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Seventy-sixth year

Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Abarry.	(Niger)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mrs. Dime-Labille
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Mark
	Tunisia	Ms. Elmansouri
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
	United States of America	Mr. Mills
	Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, Permanent Representative of Mexico, for his service as President of the Council for the month of November. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador de la Fuente Ramírez and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

The President (*spoke in French*): 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 Mr. Christian Ritscher, Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL, to participate in this meeting.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Ritscher.

Mr. Ritscher: I am very honoured to be able to address the Security Council this morning for the first time as Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) and to present to members the seventh report on its activities.

In the two months since my appointment, I have had the opportunity to engage with survivors, national authorities, non-governmental organizations and international partners, as well as with all parts of our team in Baghdad, Dohuk and Erbil. I have seen first-hand the work being conducted across Iraq, in collaboration with our national partners, to secure vital evidence capable of building a comprehensive legal basis for

international-standard trials fully reflecting the nature of the crimes committed against Iraqi communities by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Knowing from experience the challenges national authorities face in pursuing justice for those crimes, I believe we now stand at a turning point, a moment of perhaps unexpected hope. Through the establishment of structural case briefs addressing crimes committed against all impacted communities in Iraq, through the development of detailed case files tying the actions of specific ISIL members to those crimes and by harnessing advanced technology to serve this purpose, we can now envision a new landscape in which those who believed themselves to be out of reach of justice are held accountable in a court of law. If we maintain our collective commitment, if we strengthen our unity in addressing the inherent challenges that the scale of ISIL criminality presents, I believe we have the opportunity to turn the tide from impunity to justice.

A week ago, I stood at a mass grave outside Mosul containing the remains of the victims of executions carried out by ISIL at Badush Central Prison in June 2014. I listened to the story told by one survivor who had to go through that horror, and now has to carry its magnitude as he seeks to move on with his life. I also saw the commitment demonstrated by the national authorities and our team members, as well as other partners, working in that remote location, despite the security challenges, to support the collection of evidence that may lay the foundations for justice and to ensure that families will be able to bury the remains of their loved ones.

Together, we recommenced work to exhume the bodies of those killed and collect forensic evidence for use in identifying those ISIL members responsible. By working with survivors and empowering them to provide their testimonies, we have established an account of those attacks that bears the hallmarks of ISIL's violence against many communities of Iraq.

Evidence collected shows the detailed preparation for the attack by senior ISIL members, followed by the launch of the assault on the morning of 9 June. Prisoners captured were led to sites close to the prison, separated based on their religion and humiliated. At least 1,000, predominantly Shia, prisoners were then systematically killed.

Through our analysis of digital, documentary, testimonial and forensic evidence, including internal

ISIL documents, we have identified a number of individual ISIL members responsible for carrying out those crimes. Through the synthesis of that data, I can also announce to the Council today that we have finalized our initial case brief in relation to this investigation, detailing our conclusion that crimes committed by ISIL members at Badush Central Prison constitute crimes against humanity of murder, extermination, torture, enforced disappearances, persecution and other inhumane acts, and the war crimes of wilful killing, torture, inhumane treatment and outrage upon personal dignity. By establishing that comprehensive structural analysis of crimes committed at Badush prison, as we did previously with respect to attacks in Sinjar and Tikrit, we seek to strengthen the basis on which justice can be built together with national authorities.

Evidence collected on the Badush Central Prison attacks serves to underline the detailed planning undertaken by ISIL in carrying out their atrocities. That methodological and strategic approach is seen even more clearly in two other key lines of investigation that have accelerated in the past six months: on the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL and on the financial mechanisms through which it sustained its campaign of violence.

Forensic analysis of battlefield evidence made available to us by Iraqi authorities has shown that ISIL's development and deployment of chemical weapons was not an opportunist exploitation of fortunate circumstances; it was a strategic priority implemented in line with a long-term vision.

Our evidence shows that ISIL clearly identified, and then seized, chemical-weapon production factories and other sources of precursor material, while also taking over the University of Mosul campus as a hub for research and development. Small teams of qualified technical and scientific experts, some brought in from abroad, worked to adapt and enhance the programme. Through an analysis of internal ISIL manuals on chemical-weapon production, we see the programme diversify and become more sophisticated as new expertise arrives.

The results can be seen in the more than 3,000 victims of chemical-weapon attacks carried out by ISIL that our team has identified to date. Investigations in relation to attacks in Taza Khurmatu show the successful use of multiple rocket artillery projectiles containing

a sulphur mustard agent. Medical records from local hospital facilities show children and adults admitted for burns, skin infections and respiratory problems, as well as longer-term effects, including harm to the reproductive health of both men and women, birth defects, miscarriages, stillbirths and long-term health consequences for children born to exposed parents.

As with all of ISIL's activities, its confidence that its documents and internal structure would never be uncovered forms the basis for the hope of accountability. Through the analysis of detailed records ISIL left behind, we have identified individual ISIL members who are allegedly responsible for leading the development of the programme and the implementation of major attacks.

I can inform the Council today that, in my next briefing, I will present the results of a structural case brief detailing our findings in relation to ISIL's use of chemical weapons, including legal characterization of the crimes committed in its implementation.

It is essential that those who financially supported and profited from ISIL crimes also be brought to justice. That imperative, combined with a drive to understand the economic mechanisms at the heart of ISIL's operations, have guided the work of our dedicated Financial Crimes Unit.

In recent months, our investigations have uncovered the inner workings of the central ISIL treasury, Bayt Al-Mal — or "House of Money" — the central department responsible for the collection, storage, management and movement of its wealth. We have identified a network of senior ISIL leadership who also acted as trusted financiers, diverting wealth that ISIL gained through pillage, theft of property from targeted communities and the imposition of a systematic and exploitative taxation system imposed on those living under ISIL control. That work has underlined the extensive financial exploitation by ISIL of the most vulnerable communities of Iraq for the personal benefit and profit of its most senior members.

Given the scale of damage inflicted on Iraq through that economic exploitation, I am pleased to inform the Council that our work with Iraqi authorities in support of prosecutions of those responsible has deepened significantly. That is reflected in our recent sharing of a comprehensive case brief with the Iraqi judiciary, in line with our mandate and terms of reference, detailing the use by ISIL of money service

businesses as key facilitators of their financing. I look forward, in the coming months, to expanding this type of cooperation to hold those who wished to profit from ISIL crimes accountable.

That enhanced engagement with Iraqi authorities has been reflected across our work in the past six months. It also reflects a personal priority for me as I take up leadership of the team to identify additional channels through which we can deliver meaningful assistance to our Iraqi counterparts in the highest spirit of cooperation.

I am also cognizant that our work in implementing our mandate will not be satisfied through the collection of evidence alone, or through the establishment of an archive or historical record, as valuable as that might be. To deliver on the promise made through resolution 2379 (2017), we must put this evidence to work before competent courts.

Reflecting that imperative, we have redoubled our efforts to share knowledge with national authorities in areas that may ultimately support the development of joint case files and the conduct of proceedings in Iraq. That includes the implementation of a digitization project under which 25,000 documents are now being processed every day, as well as ongoing assistance in the excavation of mass graves and the exploitation of digital evidence.

In taking forward our collaboration with Iraqi authorities, I am conscious of the leadership demonstrated by the Government of Iraq in seeking the assistance of the international community through resolution 2379 (2017). Our goal must be to repay that commitment by providing tangible assistance in the conduct of international-standard trials that reflect the profound impact of ISIL atrocities on all communities of Iraq.

As I indicated in my report, I believe the steps to deliver this are clear and achievable. By the end of 2022, UNITAD will have established a cross-cutting and comprehensive legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL members for international crimes committed against a broad range of communities, as well as its chemical-weapons programme and financial support systems.

Through our effective engagement with survivors and witnesses, and by exploiting the extensive digital fingerprints left behind by its members in battlefield

evidence, we can already tie the actions of individuals to the commission of these crimes. The evidence collected pursuant to our mandate is now capable of supporting trials.

Building on that momentum, and in line with our terms of reference, I wish to underline my commitment, at the request of the Government of Iraq, to work with all partners in establishing a domestic legal framework that allows us to harness this evidence in prosecuting ISIL members for international crimes in Iraq. I am grateful for the positive discussions I have already held with Iraqi counterparts in that regard since my appointment.

This week, we have seen what comprehensive justice means to communities and survivors. Two days ago, a landmark moment was reached in the Higher Regional Court in Frankfurt, Germany, through the first-ever conviction of an ISIL member for the crime of genocide. The facts of that case resonate deeply, both because of their brutality and because of their relative normality under ISIL — a 5-year-old Yazidi girl, purchased along with her mother as part of ISIL's enslavement of their community, left to die chained outside in 50°C heat in Fallujah.

It was with a deep sense of responsibility that I led the team in charge of prosecuting that case in my former role, and I am delighted that the foresight shown by the Security Council and the Government of Iraq has led to the provision of meaningful support by UNITAD, assisting German prosecutors in securing that conviction.

For the first time, the Yazidi community has seen an ISIL member prosecuted in a court of law for the genocidal acts committed against it. The words of Nadia Murad, Yazidi survivor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate following the judgment yesterday should underline our collective responsibility as we continue this work. She said: "When survivors seek justice, they look for someone to give them hope that justice is possible."

In concluding, allow me to underline the key message I wish to share with the Council today. We now have the chance, collectively, to make such prosecutions the norm, not a celebrated exception. In cooperation with Iraqi authorities and those of the Kurdistan region, together with survivors and with the support of the Council, we are building the evidence that can deliver meaningful justice for all those who suffered from ISIL crimes in Iraq. If we maintain our

unity, we can capitalize on the opportunity that is now before us.

Next week, I will return to Iraq to attend a return-of-remains ceremony at Kocho village, Sinjar, where UNITAD is supporting the dignified burial of victims of mass killings carried out by ISIL fighters in August 2014. To the survivors and families of victims present, I will bring the same message that I have brought to the Council today. Justice has been slow, but there is now hope.

I underline my commitment to the Security Council today to do everything in my power to deliver on the promise we have made to these families and all those impacted by the crimes of ISIL in Iraq.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ritscher for his briefing.

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

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): First, I should like to welcome Christian Ritscher's appointment as Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) and the momentum with which he is taking forward the work mandated by the Security Council in resolution 2379 (2017). It is clear from the crimes described today by the Special Adviser and from the powerful words of Nadia Murad that he quoted how important it is to hold Da'esh to account. We continue to strongly support the work of UNITAD to that effect.

We also welcome the significant efforts of the Government of Iraq to progress accountability for Da'esh perpetrators, as the Special Adviser said.

Above all, we commend the close collaboration between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq. For example, the strengthening of legal and judicial frameworks is essential for the prosecution of Da'esh crimes, and this is an area where UNITAD can add particular value to national efforts. The United Kingdom encourages UNITAD's other efforts to support the Iraqi authorities, including through specialist training provided to Iraqi judges, capacity-building efforts and the sharing of evidence in financial investigations. We look forward to seeing continued efforts to secure an evidence-sharing mechanism that would provide assurances on the use of the death penalty and

ensure that the Government of Iraq can move ahead with prosecutions.

We also welcome the progress that UNITAD has made towards establishing a legal basis for the prosecution of perpetrators for the horrific mass killing at Badush prison in 2014, as we have heard today. We note the ground gained towards persecuting senior leaders of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) by the Financial Crimes Unit within UNITAD. The United Kingdom supports UNITAD's ongoing focus on investigations into the crimes committed by ISIL against minority communities and into the development and use of biological and chemical weapons by ISIL.

We will therefore continue to support UNITAD's work to address the heinous crimes committed by Da'esh. It is vital that we collectively hold perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide to account.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I trust that under, your excellent stewardship, the Council's work this month will be a huge success. The Chinese delegation will offer you its full cooperation.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mexico on an excellent job done as President of the Council last month.

I thank Christian Ritscher, Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), for his first briefing to the Council and welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) committed appalling atrocities in Iraq. Its remnants are still making waves today. It is of great importance for the United Nations, at the request of the Iraqi Government, to collect evidence of the crimes committed by ISIL and to assist Iraq's accountability efforts on the premise that respecting Iraq's judicial sovereignty is of great significance for efforts to combat terrorism and to uphold justice.

According to the briefing of the Special Adviser, over the past few months UNITAD has overcome the challenges of the coronavirus disease pandemic and resumed normal operations. It has completed basic investigations of the case of mass executions

at Badush prison, in Mosul. Its investigation into the alleged development and use of biological and chemical weapons by ISIL has also made some initial headway. It is gathering increasing evidence of ISIL's crimes. China commends these achievements.

UNITAD's extensive use of new technologies in evidence collection is a showcase for the use of science and technology to improve the effectiveness of counterterrorism work. At the same time, regrettably, despite UNITAD's more than three years of operations, the extensive evidence available to it has yet to yield concrete results in accountability for terrorists. Resolution 2379 (2017) explicitly stipulates that the Iraqi Government is to be the primary recipient of criminal evidence. Setting preconditions for the transfer of evidence will not contribute to bringing terrorists speedily to justice.

China welcomes UNITAD's sharing of information with Iraq on its investigative findings about the financing of ISIL and hopes that UNITAD can begin the comprehensive and systematic transfer of evidence to Iraq as soon as possible. In sharing information collected in Iraq with other Member States, UNITAD should have Iraq's consent and follow the principles of transparency and non-discrimination.

During the reporting period, UNITAD continued its close corporation with the Iraqi Government. Since assuming his post, the Special Adviser has engaged widely with parties in Iraq. A number of Iraqi staff members of UNITAD continue to flourish. These are all welcome developments. We support UNITAD in maintaining good cooperation with the Iraqi Government and its continued assistance with the Government's capacity-building needs, inter alia, in evidence collection and digitalization. At the request of the Iraqi Government, UNITAD can also support Iraq's conduct of trials of relevant cases. In so doing, UNITAD should fully respect Iraq's judicial sovereignty.

UNITAD is a temporary and transitional arrangement for the United Nations in supporting Iraq's accountability efforts. It should not become a permanent body. Its May report contained some preliminary ideas about the completion strategy. China hopes that, in its next report, UNITAD can flesh out the strategy for the Council's deliberations.

Terrorism is a real threat. All countries should uphold true multilateralism, abandon geopolitical considerations and ideological biases and join forces

to combat all terrorist organizations listed by the Council. Along with the rest of the Council, China stands ready to continue to advance international counterterrorism cooperation.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for your kind words and wish you every success in your leadership of the Council this month. To that end, you can count on the support of my delegation.

Mexico thanks and welcomes Mr. Christian Ritscher, who has today presented his first report in his capacity as Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), and we wish him every success in the exercise of his functions. We welcome the representative of Iraq to this meeting.

I begin by noting that the report reflects an efficient transition, which has allowed for continuity in the investigative work on the ground. That is clearly good news. We highlight the progress made on the dossier on the June 2014 mass executions in Badush prison, which includes a structured body of evidence for the prosecution of members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The investigation into ISIL's use of chemical weapons and the involvement of the University of Mosul are of particular significance. Redirecting an academic institution towards the development of weapons of mass destruction is truly regrettable. It is contrary to international law, including international humanitarian law, and represents the complete abrogation of the values for the culture of peace that are appropriate to educational institutions. That leads us to consider the importance of strengthening the tools at the disposal of the international community and the need for the full implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

We are pleased that the report reiterates the close cooperation of the Iraqi authorities with UNITAD, particularly in three specific areas: the digitization of documentary evidence, training and technical support for the excavation of graves; and the provision of courses for judges in international criminal law. We also note the work of UNITAD's financial crimes unit in investigating ISIL's funding and resource management. Clarifying such activities may be crucial to disrupting ongoing operations, while improving strategies to combat terrorist financing more effectively.

As we have said on other occasions, exhumations of victims must be carried out with respect and dignity in order to promote psychosocial healing. We highlight the scheduling of another ceremony for the return of remains to relatives this month in the village of Kocho. Those memorial ceremonies help to process the mourning to which the relatives of victims of the atrocious crimes committed by ISIL are entitled.

Finally, we reiterate the importance of ensuring that the crimes committed by ISIL do not go unpunished. We trust that the evidence that was, and continues to be, collected by UNITAD will serve to assist national and international courts, including the International Criminal Court, in the prosecution and trial of the perpetrators of such atrocities. In that regard, we welcome this week's ruling by a court in Frankfurt against Taha Al-Jumailly, the first member of the Islamic State to be tried for genocide against the Yazidi community. Truth, together with the delivery of justice, is the best way to repair the social fabric and build sustainable peace.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome you, Sir, as President of the Security Council as you usher in the Council's winter season. I take this opportunity to also thank the entire team of Mexico for its very successful presidency in November.

We welcome Mr. Christian Ritscher, Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). We hope that, under the new leadership, the Investigative Team will redouble its efforts to ensure the objective and impartial collection and analysis of evidence of crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq.

We have carefully reviewed the Investigative Team's seventh report, and we appreciate the informative briefing. We welcome the completion of the case brief on the investigation into the mass execution of Shia Muslim prisoners at Badush prison in western Mosul, which was seized by ISIL militants. The crimes committed there are inexcusable. All those responsible for them must be punished as they deserve.

We note the good pace of investigations into the development and use by terrorists of chemical and biological weapons. There is no doubt that they were used by terrorists. ISIL fighters have acted in a similar

way in other countries beyond Iraq. The Russian delegation welcomes the significant developments in the investigations of crimes against the Sunni, Christian, Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities.

We hope that UNITAD maintains that momentum, but not at the expense of the quality of its work, particularly as the advanced technological tools used by the unit make that possible. The Team successfully collects and analyses evidence, drawing on new technologies, including artificial intelligence, machine learning and others. The Russian Federation recognizes and encourages the use of modern technological innovations in investigations to the extent that it does not compromise the criterion of relevant and admissible evidence.

We hope that the Iraqi authorities will soon be able to access the collected evidence, as prescribed by resolution 2379 (2017). That text specifies the relevant Iraqi authorities as the main recipient of the evidence collected by the Team. The absence of specialized national legislation should not adversely affect the implementation of the mandate of the Investigative Team established by the Security Council.

We are convinced that granting Iraq access to evidence will expedite the process of holding the perpetrators of international crimes accountable.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I would like to start by thanking the Mexican presidency, Ambassador De La Fuente Ramírez and his team for their excellent work in the month of November. I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency for this month. I assure you of our full support. I thank Special Adviser Christian Ritscher for his report. I welcome the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iraq to our meeting today.

We welcome the seventh report of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), which includes the progress that the Team has made in the past six months. We note with satisfaction the achievements in the work of UNITAD despite the political and security challenges in the Team's operating environment, as well as the restrictions due to the coronavirus disease pandemic.

We look forward to the first prosecutions of members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for international crimes, as anticipated in resolution 2379

(2017). We are encouraged by the Investigative Team's innovative approach and its results. The continued integration of advanced technological tools in the Team's work has proved efficient in collecting and analysing a rapidly increasing amount of evidence in the digitization project.

We have been closely following the Team's investigations into the use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq in 2014 and 2016. The chemical-weapon-related atrocities, as confirmed in the Team's report, cannot be ignored.

We reiterate Viet Nam's consistent and strong support for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Chemical weapons, which are indiscriminate and inhumane, have long-term effects on human life and the environment. My delegation unequivocally condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstance. We thank the Special Adviser and his team for their efforts and look forward to the completion of the case brief in this line of investigation.

Against that backdrop, we commend UNITAD for its strengthened cooperation with the Iraqi Government and encourage the Team to continue to provide training and other forms of capacity-building assistance to local authorities for the future prosecution of ISIL members.

The strong commitment by Iraq's relevant authorities and local communities remains a key factor in the investigations. The establishment of the Witness Protection Department, with the support of UNITAD, is a significant and commendable step by the Government of Iraq. In the light of the recent elections in Iraq, we hope that the Team will continue to provide support for the establishment of a legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL members in Iraq for international crimes.

Finally, we highly value the support of Member States and international organizations for UNITAD through the provision of experts and funding. It represents the strong commitment of the international community in fighting against terrorism and preventing the resurgence of ISIL.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I thank Mexico for shepherding us through the previous month with such positive effect. I congratulate Mr. Christian Ritscher on his appointment as Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations

Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), and I thank him for his briefing.

Kenya welcomes the progress the Investigative Team has made, as reflected in its seventh report, and recognizes the contributions made by UNITAD in the landmark conviction of a fighter of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Germany earlier this week. Holding those operatives accountable is critical to combating genocide. We reiterate our unequivocal support for the prosecution of members of this group, not only for their terrorist acts but also for related crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

We recall ISIL's horrific crimes against individuals, motivated by its extremist ideology, a core part of which is the instrumentalization of a clash of identities and intolerance of diversity, which leads it, by definition, in addition to its violence, to encourage exclusion, marginalization and victimization based on ethnicity and religion. This ideology has, unfortunately, inspired movements around the world, including in Africa, where it continues to destabilize our countries. We would like members and the international community to always remember that the ideology of ISIL and that of Al-Qaida affiliates, such as Al-Shabaab, when operationalized and allowed to take root, becomes genocide. That is its logical end.

In line with UNITAD's mandate to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable, Kenya welcomes the Special Adviser's prioritization of engagements with Iraqi high-level Government officials early in his tenure. The achievement of full accountability depends on cooperation with the Iraqi Government, strengthening the capacity of Iraqi authorities and working in partnership with all elements of Iraqi society, including survivor groups, religious authorities and community leaders.

I applaud the transfer of skills through training and technology and the provision of international standard equipment. Kenya believes that the effectiveness of national judicial and prosecutorial institutions is critical to the exercise of sovereignty, and that national ownership strengthens the accountability process. We are also encouraged by the acceleration of field-based activities in the second half of this year, as UNITAD transitions back to a full staffing footprint, as well as

UNITAD's continued support of Government efforts to excavate mass grave sites associated with ISIL crimes.

I commend the bravery of the survivors and witnesses, whose testimonies make UNITAD's work possible, and I support the extra measures being taken to ensure their physical safety and mental well-being, which must be prioritized.

I conclude by encouraging the Security Council to have the same standard of seriousness and demand for accountability for other crimes committed by other terrorist groups, including in Africa and the Horn of Africa. We must have a single standard and must not deviate or create double standards or a two-lane counter-terrorism architecture in the Security Council.

Mrs. Dime-Labille (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to wish you, Mr. President, every success during your presidency, which comes on the heels of the excellent presidency held by Mexico. I would like to also congratulate Mr. Christian Ritscher on his appointment as new Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). I thank him for the presentation of the seventh report of the mechanism responsible for collecting evidence on acts that may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or crimes of genocide. I especially commend the Team for the work it completed in recent months.

France welcomes the dialogue initiated by UNITAD with all components of Iraqi society. It is essential that the families of those who were victims of the atrocities committed by Da'esh be involved in the work of the investigators.

I welcome the presence of the Ambassador of Iraq, who once again expresses Iraq's commitment to work closely with the international community and UNITAD to ensure that justice be provided to all victims of the crimes committed by Da'esh on Iraqi territory.

With regard to the report, we note the significant progress made since the introduction of the previous report (see S/2021/419). I would like to note in particular the completion of a third case related to the investigation of the massacre of predominantly Shia inmates at Badush prison on 10 June 2014 and the progress made in the investigation with regard to the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by Da'esh against civilians in Iraq between 2014 and 2016, as

well as the implementation of the joint strategy on the excavation of the mass graves. That work has made it possible to begin excavations near Badush prison and to hold the upcoming ceremony to return the remains of the victims of the massacres in Kojo village, which are important milestones.

Despite the challenges associated with the coronavirus disease pandemic, the mechanism was able to achieve results by implementing creative and innovative solutions. The pandemic has served to renew the relevance of the Team's strategy of integrating technological tools, such as artificial intelligence, to formulate charges in order to optimize future prosecutions of members of Da'esh.

The progress and success of the mechanism are the result of very good cooperation with Iraq, as evidenced by the sharing of information on the financing of the crimes committed by Da'esh, which has allowed UNITAD to uncover evidence detailing the internal administrative workings of Da'esh's central treasury and how it directly supported Da'esh's ability to commit its crimes.

Furthermore, we believe it is important that UNITAD continue to raise awareness among Iraqi judicial authorities about the mandate set out in resolution 2379 (2017), of 21 September 2017, including through the training of Iraqi investigative judges in international criminal law and the preparation of case files for the indictment and prosecution of members of Da'esh for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

It is important to recall the consistent position of the United Nations not to hand over evidence in judicial proceedings if there is any risk of the death penalty being imposed, wherever that might take place. The legislative framework that allows members of Da'esh to be brought to justice in accordance with the highest human rights standards and principles must be finalized. We encourage the Iraqi authorities to pursue their efforts in this regard, especially as the context is favourable, with the election of a new Parliament.

The situation of victims is a fundamental element. We welcome the efforts of the Special Adviser and the Team to provide psychological support to both surviving victims and witnesses.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore France's commitment to stand by Iraqis in the fight against

terrorism, including within the Global Coalition against Da'esh. Iraq is one of our key partners in the region and can continue to count on our support.

More broadly, our commitment to the country and its sovereignty was illustrated by the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, held on 28 August by Iraq, in close cooperation with France. The holding of that event created positive momentum that was maintained at the follow-up ministerial meeting held on 21 September on the margins of the General Assembly.

The fight against impunity for all perpetrators of crimes is critical for the stabilization, reconstruction and reconciliation of the Iraqi people as a whole.

The Council must remain mobilized in order to prevent the resurgence of Da'esh in all its forms. That includes both a renewed commitment by UNITAD to investigate the group's chain of command and continued support for the Iraqi authorities' counter-terrorism efforts.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I extend our warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. You can count on our full support. I also wish to congratulate our colleague, Mr. Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, and his delegation on an excellent presidency. I thank Mr. Ritscher for his report and briefing this morning. We assure him of Ireland's support as he fulfils his important mandate. I also wish to welcome our colleague Mr. Bahr Aluloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq, to today's meeting.

It is clear that the important work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) in ensuring accountability and support for the survivors of crimes perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) accelerated over the reporting period. The completion of a third case brief connected to the mass killing of predominantly Shia prisoners at Badush Central Prison, as well as advanced investigations into ISIL financial crimes, are examples of such progress.

Ireland wishes to recognize the cooperation afforded by the Iraqi authorities to the Team, without which such headway would not have been possible. We also commend UNITAD for rising to the challenge posed by huge amounts of digital evidence through the

use of creative technological solutions, particularly during the pandemic.

Building trust and providing gender- and age-responsive support are crucial in encouraging victims of ISIL crimes who are members of vulnerable and marginalized communities to actually share their stories. We therefore acknowledge the efforts of UNITAD and the Iraqi Government to meaningfully engage survivors and victims in accountability efforts. We were pleased to see the detail in the report on the range of supports that UNITAD is offering to victims and survivors, including the provision of psychosocial support measures to encourage members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community to come forward.

While it is crucial that supports and reparations are provided for victims and survivors, it is also essential to hold perpetrators to account for their crimes. In the context of UNITAD, that means moving from evidence-gathering to evidence-based trials.

We welcome UNITAD's intention to prioritize support to the Iraqi authorities in order to ensure the adoption of national legislation enabling the domestic prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide over the coming six months. Such legislation would mark another important step by Iraq in the journey towards accountability for ISIL atrocity crimes. Ireland encourages concrete action towards that end. Ensuring that criminal proceedings comply with international human rights law is, of course, essential. In that connection, I also wish to reiterate Ireland's unequivocal opposition to the death penalty in all cases and circumstances.

Separately, the capacity-building assistance provided by UNITAD to the Iraqi authorities is crucial to achieving comprehensive accountability. We strongly urge the continuation of that important work as it relates to evidence digitization, excavations of mass grave sites and the provision of judicial training in international criminal law.

Given the scale and nature of crimes committed by ISIL against Iraqi citizens, we have a collective objective to deliver accountability. The deepening support provided by UNITAD to domestic proceedings in different jurisdictions is therefore welcome.

In particular, we note the judgment in the case referenced by Special Adviser Ritscher in his briefing.

As the first prosecution of an ISIL member for international crimes drawing on UNITAD evidence and the first-ever conviction of an ISIL member for genocide against the Yazidi community, this is an important reminder of the Team's value in delivering justice for the victims and survivors of ISIL crimes. In that connection, Ireland commends Germany and all States that have initiated proceedings in their domestic courts to prosecute atrocity crimes committed by ISIL members.

ISIL's development and use of chemical and biological weapons is abhorrent and unacceptable. We welcome the Special Adviser's update on the investigation into the use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL, including progress on inquiries into the impact of the Taza Khurmatu attacks, including gender-related harms. We look forward to the completion of that particular case brief in 2022.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating Ireland's steadfast support for the important work of UNITAD in ensuring accountability and justice for victims and survivors of ISIL crimes.

Ms. Mark (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): We begin by congratulating Mr. Christian Ritscher on his appointment to Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) and welcoming his comprehensive briefing this morning. We are confident that his expertise makes him well suited to lead the Investigative Team in the discharge of its mandate.

The adoption of the landmark resolution 2379 (2017) establishing UNITAD was predicated on the need to ensure accountability for the reprehensible crimes perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Over the past few years, the Team has reached a number of milestones in its lines of investigation into these crimes, which include the completion of two case briefs during the previous reporting period, addressing crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar and the mass killing of unarmed cadets near Tikrit.

In that context, we welcome the efforts undertaken to build on those achievements through the finalization of an additional case brief concerning crimes committed by ISIL in and around Badush Central Prison in June 2014. We further welcome the progress made in UNITAD's investigations into the development and use

of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL. In that vein, we recall our unyielding position that the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and must not be allowed with impunity.

UNITAD continues to adopt an innovative approach to the collection, documentation and analysis of evidence of crimes committed by ISIL, the preservation of which is critical to facilitating the prosecution of ISIL members. We note the expansion of the Team's collection of documentary evidence within the context of the ongoing digitization project and the progress made in the implementation of the Zeteo application, which has been described as a paradigm-shifting innovation in the field of evidence analysis.

In that regard, we acknowledge the financial contributions made by Member States in support of this cross-cutting work. We recognize the Special Adviser's proactive approach to strengthening engagement with senior members of the Iraqi Government, the Iraqi judiciary and other authorities. In addition to ensuring that UNITAD's work reflects a common partnership with the Iraqi authorities, we welcome the efforts made by the Team to strengthen the capacity of the Iraqi authorities, including through the provision of support to Iraqi investigative judges in the development of case files for the prosecution of ISIL members and towards enhancing the technical infrastructure of relevant national authorities responsible for mass-grave excavation activities. While we welcome the Government's constructive approach to cooperation and collaboration with UNITAD, we recall that UNITAD must discharge its mandate without infringing upon Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Following the milestone elections of 10 October, there is great momentum within the Security Council and the international community around the creation of a peaceful, secure and prosperous Iraq. Nevertheless, that goal cannot be attained without guaranteeing justice for victims of ISIL crimes, as justice and peace are mutually reinforcing. We urge the Government of Iraq to remain steadfast in its commitment to ensuring accountability for the crimes committed by ISIL, including by continuing its consideration of national legislation that will allow for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will continue to stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Iraq, particularly in their pursuit of accountability, which is not a matter of choice, but a matter of duty.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): We congratulate the Niger on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and we offer our sincere thanks to Mexico for its excellent steering of our work in November. I welcome the representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

Let me congratulate Mr. Ritscher on his recent appointment as Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). We welcome comprehensive report and thank him for his briefing today.

Norway remains a steadfast supporter of UNITAD's mandate. The Team's work to promote accountability for international crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq is crucial to restoring the rule of law and ensuring justice for victims and survivors — both prerequisite conditions for sustainable peace.

Even though ISIL is territorially defeated, the overall situation concerning the terrorist group in Iraq is worrying. It continues to show both the capacity and the willingness to commit heinous attacks. We must therefore, as an international community, remain vigilant. In that regard, Norway is encouraged to note several positive developments concerning UNITAD's work since the former Special Adviser's last briefing to the Council (see S/2021/460, annex I). We commend the Team for completing its case brief on the investigation into the mass killing of predominantly Shia prisoners at Badush prison in June 2014. This is an important milestone, that builds on the progress demonstrated in the last reporting period, with the completion of the Team's first two case briefs.

We are also pleased to note that the work of the Team's Financial Crimes Unit is advancing, particularly with regard to investigations into ISIL's treasury, Bayt Al-Mal. Just last month, the joint open meeting of the Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities once again reminded us of the importance of preventing

and suppressing financing flows to degrade terrorist capability. We also appreciate continued progress on numerous other investigations, including ISIL's use of chemical and biological weapons, as well as its crimes against the Sunni community. The latter case file is significant in illustrating that ISIL targeted all segments of Iraqi society. Acknowledging this is important for national reconciliation.

I would now like to highlight three cross-cutting priorities that Norway considers crucial in UNITAD's ongoing work:

The first is accountability. The quantity and quality of evidence gathered by UNITAD are truly impressive. However, the mechanism was never intended to remain simply a depository; it is important that the evidence ultimately feed into judicial processes to hold ISIL members to account. Therefore, we would have liked to receive more information in the Special Adviser's report on the current status of discussions between UNITAD and the Iraqi authorities on an arrangement for evidence-sharing. We hope that the agreement reached regarding financial crimes may serve as a model in this regard.

The second priority is the protection of civilians, including children, which is a priority for Norway. We are pleased to note that the dedicated Gender Crimes and Children Unit has significantly advanced in its investigations on crimes against children. It is also very positive that the Unit has gathered additional evidence on the extent of ISIL's gender-based crimes, including sexual slavery, rape and persecution. We are pleased to learn about the achievement of an advanced child forensic interview training programme. This is absolutely vital to prevent children who have been used in conflict from being revictimized by the judiciary.

The work of UNITAD is key to the long-term stabilization and development of Iraq after the territorial defeat of ISIL. Norway is encouraged by the progress made by UNITAD in cooperating with the Iraqi judiciary and authorities towards delivering justice for the victims and survivors of ISIL's crimes. UNITAD can count on Norway's continued support in its efforts to ensure accountability for international crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq and justice for victims and survivors.

Ms. Elmansouri (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month of

December. I wish to thank Mexico for presiding over the Security Council last month.

I welcome the participation of the Ambassador of Iraq in today's meeting.

I wish to thank Mr. Ritscher for his briefing and to reiterate our congratulations on his appointment as Special Advisor and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD).

I also wish to commend the progress that has been achieved by the Investigative Team since the beginning of its mandate, in particular its prompt adaptation to the challenges that have been imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, and its achievements at various levels during the period under review, including the collection and storage of data and evidence, capacity-building for the Iraqi authorities and partnerships with the various stakeholders in Iraq, including civil society and victims.

Tunisia welcomes the opening of the third case on the crime of genocide in Badush prison and the investigative work on the use of chemical and biological weapons by Da'esh, as well as the transmission of evidence on financing for terrorism. This brings us closer to creating a database for well-established evidence with a view to ensuring accountability. Furthermore, we welcome the use of advanced technology by the Investigative Team in the collection and analysis of evidence, especially through the Zeteo automatic facial recognition technology and the digitization of documents. We welcome the partnerships with technology in ensuring accountability.

We also welcome the approach of the Investigative Team, based and rooted in the gender-dimension, the rights of minorities, human rights and the rights of witnesses and escapees. Information should be made available with respect to those categories of individuals and there should be an emphasis on matters related to sexual and gender-based violence.

This progress could not have been achieved without the support of the Iraqi authorities, whom we commend. Furthermore, cooperation with the Iraqi authorities is ongoing in capacity-building and exchange of expertise. We call on the Security Council and the international community to continue to provide political support and financial and human resources to Iraq in order to ensure

that the Investigative Team can deliver on its mandate. The Security Council should not lose sight of the main rationale for the establishment of the Investigative Team under resolution 2379 (2017), namely, to collect and analyse evidence and to transmit it to the Iraqi authorities, in full respect for Iraq's sovereignty and its jurisdiction over the crimes perpetrated on its soil.

To conclude, we wish to see tangible and effective results from the Investigative Team on the basis of a clear timeline and without preconditions. That will enable us to ensure accountability and promote reconstruction, in line with the letter addressed by Iraq to the President of the Security Council on 16 September.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): Allow me to convey my felicitations, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. You have our support for your presidency. I would also like to thank Mexico for its very productive and successful presidency. I welcome Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and thank him for his comprehensive briefing. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to this meeting.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has carried out inhuman atrocities against the people of Iraq. The victims of ISIL's horrific crimes in Iraq also include 39 Indian nationals. ISIL has deliberately and indiscriminately targeted innocent civilians, including women and children. They have systematically committed genocide, torture, rape, slavery and kidnapping throughout the territory under its control in Iraq and Syria. The seventh report of the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) again brings out the horrific crimes committed by ISIL.

UNITAD is contributing to fighting that impunity for terror and ensuring accountability for the crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq. Accountability for such crimes, including those against minority communities in Iraq, is critical to achieving smooth reconciliation and sustained peace in Iraq. The ongoing investigations on attacks against the Christian, Sunni, Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities and the strengthening of the initial case briefs in the attacks against the Yazidi community will support the Iraqi Government's efforts aimed at national reconciliation.

The close partnership and cooperation between the Iraqi authorities and UNITAD are commendable. That is central to the effective delivery of UNITAD's mandate.

The joint work of the experts of the Iraq Government and UNITAD in investigations, mass excavations and the development of case files will ensure that capacities are strengthened within the national investigative and prosecutorial system to ensure accountability in the long term for the heinous crimes perpetrated by the ISIL. That holds true for the extensive support provided by UNITAD to the digitization of evidence in the possession of the Iraqi authorities and the ISIL-related case files of the Iraqi judiciary.

The Secretary-General's recent biannual report (S/2021/682) on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security highlighted the continuous expansion of the terrorist group and its affiliates in many parts of Africa and Asia, including in our neighbourhood. Therefore, we believe that UNITAD's investigations will bolster our efforts in the fight against ISIL and terrorism. In particular, UNITAD's investigations into the internal administration of the ISIL treasury can provide valuable insights into ISIL's revenue streams and in preventing flows to ISIL and its affiliates in other parts of the world. UNITAD's widening of the scope of financial investigations must also include the external sources of funding for ISIL.

We take note of UNITAD's proactive efforts to share its findings with the Iraqi authorities on ISIL's financial crimes. That must also extend to other evidence and information collected by the Investigative Team. It is unfortunate that, despite a lapse of more than three years, UNITAD has been unable to fully service the evidentiary requirements of the Government of Iraq due to a different interpretation of UNITAD's mandate. We hope that that will be rectified soon and that the gap will be bridged.

We welcome UNITAD's continued investigation into the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq. India firmly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstance. ISIL's use of the University of Mosul for a systematic programme for producing and weaponizing chemical and biological substances is of particular concern. India has been highlighting the serious threat to international peace and security emanating from the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by ISIL and other terrorist groups. The international community needs to pay closer attention to that issue, since such a template could be replicated by terrorist groups in other places.

Last week, the victims of the dastardly 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks were remembered in India and several other countries. Be it Mumbai or Mosul, India strongly believes that the credibility of our collective fight against terrorism can be strengthened only once we can ensure accountability for the grave and inhuman acts of terror committed by terrorists. We need to take strong measures against those who encourage, support and finance terrorism.

The people of Iraq have made immense sacrifices in Iraq's fight against ISIL. Justice should be delivered to the victims of ISIL's crimes and to their families. That cannot happen unless those responsible for the atrocities are held accountable. The full and timely implementation of UNITAD's mandate would contribute to securing justice for those affected. I once again reiterate that India stands ready to provide its support to UNITAD in that regard.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I also join other speakers in congratulating Mexico on its very successful presidency of the Security Council, and I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming that task for this month. I welcome Mr. Ritscher to this meeting and thank him for a detailed overview on the ongoing investigations of crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Iraq. It is positive to hear that, during the recent reporting period, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) has re-established full field-based operational capacity.

Earlier this week, during an Arria Formula meeting on accountability in Syria, we heard about challenges to collecting evidence on the war crimes committed in Syria. I believe that the excellent work of UNITAD can serve as an example for showing how we can end impunity and help to bring justice to the victims through a holistic approach.

I stress the importance of the continued work of UNITAD through the respective special units on the issues of sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children and a focus of witness protection, as well as psychological support for witnesses and survivors.

Estonia fully supports UNITAD in its efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Iraqi authorities, and commends the significant progress made in terms of using new resources and technical

innovations. In particular, I would like to highlight the evidence-digitization project, which witnessed more than 2 million pages of documents archived and digitized within the reporting period.

Close coordination with the Iraqi authorities must remain a priority for UNITAD. That cooperation helps to facilitate the arrest of individuals believed to be active ISIL members, thereby leading to a safer Iraq. It is a notable step, which I believe paves way for even stronger joint activities in the future.

I look forward to the launch of the Interfaith Dialogue Series in January 2022. Such initiatives by UNITAD, undertaken together with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, will provide more in-depth engagement with local faith communities.

Estonia continues to value UNITAD's work, as it meaningfully contributes to achieving accountability in Iraq with full respect for the principles and best practices of the United Nations.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I welcome Special Adviser Ritscher to the Security Council. We are glad to have him here today in his new role as Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). His previous experience in his home country prosecuting alleged members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) for genocide committed against the Yazidi community in Iraq is a very meaningful asset in our shared pursuit of justice for the thousands of victims of ISIS's horrific campaign. I thank him for his briefing today.

The United States determined in 2016 that ISIS was responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

The United States stands with victims in working to ensure that those responsible are held accountable. UNITAD is critical to that effort. We will continue to work with UNITAD to ensure that the evidence of the atrocities of ISIS is collected, processed and shared in order to investigate and prosecute those who are responsible for those atrocities, including foreign terrorist fighters, by national courts.

To that end, we were encouraged to hear today from the Special Adviser of UNITAD's success in supporting Iraqi authorities to convert documentary evidence into

searchable digital files. With over 2 million documents already digitized, UNITAD is providing essential services to the people of Iraq and the international community in the pursuit of justice. In addition, as we heard this morning, the investigation by UNITAD has produced evidence that, on the morning of 10 June 2014, ISIS forces attacked the Badush Central Prison near Mosul, which housed approximately 3,000 prisoners, and executed several hundred predominantly Shia prisoners. UNITAD's investigation into that heinous crime is a critical step in the pursuit of justice for the families of the victims.

UNITAD, we believe, is most effective when it works in lockstep with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. We encourage UNITAD to continue coordinating closely with the new Iraqi Government to build upon the good cooperation we saw in the past, as well to continue its engagement with Iraqi law enforcement and judicial entities, as well as civil society, including survivor groups, non-governmental organizations and religious authorities. The United States urges Iraq to adopt legislation that would provide a basis for the Iraqi Government to prosecute atrocity crimes, including those committed by ISIS. Such authority is essential to finalizing an arrangement for UNITAD to share evidence with competent Iraqi authorities in accordance with its terms of reference.

The United States urges Member States — including Iraq — to repatriate and prosecute, as appropriate, their citizens who joined ISIS. In addition, it is important that all Member States rehabilitate and reintegrate, as appropriate, the associated family members of those who travelled to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS. As the Special Adviser can attest, UNITAD has provided valuable support to Member States, including the United States, to investigate and prosecute foreign terrorist fighters.

In conclusion, through our strategic dialogue with Iraq, the United States has confirmed its commitment to supporting Iraq's territorial integrity, stability and prosperity. Holding ISIS accountable for its atrocities and promoting justice for the victims of ISIS in Iraq is an important step in service of Iraq's national reconciliation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Niger.

I would like to thank Mr. Christian Ritscher for his briefing. I also take this opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment and wish him every success in his new role at the helm of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). The work he does is crucial to ensuring accountability for crimes committed by terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da'esh, and hence reconciliation among the people of Iraq.

We are already delighted with the first convictions of representatives of Da'esh on 30 November in Germany, and we invite all States to strengthen their cooperation with UNITAD to identify, apprehend and bring to justice all those who are suspected of committing crimes of terrorism. In that regard, in May 2019 in Niamey, the Government of the Niger signed a cooperation agreement with UNITAD in order to benefit from its expertise in this area.

Turning back to Iraq, allow me first of all to commend the strong cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi authorities in the implementation of resolution 2379 (2017), in particular in assistance related to digitization project concerning the data collected in the investigations, the provision of technical equipment to support the excavation of mass graves and, above all, the advanced training in international criminal law for Iraqi investigating judges.

We encourage Mr. Ritscher and his Investigative Team to persevere along the same lines in order to finalize the case briefs relating to the other crimes committed by Da'esh fighters as well. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the fact that a new milestone was achieved in the basic investigative work of the Team with the completion of a third case brief relating to its investigation into the massacre of predominantly Shia prisoners, which occurred on 10 June 2014, in Badush Central Prison. The ceremony of the return of victims' remains to be held in Kojo village in early December will enable many families to finally proceed with burials in accordance with the wishes and the traditions of their community.

The progress made in the investigations carried out by UNITAD into the ISIL chemical weapons programme, including the reconversion of Mosul University into a centre for research and development for such weapons, is also commendable.

Also within the context of progress achieved, I would like to highlight the progress made in the work of the UNITAD Financial Crimes Unit in the collection of evidence regarding the internal operations of ISIL's treasury, as well as the identity of ISIL members who have acted as trusted financiers. On that point, my delegation notes that it is essential that those who have financially supported or profited from ISIL's crimes be held accountable.

We reiterate our support for the establishment of the agreement between UNITAD and the Iraqi judiciary to facilitate the exchange of information concerning financial crimes committed by Da'esh in Iraq, in accordance with the Team's mandate. That will undoubtedly make it possible to strengthen cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of those who facilitated and financially benefited from the crimes committed by that terrorist organization in Iraq and who are also guilty of those crimes by association.

My delegation supports the continued integration of advanced technological tools into the work of UNITAD, in particular the partnership with Microsoft in the use of artificial intelligence to collect data. The progress made in the implementation of the Zeteo platform, which was developed by the Team with Microsoft, is good news.

Lastly, my delegation would like to reiterate its support for the provisions of resolution 2379 (2017), as well as its support for the work of the UNITAD Investigative Team aimed at establishing responsibility and accountability for acts that may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide committed by Da'esh fighters.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of Iraq, I would like to thank the United Nations for the various resolutions, recommendations and decisions concerning my country, and I welcome the international efforts under way to help us to pursue terrorists. I would like also to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month, and I wish you, the Permanent Representative of the Niger, every success. And I would like to thank the country of Mexico for the skill it demonstrated in its presidency last month.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Ritscher on his appointment as Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), and I thank him for his work and his briefing and the introduction of the seventh report.

We welcome the adoption of resolution 2597 (2021) approving the Iraqi Government's request to extend UNITAD's mandate for one more year to 17 September 2022. We are ready to make greater efforts to pursue those responsible for these crimes, those who have provided financial, logistical or technological support to these criminals and those who have supported Da'esh through the sale of antiquities. We also welcome the judgment of the German Federal Court against a member of Da'esh, and we hope that augurs well for the future.

We heard Mr. Ritscher's briefing and welcome the seventh UNITAD report, which describes the progress made by the Team in Iraq thanks to its cooperation with the Government of Iraq and the relevant local authorities. The broader aim is to ensure accountability at the international level. We must therefore move from the collection of evidence to trials and the extradition of people to face Iraqi justice.

The seventh report follows up on the sixth report, but does not propose concrete measures. The sixth report clearly stressed that the progress made and evidence gathered would make it possible to prosecute those responsible in Iraq. We hope that specific concrete measures will be taken to transfer that evidence to the Iraqi Government so that we can begin our national trials.

Our position on terrorism has not changed. We continue to do what needs to be done to put an end to this dangerous scourge. My Government is seeking to strengthen the capacity of the relevant authorities fighting terrorism, as well as the judicial system, in accordance with human rights, our international commitments and the Iraqi Constitution. We have also begun the necessary legal preparations to assess the evidence within our national court system once it has been provided to us by UNITAD.

In that connection, the Iraqi Parliament has completed its first reading of the draft bill relating to an amendment to Law No. 10 of 2005 establishing

the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal. That law will make it possible for us to use the evidence related to crimes committed by Da'esh against the Iraqi people, and this evidence will be important for the families of the victims and the Iraqi Government, which each year renews its trust in the Investigative Team to provide justice to the victims.

In that sense, the Investigative Team must act in full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its competence with regard to crimes committed on its territory against its own citizens and must be in accordance with the mandate given to it and now extended at the request of the Iraqi Government. We must re-establish justice and fight impunity, and we hope that, as time passes, the evidence will remain fresh, because providing justice will enable the victims to get on with their lives.

My Government is following and assessing UNITAD's work this year, and it is critical to establish a strategic plan together with the Iraqi National Coordinating Committee in order to achieve the Team's goals. At the same time, Iraq will continue to cooperate with the Investigative Team and will provide the necessary assistance thanks to the Committee. All of this must be conducted in full respect for Iraqi sovereignty and the competence of Iraq with regard to crimes committed against the Iraqi people on Iraqi soil. The use of criminal evidence beyond Iraqi jurisdiction must be subject to the agreement of the Iraqi Government.

We are awaiting the evidence and the results of the tests carried out by the Team pursuant to paragraph 39 of UNITAD's mandate, according to which UNITAD must provide the necessary legal assistance to the Government of Iraq in order to help it strengthen its judicial capacities. The principle of equity and justice must prevail. The fact that the Iraqi people are the primary victims of the crimes of Da'esh should motivate further efforts to elucidate the group's crimes against the Iraqi people. We also call for the preservation of evidence, pursuant to resolution 2379 (2017).

In conclusion, we would like to thank the members of the Council and the friendly States that have helped us to fight terrorism. We must work together to ensure that we bring the guilty to Iraqi justice. I would like to thank Mr. Ritscher and his team once again, and I wish them every success.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.