwait dossier.

We note that the importance of consistent efforts in settling differences among the various ethnic and faith-based groups in Iraq and the importance of bolstering the unity of the Iraqi people and the integrity of the State. In that connection, we welcome the ongoing dialogue to establish a mutual understanding between Baghdad and Erbil. We believe that further improving those relations

will help Iraq strengthen security, which is all the more important given the persistent security challenges.

We are keen to see the elimination of the threats posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and terrorism in general. The way to effectively tackle this challenge is through the broadest possible coordination on counter-terrorism efforts. At the same time, we believe that it is necessary to engage all stakeholders involved in combating terrorism in Iraq, that there be respect for the sovereignty of the Iraqi Government and that their actions be coordinated with Baghdad. That needs to align with the stated aim of combating terrorism and assisting the Iraqi Government in stabilizing the situation.

We are closely following the process of strengthening the Iraqi armed forces, including the integration of the popular mobilization forces to deliver on security in the country.

The Russian Federation will continue to do everything possible to support the Iraqi Government's efforts to restore control over all territories seized by ISIL as well as to ensure the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. At the same time, we cannot but be troubled by the negative impact of escalations in the Persian Gulf region on the process of achieving an intra-Iraqi agreement. Attempts to drag the country into a contrived confrontation over the Islamic Republic of Iran are counterproductive and further destabilize the already tenuous situation in the country. The international community would be well advised to avert such a scenario. We cannot allow another geopolitical experiment, regardless of its origin, to undermine the hard-won success that has been achieved in counter-terrorism.

During a meeting in Moscow in July between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Lavrov, and Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, confirmation was voiced of the need to address all crises through dialogue and collective efforts. In that connection, we wish to note that we are open to cooperation on that basis with all interested regional and international partners through our blueprint for collective security in the Persian Gulf. At the same time, we are of the view that our efforts are aligned with the mandate of the Secretary-General to design confidence-building measures in the region in keeping with resolution 598 (1987).

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Poland.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative for her comprehensive briefing and express our appreciation for the tremendous work that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is doing in assisting the Iraqi authorities.

Poland welcomes that further progress has been made in forming the Government, with the appointment of the Ministers of the Interior, Defence and Justice, and encourages the Iraqi political parties to continue their positive engagement in order to complete the process in the near future and to ensure that women be included at all levels of decision-making processes. We also commend the progress on the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government. We are encouraged by the continued dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil aimed at resolving outstanding disputes.

We highly commend the efforts undertaken by the Iraqi authorities to restore stability and prosperity in the country. We welcome in particular their continued focus on combating corruption and on finding ways to improve the environment for business and investment. We encourage the Government of Iraq to make further progress in that respect for the benefit of all Iraqis.

With regard to security issues, we highly commend the decision of the Government of Iraq to bring the popular mobilization forces under effective State control. We consider that to be an important step towards advancing security-sector reform aimed at restoring sole responsibility for providing security in the country to the State. The effective implementation of this decision, as well as ensuring accountability for noncompliance with the decree, will be critical. In addition, we remain concerned about the continued activity of Da'esh cells across numerous governorates, which still pose a significant security threat.

After years of conflict, the path to stabilization and reconciliation in Iraq will require time, extensive reforms and the building of strong State institutions. We believe that it is essential to meet the needs of all Iraqis, including women, young people and members of all religious and ethnic groups, including by prioritizing the delivery of basic public services and creating job opportunities.

Advancing stabilization and reconstruction in areas recaptured from Da'esh is also of critical

importance. Rebuilding damaged infrastructure and restoring effective administration, security and public services are indispensable for creating conditions for the voluntary, dignified and safe return of internally displaced persons, as well as their local integration or resettlement. It is also vital that internally displaced persons be treated in a non-discriminatory manner, irrespective of their perceived affiliation, and be provided the assistance they require.

To conclude, I would like to stress the need to support Iraq in its efforts to restore stability after years of conflict in full respect for its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Fatah (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on managing the work of the Council wisely during August. I would like also to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for her briefing.

On behalf of the Government of Iraq, I thank the two delegations of the United States of America and the sisterly Kuwait for organizing the regional visit of the Security Council mission to cities in Kuwait and Baghdad. The first visit of its kind, it signalled the continued strong commitment of the international community to support the stability, prosperity, sovereignty, independence and security of Iraq. It marked a new phase on the country's journey and offered reassurance of the good intentions of Iraq and Kuwait to build good neighbourly relations and resolve crises in the region through political and diplomatic means.

We also thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for the efforts she made along with her team to guarantee that the visit went smoothly. We thank her as well for her close cooperation with the Iraqi authorities while implementing her mandate as per resolution 2470 (2019) and providing Iraq and Kuwait with the support to implement resolution 2107 (2013).

What the Iraqi cities are witnessing today demonstrates that Iraqis share a common objective, namely, a determination to live a life of freedom and dignity and to have a Government that serves its citizens and provides them with services. Given the circumstances and the potential available, there is great

hope that my country's Government will manage to achieve the objectives of the governmental programme for the period 2018 to 2022, the implementation of which requires structural economic reforms with a view to harnessing Iraq's resources and putting them in the service of the Iraqi people.

The most important challenges facing Iraq today include bringing about economic reform, supporting the status and rights of women, protecting and bolstering human rights and eradicating unemployment. The biggest challenges lie in the areas of security and social development. However, all of those reforms require a stable economic environment. Iraq is a country that deserves to live in safety and to have an opportunity to fulfil the aspirations of its people, especially after the war it has waged against terrorism. The Government of Iraq was recently able to take the following measures.

The Cabinet has now been formed with the appointment of the Ministers of Defence, the Interior and Justice by the Council of Representatives, which chooses ministers with a high degree of professionalism and experience. They took their constitutional oath on 24 June. That was the result of considerable integration and coordination among the three presidencies.

Iraq in general, and the governorates that have been liberated from Da'esh in particular, has experienced improved security and stability. All the roads in Baghdad that had been closed since 2003 have been reopened. In addition, on 1 July, the Prime Minister issued Executive Order 237, which restructures the popular mobilization forces, regulates their military operations and introduces terms of reference with the aim of increasing stability and the State's authority and guaranteeing that weapons are strictly in State hands. In that context, the volunteer factions have stated their intention to abide by the Executive Order and to implement all the orders issued by the commander of the armed forces. All factions that operate outside the law and use the banner of the popular mobilization forces for illegal purposes will be held accountable.

The Supreme Council for Combating corruption has introduced a national anti-corruption strategy in Iraq, including establishing a national integrity index, with the participation of the various Iraqi components and civil society organizations, as well as putting in place effective implementable mechanisms.

Furthermore, there has been a breakthrough in the relationship between the federal Government and the

Kurdish Regional Government, which are now working to resolve pending issues via constitutional means. More than one round of talks has taken place between representatives of both Governments, in Baghdad and in Erbil, at which both sides agreed on a raft of economic, agricultural and financial measures, foremost of which is the standardization of administrative procedures at all Iraqi border crossings, including those located in the province of Kurdistan, and the resumption of oil exports from Kirkuk to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Iraq submitted its first report under the voluntary national review procedure at the High-level Political Forum held in New York last month. It summarizes Iraq's experience in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, the Government of Iraq, with support from partners, has devised new strategies and plans to deal with the challenges of transitioning from a crisis situation to an economy conducive to sustainable development. It has also devised a national development plan and a poverty reduction strategy that targets the most vulnerable segments of society, especially in the most remote and disadvantaged areas, as well as a reconstruction and development plan for the period 2018 to 2027. The Government also took part in designing a Vision 2030 plan, in line with the Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals.

The defeat of the terrorist organization Da'esh was without doubt a huge challenge and an important victory for the Iraqi armed forces, including the army, the police, the Peshmerga and the popular mobilization forces, which fought side by side to rid Iraq of the filth of this criminal organization. In that regard, we are thankful for the assistance of our international coalition allies led by the United States. Our task now is to intensify our efforts to tackle the legacy of this terrorist organization and establish a work plan to care for the children it recruited and children born as a result of rape, as well as to deal with foreign terrorist fighters, the wives, widows and children of terrorists and women and victims survivors of rape committed by terrorists. Furthermore, we must step up efforts to achieve stability in the liberated areas once occupied by Da'esh terrorists. We must also address the tragedy of internally displaced persons.

To that end, we must tackle the security and human rights concerns linked to the return of terrorist elements and their families to Iraq. However, we must underscore that this problem is not merely an Iraqi one; rather, it

is a problem that affects everyone in the region and beyond. If this issue is mismanaged, we risk creating fertile ground for a new generation of terrorists. We must therefore eliminate the danger inherent in the movement of hundreds of Da'esh women able to attract and recruit new fighters. Da'esh has been among the most successful terrorist organizations in relying on women within its ranks to carry out operations and spread its extremist ideology. The presence of female elements in Iraqi camps and prisons is a great burden that far exceeds the ability of the Iraqi Government to address the problem. The international community, international organizations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees therefore have a responsibility in that regard. It is not simply a matter of providing medical assistance, food and water, but also of maintaining security and limiting the spread of the extremist ideology of Da'esh.

In that connection, we ask the international community to fully respect Iraq's sovereignty and jurisdiction and to support its efforts to hold those terrorists accountable and bring them to justice, in accordance with relevant local laws, so as to curb the return and the spread of terrorist activity. Iraqi judicial institutions will apply due process with full transparency and professionalism with regard to those indicted or convicted of belonging to Da'esh, whether in the investigation stage or during trials and sentencing. Iraqi judicial institutions provide foreign detainees and convicted persons with the necessary assistance in order to meet with their embassies in Iraq. In that regard, we call on the Governments of the countries concerned to develop a comprehensive response to the repatriation of their citizens, try them in national courts and work with the relevant bodies for the return children associated with the remnants of Da'esh.

Iraqi forces tasked with liberating cities referred terrorists and their families to specialized investigative bodies to determine their citizenship status and identification numbers in order to complete their investigation files — this after they had destroyed all of their identification documents prior to entering Iraq. That would then allow them to stand before Iraqi courts to be tried transparently and fairly and in accordance with Iraqi laws in effect that criminalize and punish persons who have committed terrorist crimes, including foreign residents law No. 118 of 1978, counter-terrorism law No. 13 of 2005 and law No. 111 of 1969 of the amended Iraqi penal code.

The children of Da'esh terrorist families are divided into two categories. The first, minors, are subject to the laws in effect if they are proven to have belonged to a terrorist group or participated in its activities. After sentencing, they are sent to rehabilitation homes and schools. Children below the age of criminal liability make up the second category. After verification of their citizenship status, those children are handed over to the embassies of their countries to be repatriated.

Given its sensitive nature, this work requires accuracy. It also requires exhaustive examination into the status and citizenship of the families and children of Da'esh, followed by determination of their specific legal status. They are then referred to the specialized Iraqi bodies that work in coordination with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which acts as the liaison between the specialized Iraqi bodies and foreign embassies, both within and outside Iraq.

As a result of those efforts, Iraq has returned a number of children to their countries of origin, including Russia, Tajikistan, Belarus, Georgia, Finland, Ukraine and Turkey. That number totalled 473 children as of 10 July. Moreover, Iraq urges other embassies, in or outside Iraq, to take in their citizens, including women and minors, who have served their sentences or are under the age of criminal liability.

As for offering support to internally displaced persons, the Ministry for Migration and Displaced Persons has issued repatriation grants to displaced persons from liberated areas and continues to implement social reconciliation measures in the areas where they reside. Moreover, campaigns to rebuild liberated cities destroyed by the Da'esh terrorist organization continue in earnest.

My Government is working to send a clear message to our neighbouring countries that Iraq's stability and prosperity is in our common interests. The time has come for the region to have a unified vision for achieving economic prosperity. Iraq's chances of success are real but are in jeopardy. As a result, Iraq cannot tolerate more tension or escalation in the region. The Government of my country is keen to fully develop relations with its Arab neighbours.

We also attach importance to our relationship with Iran, with which we share a border of 1,400 kilometres. We enjoy many economic and social ties to Iran, and it is in our national interest to enhance our ties with it.

The same is true of our neighbour Turkey, to the north. Undoubtedly, Turkey is important from a geopolitical and economic perspective, despite its continuous violations of Iraqi territories. My Government has issued approximately 54 protest memorandums demanding the immediate halt of Turkish shelling of Iraqi territories and calling for respect for the sovereignty of Iraq. In that regard, I would like to confirm that my country is keen on defending the independence and sovereignty of Iraq. In return, Iraq's territories will not be used to launch any threat to the safety and security of neighbouring countries.

I would like to thank the States members of the Tripartite Commission for providing us with satellite imagery, which has acquired vital importance. In addition, the efforts of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, witness testimony, analysis of the images provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and GPS coordinates all helped to determine the sites provided by Kuwait and to uncover 46 unidentified remains in Samawah. After conducting the necessary DNA tests on those remains, it was proven that 32 of them belonged to missing Kuwaitis. The Iraqi Government handed over the remains to Kuwait on 8 August. Moreover, I would like to thank the United Nations, which provided the Committee with modern technology such as underground radar to help both the Iraqi and Kuwaiti sides uncover potential burial sites, which we consider a positive step to resolving this important humanitarian issue.

In addition, approximately 162,000 books were found, which belonged to the University of Kuwait and the National Library of the State of Kuwait. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Iraq, in cooperation with its Ministry for Foreign Affairs, collected those books from various markets, bookshops and citizens. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs supervised the packing and transport of 42,000 of the books and dispatched them yesterday on board an Iraqi Air Force C-130 military aircraft. They were delivered to the Kuwaiti side today, 28 August, in the presence of the Undersecretary of the Iraqi Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hazzim Al-Youssifi, Head of the Archives Committee charged with searching for Kuwaiti property and archives, and a representative of the United Nations. The rest of the books will be returned in instalments in the near future so that we can finally conclude our consideration of this issue.

As for Iraqi missing persons, we are carefully following all important related developments and are trying to determine the burial locations of Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait. The uncovering of their remains would help alleviate the suffering of the families of Iraqi soldiers missing since the 1991 Gulf War. In that connection, we appreciate the efforts of the three members of the Committee in analysing satellite imagery in order to arrive at a highly accurate location of the burial sites. We also thank the ICRC for providing us with a complete list of coordinates pertaining to the burial sites, which will be cross-referenced with the satellite's coordinates. We look forward to uncovering the fate of the remains of those soldiers as soon as possible, while the necessary measures taken and the outcome will be

included in the Secretary-General's report on the status of the implementation of resolution 2107 (2013).

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate my country's commitment to building a prosperous Iraq, in coordination and cooperation with the international community, with a view to eliminating the ravages of terrorism and expediting the reconstruction process so as to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and implement the Government programme decisions in accordance with national laws in effect.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at noon.