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Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Hoxha	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mrs. Aguiar Barboza
	China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
	France	Mrs. Dime Labille
	Gabon	Mrs. Onanga
	Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. O'Sullivan
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
	United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

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 Mr. Christian Ritscher, Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Ritscher.

Mr. Ritscher: I am honoured to address the Security Council today as I deliver the eighth report (see S/2022/434) of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD).

Over the past six months, the Team continued to make great progress in its investigative work. After more than two years of restrictions and preventive measures, UNITAD is back to its full capacity and, with its growing presence in Iraq, is stronger than ever. Against the backdrop of the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have continued to deliver accountability outcomes for survivors and their families, strengthened our partnerships in the country and throughout the world, and have stepped up our pursuit of accountability and justice for international crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Overall, our evidence collection has surged, as working modalities returned to normal, for instance when it comes to the excavation of mass graves and other field-based activities. During the reporting period, we preserved and converted to digital formats a total of over 4.5 million hard copy pages of documentary evidence from courts across Iraq. This was done in close cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary and the Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government. By doing so, we can reduce search times of databases from days to minutes and help the Iraqi authorities to make full and better use of their own

data and records. This undertaking is vital to enabling efficient and fair legal proceedings, and it is critical to preserving the historical record of ISIL's international crimes in Iraq. All our work continues to be conducted in full compliance with international legal standards and applicable policies of the United Nations.

Since I last reported to the Security Council (see S/PV.8914), the Team has successfully made progress in the full range of our investigative activities, such as carrying out witness interviews, conducting analysis of evidence and the drafting of case files. Allow me to highlight a few examples of the progress made within our investigations and the approaches taken towards seeking justice in relation to ISIL's crimes in Iraq.

Investigations into the Bayt Al-Mal — ISIL's so-called House of Money — have progressed significantly. An initial draft case brief articulates how Bayt Al-Mal provided vital material to and financial support for the overall structure of ISIL, including managing the payments of units that have allegedly committed core international crimes. Bayt Al-Mal was crucial to the daily operations of ISIL. We plan to provide additional strategic reports to our counterparts at the Iraqi judiciary that address the internal functioning of Bayt Al-Mal, to help broaden the understanding of ISIL's financial activities. This is particularly important as tracing the money means mapping the organization, understanding its structure and identifying the hierarchy and those in charge of giving orders. It brings us closer to identifying the individuals most responsible for the range of heinous international crimes committed in Iraq.

Since my last briefing, investigations into the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL are ongoing and have revealed new information. Through field missions to relevant sites, engagement with affected communities and cooperation with Iraqi authorities, the Team collected and preserved testimonial, digital and documentary evidence pertaining to the manufacturing and use of chemical and biological weapons.

Our investigations will look more closely at the underlying procurement system for these weapons and related financial flows. This entails focusing on the involvement of specific individuals, including those involved in conducting human tests with chemical agents on detained persons. The aftermath of such chemical attacks, namely, severe health problems

among survivors and affected communities, continue to this day.

UNITAD's investigations have helped to produce dedicated case files and the identification of those allegedly most responsible for, for example, the crimes committed against the Yazidi community and those committed against the personnel of Tikrit Air Academy, also known as Camp Speicher. Our Tikrit Air Academy investigation contributed to the identification of alleged perpetrators from ISIL who have played a prominent role in harassing, abusing and terrorizing the civilian populations of Tikrit and Al-Alam. It revealed that ISIL systematically targeted all people who did not agree with their ideology. It encompasses those belonging or perceived to belong to groups either opposing, not supporting or not aligning themselves with ISIL. This includes the Shia community, those affiliated with Governmental authorities, members of specific tribes and those who had assisted the cadets and military personnel of the Tikrit Air Academy.

Together with the Permanent Missions of Iraq and Finland to the United Nations in New York, UNITAD is organizing a special public event on the massacre of the personnel of Tikrit Air Academy, which will be held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber on Friday, 10 June, at 1.15 p.m. We will screen a short film about our investigation, followed by an expert panel discussion and interventions from the floor. The event coincides with the eighth anniversary of the massacre.

The investigation into the mass execution of approximately 600 Badush prison detainees on 10 June 2014 also continues to gain momentum. That is in large part thanks to the excavation of the Badush Valley mass grave conducted by the Iraqi Mass Grave Directorate, with technical and operational support provided by my Team. We engaged directly with the competent Iraqi court in that investigation to identify the perpetrators of the massacre, including individuals who are currently held in custody. That is in line with the Team's intention to intensify the investigations pertaining to crimes committed in Mosul, the capital of the so-called caliphate. UNITAD ensures that investigations into sexual and gender-based crimes committed by ISIL form part of each investigation.

As part of that approach, we continue to interview Yazidi women and girls who are survivors of sexual enslavement by ISIL and others who are able to provide information on the perpetrators, including foreign

terrorist fighters. Crimes against and affecting children are also considered to be an overarching priority. During the reporting period, the Team conducted interviews with Shia Turkmen boys who were conscripted by ISIL.

Those are just some examples of the work that has been done, and continues to be done, by our six investigative and two thematic units, which advance UNITAD's structural investigations of core international crimes committed against all affected communities in Iraq, including the Christian, Sunni, Shia, Kaka'i, Shabak and Turkmen Shia communities.

Our victim- and survivor-centric approach means that each and every person affected matters and all international crimes committed by ISIL members will be thoroughly investigated and their record of evidence duly established. Today's meeting does not allow me to go into all our work in detail. The recently submitted eighth report to the Security Council (see S/2022/434) covers in greater depth all of the Team's progress during the reporting period.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Government of Iraq, the Iraqi judiciary and the authorities of the Kurdistan Regional Government for supporting the implementation of our mandate. I have made it a priority to establish and maintain a continuous dialogue with senior members of the Iraqi Government, including the presidency, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the National Security Advisory.

Together, we are working towards ensuring accountability for the core international crimes committed by ISIL in evidence-based trials and in accordance with due process and international fair trial standards. By doing so, we aim to advance justice in the name of the many victims and survivors of the core international crimes committed by ISIL against the people of Iraq.

At a strategic discussion workshop held in January with the National Coordinating Committee and chaired by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, we reflected on our cooperation and jointly defined common areas of priority, including information-sharing and capacity-building with national counterparts and coordinated operations in the areas of mass grave excavations and the return of identified remains of victims to their families.

UNITAD's cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry for Foreign Affairs has advanced significantly over

the past six months. As agreed during the strategic discussion workshop and at the Ministry's request, we have been working in coordination with Iraqi Embassies in different countries to organize a series of special events to promote accountability for ISIL's international crimes.

In April, we held an event in Berlin entitled "Investigating financial dimensions of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide: the international legal and regulatory framework". UNITAD, Iraq and Germany renewed their commitment to further investigating the financial dimensions of ISIL's core international crimes. The upcoming special event to be held this week is also part of our global cooperation with Iraq.

Consistent with its terms of reference, UNITAD is committed to improving the modalities of information-sharing with the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi judiciary. Accordingly, the Team expanded and further operationalized arrangements with members of the Iraqi judiciary that allowed for the sharing of information relevant to financial crimes committed in connection with ISIL activities in Iraq. A general overview of key investigative findings of the crimes committed against the Yazidi community and Tikrit Air Academy personnel was presented to members of the National Coordinating Committee in Baghdad.

UNITAD believes it essential to seize every opportunity to hold ISIL perpetrators accountable for the core international crimes committed in Iraq — war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. There are ongoing discussions in Iraq to adopt the necessary legal framework to deal with ISIL crimes as core international crimes before the Iraqi courts. UNITAD stands ready to provide technical advice and to work with the Iraqi Council of Representatives, as well as the judiciary, going forward. We hope that there will be positive developments in the coming months, and we call on the international community to support Iraq in those efforts.

My team and I feel privileged that we get to experience the beauty of Iraq, its historic sights and the hospitality of its diverse communities at first hand. For me, community engagement and being part of an ongoing dialogue with civil society are key objectives for UNITAD.

Last month, in partnership with the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and

the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq, UNITAD organized in Baghdad the second high-level conference on the theme "Interfaith statement on the survivors and victims of ISIL". The conference brought together religious leaders from all governorates of Iraq and its diverse religious communities, who confirmed that ensuring accountability for ISIL's crimes and providing justice to all victims, regardless of their faith, are important steps towards reconciliation. UNITAD continues to have an important role to play in those processes.

Just last week, we held the fourth thematic round table of the UNITAD-non-governmental organizations dialogue forum, which focused on ISIL's destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq, an area in which UNITAD will be expanding its investigations in the coming months. ISIL's vicious destruction of cultural heritage was an attempt to erase Iraq's diverse cultural history. After the briefing I provided to the Security Council in December (see S/PV.8914), I visited the site of Nimrud, which had been blown up by ISIL in 2015 — a 3,000-year-old site reduced to a pile of rubble. I was devastated by the destruction of that and other cultural heritage sites I visited recently.

At the same time, I continue to be impressed by Iraq's ongoing efforts to restore those sites. I can compare the restoration of cultural heritage sites to our work at UNITAD in the pursuit of accountability and justice. It takes years and is a painstaking process, but it is work that must be done. At UNITAD, we are committed to continuing our investigation to ensure that the ISIL members responsible for atrocity crimes in Iraq are held accountable before the competent courts in Iraq and elsewhere.

Extrabudgetary contributions to the UNITAD Trust Fund have proven to be vital to our operations and the continuation of many investigative leads and distinct projects. Therefore, we continue to rely on voluntary contributions from Member States. We welcome the recent contributions by Denmark, France, India and Slovakia. We are also grateful for the recent commitments of additional funds made by the Netherlands and the United States of America. To date, 15 States have provided extrabudgetary funds to UNITAD, which is very encouraging.

At the same time, we call on more States to consider contributing financially to our work to enable us to take advantage of existing and future

justice opportunities. We encourage States to make unearmarked contributions to support our general operations so that we can maintain an agile, flexible and needs-based management of the funds. Without extrabudgetary funding, UNITAD's investigations and broader operations in pursuit of accountability will have to be curtailed. That also affects the assistance we provide to jurisdictions of Member States currently investigating and prosecuting the conduct of individuals affiliated with ISIL.

The Investigative Team increased its support to ongoing domestic proceedings in several Member States, in consultation with the Government of Iraq. As of today, a total of 15 Member States have requested assistance from UNITAD. Demands continue to increase, with more jurisdictions looking into requesting assistance. Perhaps the most notable contribution in that context is the landmark conviction for the crime of genocide of ISIL member Taha Al-Jumailly in Frankfurt last year. We also supported the Swedish Prosecution Authority during the trial of a woman who was charged and finally convicted for the war crime of enlisting her child as a soldier during her time with ISIL. That assistance included providing expert testimony on ISIL practices regarding enlistment, conscription and the use of child soldiers.

The Team has also continued to support the joint investigation team created by the national prosecution authorities of Sweden and France to adjudicate core international crimes committed by ISIL against the Yazidi community in 2015. UNITAD is assisting with a range of investigative steps, including focused interviews with Yazidi witnesses in Iraq and elsewhere and the collection of battlefield evidence related to Yazidi enslavement networks, as well as searches within our evidence holdings and database. In that way we aim to minimize the retraumatization of victims, in line with our commitment to a victim- and survivor-centric approach. The work with the joint investigation team also enables us to better identify and exploit linkages between foreign terrorist fighters across jurisdictions so as to facilitate prosecutions in a number of Member States.

Three weeks ago I conducted a joint field visit to Sinjar and Duhok with Ms. Alice Nderitu, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. We met with survivors of the genocide and of ISIL's sexual slavery, some of whom obtained their freedom only a couple of years ago and some of whom, I should emphasize,

still have relatives enslaved by ISIL to this very day. As I listened to those young people's thoughts and concerns, I saw pain and grief but also resilience and determination. We were sitting on the floor of a survivor's house, still under construction, on the outskirts of the Khanke refugee camp, where Yazidi survivors stressed the importance of the genocide conviction in Frankfurt and told us that it was what they want to see done in Iraq. I reiterated UNITAD's commitment to working for that goal, a commitment that we owe to the survivors, to international justice and to humankind at large.

The crimes committed by ISIL are some of the most gruesome acts we have seen in recent history. The individuals responsible for such acts must be identified and ultimately tried and convicted for their crimes at the national and international level. Only by prosecuting and referring such barbaric acts as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide will we be able to deliver justice to the many victims and survivors and ensure that their voices are heard. Only by remaining impartial and serving all the communities affected can we contribute to broader reconciliation processes in Iraq. UNITAD will continue its work on that path to accountability. I thank the Council for its support.

The President: I thank Mr. Ritscher for his briefing.

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of note 507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

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

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): We welcome the Special Adviser's report on the very important work that he and his team are doing.

The world was shocked by the horrific crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and by its barbaric methods and use of mass execution, torture and rape. We must maintain our collective determination to ensure accountability for all the suffering that ISIL has caused. The United Kingdom therefore reaffirms its strong support for the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD)

and the progress that it is making. In particular, we strongly support UNITAD's efforts to contribute to the domestic prosecution of ISIL members in 15 Member States, including Sweden and Germany. We also welcome UNITAD's thorough efforts to investigate the financing of ISIL's crimes through Bayt Al-Mal, or the "House of Money", as described by the Special Adviser. Detailed documentation of the House of Money is vital if we are to establish accountability for the full scope of ISIL's activity and determine the full ISIL hierarchy.

We reiterate our support for UNITAD's work with the Iraqi judiciary to develop the capacity to deal with the full range of those complex crimes. We hope to see it continue and strengthen, and we welcome the cooperation of the Iraqi Government with UNITAD's work.

We applaud the focus that UNITAD maintains on the welfare and experiences of survivors, as well as its continued efforts to engage with all the communities affected in Iraq, including ethnic and religious minorities. As the Special Adviser said, the resilience of those survivor groups is inspiring. In particular, ensuring that survivors of sexual enslavement and violence, such as the women and girls of the Yazidi community, can have their experiences documented safely and effectively is a first step towards achieving justice and accountability for those awful crimes. That is why UNITAD's investigative experts contributed to the development of the Murad Code, a global code of conduct for gathering information from survivors, which we launched with Nadia Murad under our recent presidency of the Security Council. We have also supported the International Organization for Migration and its work with the Directorate for Survivors' Care in Iraq, facilitating the design and implementation of an effective, accessible reparations mechanism.

The UNITAD mission deserves the Council's full support. UNITAD's close collaboration with the Government of Iraq is vital if we are to deliver the justice and accountability that the victims and survivors of ISIL atrocities deserve.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Special Adviser Christian Ritscher for his comprehensive briefing and welcome Ambassador Bahr Aluloom to today's meeting.

Delivering justice for the victims of crimes committed by Da'esh is a pivotal element in combating and eliminating terrorism. It also sends a clear message

to terrorists around the world that the international community is determined to hold them accountable for their heinous crimes. In that regard, the United Arab Emirates commends the considerable efforts of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) and the progress that has been made on several cases during the reporting period, particularly with the completion of the initial assessment report on the case related to Da'esh's development and use of chemical and biological weapons, as well as the investigations into the funding of its terrorist crimes.

We urge UNITAD to continue investigating crimes committed by Da'esh against local communities, including the Yazidis, and to complete its search for mass graves in Sinjar, Tal Afar and elsewhere in order to identify the victims. Priority must be given to completing the remaining case briefs without delay and to achieving justice for the families of the victims so they can bury their loved ones with dignity. Moreover, in accordance with resolution 2379 (2017), all the available evidence must be supplied to the relevant Iraqi authorities as the primary intended recipients, so that it can be used in court to hold Da'esh members accountable for their crimes and to ensure justice.

We commend UNITAD's efforts to provide expertise and technical support to Iraq, including providing the Government with an advanced Laboratory Information Management System, which uses DNA matching to identify victims. We emphasize the Team's important role in digitizing and archiving the evidence that is currently available at Iraqi courts to preserve it from any damage.

Furthermore, we commend the Team's use of advanced technology and applications, such as Zeteo, which has greatly improved the Team's ability to identify perpetrators of terrorist crimes. We encourage the further development of such methods, which can be replicated in future investigations related to similar crimes in other areas. That highlights the important role that technology plays in maintaining international peace and security.

The United Arab Emirates attaches special importance to the work carried out by the specialized unit in UNITAD that investigates crimes committed against women and children, including crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, while cooperating with

specialized agencies to provide psychological support to the victims. My country has been keen to support that unit and provided it with \$0.5 million, as we believe that it is critical to have a gender-responsive approach during investigations into Da'esh's crimes.

Supporting victims also includes the restoration and rebuilding of Iraq's deeply rooted cultural heritage, which Da'esh has attempted to destroy in order to completely erase the identity and history of Iraqi communities. The crimes committed by Da'esh have affected historical and sacred sites, such as Al-Tahera and Al-Saa'a Churches, as well as the Al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul. The United Arab Emirates is currently contributing to rebuilding those three landmarks in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as part of international efforts in the context of the Revive the spirit of Mosul initiative. We commend Iraq's commitment to its history and diverse heritage as well as its fight against any attempt to obliterate its identity.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates stresses that there is a need to continue working with international partners to ensure that Da'esh is defeated, prevent the spread of its violent ideology wherever it appears and bring members of that terrorist group to justice to hold them accountable for their crimes against innocent people. In that regard, we welcome UNITAD joining the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, and we affirm the keenness of the United Arab Emirates to enhance cooperation with UNITAD and support it in carrying out its tasks effectively.

Mrs. Onanga (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Adviser, Mr. Christian Ritscher, for his very detailed briefing on the progress in the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). I assure him of Gabon's support. I acknowledge the presence among us of the Permanent Representative of Iraq, whom I welcome.

Let me begin by reiterating Gabon's condemnation in the strongest terms of all acts of terrorism throughout the world and to affirm our full support for the Security Council's counter-terrorism efforts. We support the Security Council's strategy to prevent the proliferation and use of chemical weapons by State and non-State actors, such as terrorist organizations, and to combat impunity.

The eighth report (see S/2022/434) of the Investigative Team, submitted for our review, highlights the significant progress made in the area of investigation during the reporting period. That progress is based on the sound cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi authorities. We welcome such cooperation, and call for it to be strengthened in order to ensure accountability for the crimes.

We welcome the judicious use of state-of-the-art technology, in particular the new strategies to accelerate the scanning of evidence documents, thereby facilitating access to those documents and saving considerable time.

We also note with interest the Team's support to Iraqi investigating judges and investigators in the preparation of cases for the prosecution of Da'esh members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

We welcome the Team's efforts in investigating crimes against Christians, such as the perpetration of sexual violence and the enslavement of Christian communities by Da'esh, as well as forced religious conversions.

We commend the practical, survivor-centred approach, with a particular focus on gender mainstreaming throughout the investigation process, which enabled access to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and other vulnerable survivors despite difficult social constraints.

The demand for accountability for members of Da'esh is part of both the fight against terrorism and the rebuilding of the Iraqi nation and State. The fight against impunity also involves the international community due to Da'esh's cross-border activities. To that end, my country supports the cooperation between the Investigative Team and the National Security Advisory to conclude an agreement that would facilitate information-sharing in the context of United Nations sanctions and the national assets freeze.

In the same vein, we welcome the ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition against Da'esh held in Morocco on 12 May. It is crucial to address the global threat posed by Da'esh through a holistic and comprehensive coordination of efforts.

Of course, the Iraqi Government has the primary responsibility to try those responsible for crimes committed on its territory. As such, all initiatives must

be carried out with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its jurisdiction over crimes committed against another person on its territory, in accordance with paragraph 39 of the UNITAD mandate (see S/2018/118, annex).

In conclusion, we would like to stress the urgent need to create the conditions for restorative justice for the killings of Iraqi people, especially Yazidis, in relation to the war crimes, crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity committed by Da'esh. It is imperative that an inclusive approach be taken to maximize the collection of information to better ensure the establishment of facts.

Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Christian Ritscher and his team for the presentation of the eighth report (see S/2022/434) on the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), which reflects the progress made in the ongoing investigations.

In particular, we highlight the importance of the assessment on the use of chemical and biological weapons by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq, where the findings are conclusive in relation to the attack perpetrated in Taza Khurmatu on 8 March 2016. We agree with Mr. Ritscher's decision to prioritize the investigation of crimes committed by ISIL using chemical weapons given their immense gravity and their prohibition under international law. The international community cannot afford to let those crimes go unpunished. Otherwise, we run the risk that other actors, State and non-State, in other places will also test our collective determination for accountability.

For those reasons, we agree with the point made in the report that, now that we have the amount of evidence collected by UNITAD, we must move from an investigative stage to a new phase of prosecutions. It is commendable that this reporting period saw a doubling of the amount of documentary evidence that has been preserved and digitized by UNITAD members.

We must therefore not lose sight of the fact that the ultimate goal of all these investigations is the criminal prosecution, in both national and international courts, of those individuals found responsible for all war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by ISIL in Iraq. We reiterate the importance of the role that the International Criminal Court can play in this

regard. Central to the success of UNITAD's work, however, lies cooperation with the Iraqi authorities. We recognize that there has been progress on this front. The exhumation of three mass graves in Sinjar last March is precisely a testament to that positive cooperation.

Undoubtedly, the good faith participation of the national authorities is necessary so that the pending investigations can be concluded and so that the families of the victims can have access to the truth and, with it, to reconciliation and reconstruction of the social fabric. On this also depends that the holding of fair trials, with full respect for due process, in which the affected country itself sets the standard in the administration of justice. In this regard, it is essential that pending national legislation be adopted so as to provide substance for the criminal trials of those who have committed the crimes that have been investigated by UNITAD. We hope that the next report of the Secretary-General will reflect even greater progress to this end and that the number of prosecutions opened, thanks to the collection and preservation of evidence by UNITAD, will continue to increase and gradually translate into reparations for victims.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Ritscher for his substantive briefing on the outcome of six months of work by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). We have studied closely the eighth report (see S/2022/434) of the investigative team he heads and welcome the completion of the preparations for the initial case-assessment report investigating the development and use by terrorists of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq.

As we see from the report, the use of such weapons was encouraged by the High Command of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We hope that the Investigative Team will redouble its efforts for fuller collection of data and comprehensive analysis of all available information on ISIL's chemical programme in Iraq.

It would probably be naive to think that, given their programme to develop and use chemical weapons in Iraq, terrorists from ISIL would not use a similar approach beyond the borders of the country as well, for example, in neighbouring Syria. And if, in this neighbouring State, the Western coalition is, at the same time, as usual striving to overthrow a legal

Government, then those terrorists would have every opportunity to evade responsibility and accountability, and the blame for their actions would be placed on the undesirable Government, after which a series of missile strikes would be carried out on its facilities.

Council members understand the matter to which I am referring: the plan that three permanent members of the Security Council — the United States, the United Kingdom and France — used on 14 April 2018, in an act of unprovoked and unjustified aggression of choice. At that time, they used cruise missiles launched from sea and from air to hit Douma, on the outskirts of Damascus.

The Investigative Team is working at a good tempo in investigating the functioning of ISIL's central treasury. We believe that this is one of the most promising areas from the point of view of collecting evidence, which will allow us to establish the main connections within ISIL and maybe identify the sponsors of that organization. The Russian delegation welcomes the investigation of crimes against the Sunni, Christian, Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities. We also note evidence continues to be collected on the aspects of investigation that have already been completed, including crimes against the Yazidi in Sinjar, the murder of students at the Tikrit Air Academy and the execution of Shia detainees in Badush Central Prison.

We emphasize that the mission of the UNITAD should not be limited only to the collection of evidence. First and foremost, the team's job is to support the domestic efforts in Iraq aimed at bringing terrorists to accountability within the framework of their respective national judicial systems. The main recipient of the evidence collected by the Team should be the Iraqi authorities themselves, as explicitly set forth in resolution 2379 (2017). We encourage them to be given this access as soon as possible. We are convinced that this will significantly speed up the process of holding people accountable for international crimes.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank the Special Adviser, Mr. Christian Ritscher, for his briefing and welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

Kenya commends the progress the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) has made in all aspects of inquiry, as reflected in its eighth report (see S/2022/434). We particularly welcome the completion of the compilation

of initial case briefs and the transition being made to the phase of building up of targeted case files against perpetrators identified as most responsible for the crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The successful completion of the perpetrator-focused phase requires continued cooperation of the Government of Iraq. In this regard, we are encouraged by the collaborative working modalities between the Team and the Iraqi authorities, and we hope that the Iraqi judiciary will extend the support needed in this endeavour.

Kenya recognizes the strides made by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) in implementing its mandate in support of domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable for its crimes in Iraq, including against women and girls, as well as minority groups, particularly the Yazidi people. We also welcome the efforts of the Special Adviser in line with his mandate to promote global accountability for crimes committed by ISIL and deliver justice for all survivors and victims, regardless of faith, gender or ethnicity, and despite significant security, technological, psychosocial and resource constraints.

Kenya supports the investigative initiatives of UNITAD to unearth key terrorist financial facilitators. This will go a long way towards holding terror operatives and facilitators accountable for their crimes. We also commend the ongoing information-sharing efforts among security agencies and the justice system to ensure the prosecution of ISIL operatives.

UNITAD's successes offer useful lessons in investigating similar acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed by ISIL and its affiliates in other parts of the world. Notably, ISIL's development and deployment of chemical weapons, exploitation of financial systems and use of foreign terrorist fighters have enabled it to grow its lethal power and enhanced its ability to spread its tentacles to other parts of the world.

In Africa, ISIL's affiliates in Somalia, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and countries in West Africa and the Sahel continue to be inspired to carry out complex attacks that are destabilizing Governments, terrorizing civilian populations and exacerbating State fragilities. In East Africa, Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaida-linked terrorist group, is the

premier peace and security threat. This terror group draws much influence from foreign terrorist fighters joining the group from ISIL and its affiliates. Kenya therefore continues to strongly call for the application of the full force of the counter-terrorism sanction regimes, including the regime established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), on all terrorist groups in equal measure and without favouritism.

In conclusion, Kenya commends the Iraqi Government for its continued collaboration with and support for UNITAD. We urge for enhanced funding by the international community to address existing operational and modern technological gaps to facilitate expedited investigations and the full implementation of the Team's mandate in accordance with the highest possible standards.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank the Special Adviser for his briefing and his leadership of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), as it carries out its challenging but critical mandate.

The United States welcomes the news that, as we heard from the Special Adviser, UNITAD is beginning to uncover how leaders of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) used the group's ill-gotten funds to finance its crimes, in particular to carry out genocide against Yazidis, Christians and Shia Muslims in the areas that it controlled, and crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing against those same groups, as well as against Sunni Muslims, Kurds and other minorities. The United States also welcomes that UNITAD is reconstructing its chain of command down to the local level in order to establish individual responsibility by perpetrators involved in specific crimes.

We also note that the evidence uncovered by UNITAD, including direct communications among senior leaders, reveals the methods ISIS used to develop chemical weapons. ISIS was intentional and thorough, conducting experiments on humans to optimize lethality; then the group incentivized the deployment of those deadly weapons by providing specific financial rewards for ISIS forces that deployed those weapons.

The United States joins others in commending the remarkable work of UNITAD's dedicated members in collecting, preserving, archiving and analysing the evidence of crimes by ISIS members. We are pleased to hear about UNITAD's successes in developing

innovative data-harvesting and storage solutions to the challenges posed by the millions of pages of documents and the vast digital content that the Special Adviser is working with.

We also welcome the reports of strong cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry and the courts, as well as provincial authorities and the Kurdistan Regional Government, particularly as UNITAD transitions to developing case files to document the crimes committed by specific individuals for use in prosecutions.

We also welcome news of the growing UNITAD collaboration with law enforcement authorities from outside Iraq as those States seek to prosecute their nationals who have committed crimes as foreign fighters. We welcome UNITAD's support for the Swedish Prosecution Authority during the trial of a Swedish national for war crimes committed during her time with ISIS, as we heard from the Special Adviser.

In the context of UNITAD's increasing ability to support prosecutions, the United States urges Member States to repatriate, rehabilitate, reintegrate and prosecute, as appropriate, their nationals who are foreign terrorist fighters or ISIS-associated family members in Iraq and Syria. UNITAD's work is core to reconciliation in Iraq. Transparent prosecutions that meet minimum fair-trial guarantees and legal protections will ensure accountability. The identification and return of remains to family members can provide dignified closure and community healing.

In conclusion, although diminished, ISIS remains intent on achieving its abhorrent goals. Through UNITAD's expert support of Iraqi efforts to hold ISIS members accountable, combined with the counter-terrorism operations of Iraqi forces and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, it will be increasingly clear to ISIS members and recruits that there is no future for ISIS.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I also thank Special Adviser Ritscher for his comprehensive briefing today.

Norway remains a steadfast supporter of the mandate of United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). Accountability for the crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq is a

prerequisite for the rule of law and sustainable peace in the country.

We are encouraged by the progress that the Team and Iraqi partners made during the current reporting period towards bringing ISIL perpetrators to justice. We also commend the Team for completing its initial case assessment report of ISIL's use of chemical and biological weapons, and we look forward to the final case brief for this critical investigative track, which should also be viewed in relation to the international non-proliferation architecture.

We welcome the progress reported in several other investigations, including with respect to crimes committed by ISIL against Christians, Yazidis and other minorities. We are pleased to note that the Team's priorities are beginning to shift from structural investigations to the preparation of specific case briefs to support the prosecution of individual perpetrators. That development is a clear sign of the Team's efficient work and a crucial step towards accountability.

With regard to cross-cutting thematic priorities, we once again applaud the Team for consistently employing a survivor-centred and age- and gender-sensitive approach across its work. We commend the Team for continuing to build its capacity in specialized cross-sectional areas, ensuring that investigative activities are conducted in line with international standards. In the context of the investigation of crimes against Christians, we note that approach has allowed the Team to "reach survivors of sexual and gender-based violence ... despite challenging social constraints". That is a critical investigative achievement, which is also a key priority for Norway.

Similarly, with regard to the investigation of ISIL's use of chemical and biological weapons, we note that the Team's previous report described the "underreported gender-related harms" (S/2021/974, para. 19) suffered by those targeted by such weapons. Upon the completion of the investigation's initial case assessment, we would have welcomed the inclusion of additional gender-related information in the current report (see S/2022/434).

Lastly, Norway is also pleased to note the robust partnership that continues between the Team and the Iraqi authorities, including on a wide range of capacity-building and technical assistance measures for strengthening national judicial institutions. We particularly commend Iraq on its active engagement

and cooperation in that regard. We would, however, be eager to learn more about UNITAD's efforts to support Iraq in the adoption of national legislation allowing for the prosecution of international crimes — a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the Team's mandate.

In conclusion, let me once again thank Special Adviser Ritscher for his briefing today. UNITAD's work remains key to ensuring accountability for ISIL's crimes, justice for survivors and sustainable peace for Iraq. The Special Adviser can count on Norway's continued support.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): At the outset, my delegation would like to welcome the eighth 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) (see S/2022/434). We also wish to express our gratitude to Special Adviser Christian Ritscher for the valuable briefing, which brings further understanding to the state of play of the key benchmarks in the implementation of resolution 2379 (2017).

The Security Council knows all too well that the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people, as well as their expectation for a swift, impartial and independent investigation into the crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and affiliated terrorist groups against civilians and vulnerable groups in Iraq, hinge firmly on the work of UNITAD.

We must therefore continue mobilizing the international community to remain engaged in seeking accountability, including by providing vital support for the investigative team to enable it to assist the Iraqi authorities to thoroughly carry out needed investigations into the crimes perpetrated by ISIL, especially the reported grave human rights violations and abuses, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and deliberate acts of vandalism targeted at cultural and religious sites.

Ghana holds the view that maintaining the momentum is necessary to hold accountable all those who believe that they can maintain impunity for parochial, ideological and religious gain, including the use of violence to terrorize vulnerable groups and individuals. Accountability is fundamental for dealing decisively with the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism.

In that context, it is imperative for the international community not to countenance any situation that allows the crimes committed by ISIL and affiliated groups in Iraq or anywhere else to go unpunished. Without effective accountability, we not only undermine the global fight against terrorism but potentially risk diminishing the hopes of victims and survivors for justice.

In joining our voice to that of other Council members in acknowledging the commendable progress that UNITAD has made, we note that a lot more can be done in the area of enhancing cooperation and information-sharing between UNITAD and the competent Iraqi authorities. In that regard, we would like to make the following three points.

First, it is important to ensure that the Investigative Team is mindful of the need for an Iraqi-owned and -led process. National ownership and support for the key strategic, operational and evidence-collection activities of UNITAD, in line with the terms of reference, is vital to building case files that can facilitate successful trials. In that respect, UNITAD should not seek to replace or act as an alternative to the Iraqi judicial system but should complement it by providing the requisite institutional support and resources to assist Iraqi investigative judges and investigators in the task of gathering and preserving evidence in order to help them prosecute crimes effectively.

Secondly, the Iraqi political and judicial authorities should continue to sustain the healthy cooperation and coordination that has characterized their relationship with the Investigative Team. We encourage the relevant Iraqi authorities to scale up their efforts to cut through administrative bottlenecks, red tape and bureaucracy in order to create the conditions and environment needed to support UNITAD's important work. It should not be lost on anyone, including the Iraqi officials, that evidence-based prosecutions are fundamental to ensuring that justice is obtained without discrimination or selectivity for all the citizens affected, with a view to fostering genuine national reconciliation.

Lastly, we would like to underline that international cooperation and multilateralism remain a vital component of any meaningful effort to degrade the capabilities of terrorist groups and curb the serious threats that they pose to international peace and security. Joint and coordinated action among all stakeholders and international partners, including the United Nations

system, is the only way to comprehensively prevent and combat terrorism, including dismantling the opaque and clandestine operations of terrorist groups and their leadership, structures, financing, ideology and decision-making processes.

In conclusion, Ghana affirms its support for the leadership of Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and looks forward to the successful implementation of UNITAD's mandate.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Special Adviser Ritscher for his briefing.

The collection of evidence is an important basis for pursuing accountability for the terrorist acts committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. China supports the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) in assisting the Iraqi Government with evidence-gathering. We welcome the overall progress that the Investigative Team has made, notably in its investigations of the use of chemical and biological weapons and terrorist financing, which will help to establish the conditions for pursuing accountability for acts of terrorism.

Iraq bears the primary responsibility for providing justice within its territory. The international community should show genuine respect for Iraq's sovereignty and jurisdiction over its territory and support it in pursuing accountability for terrorist crimes under its domestic law. We encourage UNITAD to continue to strengthen its cooperation with the Iraqi Government, especially with regard to the speedy and complete transfer of evidence to Iraq, in line with the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. If it wants to share evidence with other Member States, the Investigative Team should obtain the consent of the Iraqi Government and adhere to the principles of transparency and non-discrimination. UNITAD should continue to maintain constructive, cooperative relations with the Iraqi Government and assist it with capacity-building, evidence-collection and digitization, among other things. Its donation of a DNA laboratory information system to the Iraqi Government and assistance with digitization are commendable efforts. The application of new technologies for greater effectiveness in the area of counter-terrorism is a useful practice and can be an important reference point for the use of technologies in other fields.

It should be emphasized that UNITAD is an interim and transitional arrangement in support of Iraq's accountability efforts and should not become a permanent United Nations body. Last year's report by the Team (see S/2021/974) set out some preliminary ideas for a completion strategy, which we hope that UNITAD will further flesh out and implement.

Terrorism is the common enemy of humankind, and counter-terrorism transcends borders. The international community should continue to support Iraq in its efforts to fight terrorism and consolidate its hard-won counter-terrorism gains. We call on the countries concerned to expedite the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters in Iraq. It is also imperative to strengthen cooperation within the United Nations framework and oppose terrorism in all its forms. We must combat all terrorist organizations designated as such by the Security Council and avoid politicizing counter-terrorism and adopting double standards.

Ms. O'Sullivan (Ireland): Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of Iraq and thank Mr. Ritscher for his report (see S/2022/434) and briefing this afternoon. He can be assured of Ireland's strong support for the crucial 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 pursuing accountability for atrocity crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Iraq (ISIL).

Ireland welcomes the progress that UNITAD made across all its investigative lines of inquiry during the reporting period. We recognize that the cooperation with the Investigative Team by the Iraqi authorities, including the Kurdistan Regional Government, was essential to ensuring such progress. We welcome the completion of an initial case assessment report on ISIL's development and use of chemical and biological weapons, including in Taza Khurmatu in 2016. The calculated way in which ISIL sought to produce and deploy weapons of mass destruction is truly appalling. There must be accountability for that.

We were pleased to see significant progress in UNITAD's thematic investigation into sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by ISIL. The insights obtained by the Team through interviews with older Yazidi women demonstrate the real value and importance of both gender- and age-sensitive

investigative approaches. We also recognize the progress in investigating crimes against the LGBTQI+ community and would like to thank civil society for identifying witnesses to interview. While accountability and compensation for victims and survivors are crucial, so too is implementing psychosocial supports ensuring that their needs are met in the long term. More broadly, we commend the Team for its continued partnership with civil society, which has significantly boosted its evidence holdings.

As outlined by the Special Adviser, the Investigative Team's priorities have pivoted towards the identification of perpetrators most responsible for atrocity crimes and building targeted case files in cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary. That is an important step in moving from evidence-gathering to evidence-based trials. However, the key to advancing accountability for ISIL perpetrators and moving forward in sharing evidence between UNITAD and the Iraqi authorities is the continued effort to develop legislation enabling the domestic prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Ireland therefore calls on the relevant actors in Iraq to form a Government as soon as possible in order to make progress on such legislation as a matter of priority. We also reiterate our firm view that such legislation should not include the application of the death penalty.

The technical assistance and support provided by UNITAD to the Iraqi authorities is multifaceted, ranging from evidence digitization and preservation to forensic expertise, the excavation of mass graves and training for judges and investigators. We note that the European Union (EU) has played an important role in enhancing UNITAD's digital capacities through the EU digitization project, and we strongly urge for the continuation of that important technical assistance.

Beyond Iraq, we also welcome the continued assistance provided by UNITAD in support of investigations by national authorities in a range of jurisdictions, including in Europe, and we note that extrabudgetary funding remains crucial to both the speed of investigations in Iraq and to UNITAD's response to assistance requests from Member States. Ireland commends the States that have exercised universal jurisdiction to prosecute atrocity crimes committed by ISIL members in Iraq, and we noted most recently the support that UNITAD provided to the Swedish Prosecution Authority, which assisted in the conviction of a Swedish woman for failing to protect

her minor son from recruitment and use as a child soldier by ISIL.

In that regard, we encourage UNITAD to build on progress to date and enhance evidence-sharing cooperation with both the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation.

Before concluding, allow me to reiterate Ireland's steadfast support for the Special Adviser's work in delivering justice for the victims and survivors of ISIL atrocity crimes in Iraq.

Mrs. Aguiar Barboza (Brazil): I would like to thank Special Adviser Ritscher and his team for their work and for his comprehensive update on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD). I would also like to welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq and commend the Iraqi Government for its cooperation with UNITAD in its work.

The serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq deserve the utmost condemnation. The perpetrators' utter disregard for the law and for civilian lives must not go unpunished. Promoting accountability for ISIL crimes in Iraq is key to long-term stability in the country.

Members of all religions across the country have suffered the consequences of the crimes of Da'esh/ISIL, and all survivors must receive support in their efforts to move on with their lives within their communities. We therefore praise the progress made in investigations concerning core crimes under international law committed by ISIL against the Christian community, as well as other ethnic and religious groups in Iraq.

We also welcome the Special Adviser's conclusion in his report (see S/2022/434) that UNITAD has begun a new central stage of its work, namely, the development of case files to hold ISIL leaders accountable for their crimes. It goes without saying that, in implementing its mandate, UNITAD must be impartial and independent and act consistently with the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant norms of international law.

The international rules on the allocation of jurisdiction among States, in particular, is one such relevant branch of international law. We therefore

stress the importance of respecting Iraqi sovereignty in the pursuit of accountability for crimes committed on its territory, including in the sharing of information by UNITAD with third countries.

We recall that UNITAD's mandate to support domestic prosecutions has the Iraqi authorities as its primary intended recipient. In a spirit of partnership, we commend the collaboration between UNITAD and the Iraqi Government in the collection, storage and analysis of evidence of the atrocities committed by ISIL. We also acknowledge UNITAD's efforts to build the capacity of Iraq's judicial system. Our collective responsibility to promote justice and seek redress for the victims of international crimes, including through domestic courts assisted by UNITAD, can be addressed properly only as part of a collective, coordinated effort.

Another important aspect of UNITAD's activities is oversight, which is also valid for other investigative bodies of the United Nations that are preventive in nature. Justice can be delivered only within the limits of the law, and we must be able to ascertain and oversee compliance by United Nations organs with those limits.

To conclude, we take note of UNITAD's need to recruit expert personnel to support its activities in Iraq and encourage efforts to enhance geographic diversity across UNITAD staff.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I thank Special Adviser Ritscher for his briefing, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the meeting.

The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) was set up by the Security Council to assist the Government and the people of Iraq in their pursuit of justice for the heinous crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The victims of ISIL's horrific crimes in Iraq also include 39 Indian nationals. The implementation of UNITAD's mandate, which includes the collection and timely sharing of evidence of ISIL crimes perpetrated in Iraq, will contribute to ensuring accountability for those crimes and fighting the impunity of terror.

Ensuring accountability for ISIL crimes, especially those committed against minority communities in Iraq, is also critical for achieving a smooth reconciliation process and long-term peace in Iraq. The ongoing investigations into 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 Government of Iraq's efforts aimed at national reconciliation and delivering justice.

We strongly believe that the credibility of our collective fight against terrorism can be strengthened only when we can ensure accountability for the grave and inhumane acts of terror committed by terrorists and those who foment, support and finance terrorism. India's financial support to UNITAD in those two key areas of its investigation will further strengthen that objective.

We welcome the completion of an initial case assessment of the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq. The preliminary observations of the report are deeply concerning, as they reveal that a terrorist group with considerable territory under its control can develop and deploy those deadly weapons within a short period of time by misusing the State's educational, financial and commercial infrastructure.

The international community needs to pay closer attention to that issue, since such a template could be replicated by other terrorist groups that enjoy considerable territorial control. We encourage UNITAD to share its findings in relation to that investigation with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), which has the mandate to assist countries in preventing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors.

ISIL's destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq is widely known. In its preliminary investigations, UNITAD identified a number of such crimes, including the destruction of shrines and culturally significant sites belonging to Iraq's minority communities. India's financial contribution to UNITAD will strengthen the Team's investigations in that important area and enable prosecutions for such crimes.

UNITAD's work in Iraq must continue to be underpinned by close cooperation and coordination with the Iraqi authorities and their capacity-building efforts. We commend the Team's joint work with the Iraqi judiciary and its assistance projects in areas such as the digitization of records, DNA forensics and mass grave excavations. We also note the increase in the number of Iraqi experts who are part of UNITAD. Augmenting the capacities of Iraqi agencies and experts is crucial from

a long-term perspective and we encourage UNITAD to continue its good work in that area.

We are also happy to note that the evidence collected and shared by UNITAD with third countries has resulted in the prosecution and conviction of ISIL terrorists. Similar evidence-sharing with the Iraqi authorities should commence at the earliest opportunity in order to support trials and prosecutions in Iraqi courts. 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 differing interpretation of UNITAD's mandate. That needs to be rectified soon.

The people of Iraq have made immense sacrifices in Iraq's fight against terrorism. As a country that has been a victim of terrorism for many decades, we share their pain and grief. Justice should be delivered to the victims of ISIL's crimes and their families, but that cannot happen until those responsible for the atrocities are held fully accountable. The full and timely implementation of UNITAD's mandate would contribute to securing justice for those affected.

Mrs. Dime Labille (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Christian Ritscher, Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), for his presentation of the Team's eighth report (see S/2022/434), submitted pursuant to resolution 2597 (2021).

I welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Iraq, which once again demonstrates his country's commitment to working closely with the international community and with UNITAD to ensure that justice is delivered for all the victims of the crimes committed by Da'esh. We congratulate all members of UNITAD for their outstanding work, sometimes in difficult conditions, and reiterate our support for the Team.

Thanks to UNITAD's actions on the ground, together with national and local authorities, significant progress has been made. In particular, we welcome the completion of the first report on the development of chemical and biological weapons and the use of chemical weapons by Da'esh in Iraq, which is based in particular on the crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar dating from August 2014.

We also welcome the establishment of an analysis laboratory, the progress on the financial investigation into Da'esh's central treasury of Bayt Al-Mal and the excavation completed at the beginning of March of three mass graves in and around Hardan in Sinjar district, in partnership with the medical and legal department of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, which led to the discovery of more than 50 bodies. I would now like to focus on three points.

First, the collection and preservation of evidence are at the core of UNITAD's mandate, and its progress in digitizing evidence is crucial to preventing the loss of evidence or damage to it. We encourage UNITAD to continue that work in order to reach its goal, by the end of 2022, of digitizing half of the evidence that it currently holds in hard-copy format. We also welcome the ongoing commitment of the Investigative Team to Iraqi civil society. A dialogue between UNITAD and civil society is essential to meeting the goals at the core of its mandate. That dialogue has also made it possible to collect valuable witness statements, thereby enabling progress to be made on investigations and shedding light on crimes committed by Da'esh.

Secondly, cooperation is essential to combating impunity for crimes committed by Da'esh, and UNITAD's enhanced cooperation with the Iraqi Government has made a considerable contribution to the progress it has made. We also underscore the importance of continued awareness-raising by UNITAD among the Iraqi judicial authorities regarding the mechanism's mandate, as defined by resolution 2379 (2017) of 21 December 2017, including by training Iraqi investigating judges in the area of international criminal law and in preparing case files and prosecutions against members of Da'esh for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. We encourage the Iraqi authorities to continue their dialogue with UNITAD on those issues. More broadly, France calls on all interested States to support the work of UNITAD through enhanced cooperation and commensurate financial support. However, it is also important to recall the unwavering position of the United Nations with regard to sharing evidence in judicial proceedings that might result in the death penalty, regardless of location.

Thirdly, the fate of the victims must remain our primary concern. In cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, UNITAD is currently training 80 social workers and psychologists in providing support to victims, which is a key pillar of

reconstruction and reconciliation for the Iraqi people. That victim-centred approach, as well as the gender-sensitive approach adopted by UNITAD in all of its work, is essential.

In conclusion, France reiterates its commitment to combating terrorism and impunity. The threat posed by Da'esh has not disappeared. That terrorist organization continues to carry out frequent deadly attacks. Together with its partners, France will continue to stand with Iraq in combating terrorism and remains determined to continue working to ensure Da'esh's lasting defeat. Given the risk of Da'esh's resurgence, the Council must remain mobilized, including by firmly supporting the work of UNITAD. Combating impunity for all perpetrators of crimes is an imperative for stabilization, reconstruction and reconciliation for the Iraqi people as a whole.

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

I thank Special Adviser Ritscher for his work and for the valuable information he provided to the Council today. I also welcome the presence of the Ambassador of Iraq at today's meeting.

Albania commends the excellent 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 collecting, documenting and preserving evidence of crimes, including sexual violence and crimes targeting minorities, as well as the use of biological and chemical weapons by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We welcome the support and the strong cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi authorities, as well as their cooperation with national judicial authorities. Sharing information with relevant Member States will enable justice systems to prosecute those responsible for financing, supporting and carrying out terrorist activities worldwide. We commend the authorities for their work to rebuild cultural heritage damaged or destroyed by ISIL.

ISIL has been defeated. The caliphate no longer exists. Yet dormant cells and affiliate groups still present an imminent and global threat in various regions, and the spread of ISIL in Africa is extremely worrying. We need united global efforts and coordination to win the fight against terrorism in all its forms and shapes more than ever. Albania remains fully committed to accountability. We reiterate that delivering justice is

not and should not be optional. It is a must everywhere, including in enabling the Iraqi people to rebuild a better and peaceful future. It is also a reminder to all perpetrators that they will be held to account for their actions and that they will answer for their crimes. Regional and international cooperation is important in that regard. We must move from evidence-collection to extradition to judicial proceedings at the national level.

While it is vital to legally prosecute all persons responsible for crimes against humanity, torture and inhumane treatment, we need to ensure that all measures taken to combat terrorism comply with international law and international humanitarian law and fully respect human rights. Albania urges Member States to repatriate and prosecute, as appropriate, all individuals involved in terrorist activities, as well as to facilitate their reintegration into society by providing them and their family members with secure jobs, housing options and education. There should be a special focus on the needs of children, and the best interests of the child must be the guiding principle. Albania has successfully repatriated dozens of women and children from detention camps in Syria and Iraq and provided them with the means they need to start a new life.

Ending impunity is imperative for Iraq's stabilization, reconstruction and reconciliation. The Security Council must show unity and support United Nations mechanisms in preventing the resurgence of ISIL, Da'esh and their affiliate groups in Iraq and elsewhere. Strengthening cooperation at all levels and sharing data with all the relevant actors, encouraging holistic civil-society engagement, supporting judicial mechanisms for fair trials and guaranteeing and protecting human rights are all essential tools in winning the war against terrorism.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would again like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in the Council's meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the honour, as the representative of my country, to convey its thanks and gratitude for the efforts

of the United Nations and its main organs through its resolutions, recommendations and decisions, and for all international efforts to support Iraq in combating terrorism and bringing terrorists to justice. And I would like to congratulate Albania on its presidency of the Council this month. We wish you and your team every success in your endeavours, Mr. President. I would also like to thank Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and his team for his briefing to the Council and for highlighting the most important paragraphs of the eighth report (see S/2022/434) issued by the United Nations Investigative Team (UNITAD), which covers its activities in my country during the reporting period.

During the implementation of resolution 2597 (2021), Iraq looks forward to continuing the work of prosecuting all who have been involved in the terrorist organization Da'esh and who have assisted, funded and provided it with logistic and cyber support, as well as of prosecuting crimes committed by Da'esh related to smuggling oil and artefacts during the period when it was in control.

Following Mr. Ritscher's important briefing, we commend his report, which addressed several important points that ensured the progress that has been made in the Team's work in Iraq. That was achieved by collaborating and cooperating with the Government of Iraq and by opening new investigation tracks for the crimes committed by the terrorist organization against all the people of Iraq so as to achieve accountability in cooperation with the Iraqi national authorities.

In that regard, we also commend the efforts of the Investigative Team and its Head to promote universal accountability for the crimes committed by the terrorist organization Da'esh. At the same time, we emphasize that criminal accountability is long overdue in Iraq and that the victims and their families are still waiting for justice to be served. UNITAD was established to serve justice and provide reparations for the horrific crimes that were committed against the Iraqi people.

It should be noted that the major challenge facing the Team in the coming period is to deliver justice and to submit all evidence to the Iraqi Government as soon as possible, whether obtained by the Team or provided by Iraq and developed using innovative technology, for use in Iraqi national courts. UNITAD's mandate, in accordance with resolution 2379 (2017) and its terms of reference, is to collect, preserve and store evidence pertaining to the crimes that terrorist Da'esh committed

in Iraq and to present that evidence to Iraq to enable it to conduct fair trials and to achieve justice and ensure redress for the victims. UNITAD's mandate is not complete if it stops at collecting, preserving and storing evidence without allowing the use of that evidence in national legal contexts.

The eighth report mentions that the Investigative Team has completed its investigations in four important cases. That progress in the Team's work and the collection of evidence in those four cases provide a significant opportunity that UNITAD should take up by handing over such evidence to be used in national trials to prosecute Da'esh elements responsible for those crimes.

In that regard, we recall that the Team's sixth report explicitly mentions that those trials could be conducted by the end of 2021 or the beginning of 2022. That therefore represents a commitment, and we should cooperate to fulfil it within the time limits specified in the report. In that context, we hope and reiterate the importance for Iraq and the international community to take quick, effective and practical steps to submit the evidence to the Iraqi Government and conduct national trials.

Despite UNITAD's efforts and the ongoing and increasing cooperation with the Iraqi Government to fulfil the Investigative Team's mandate, Iraq believes that the Team has gone a long way in collecting, preserving and storing evidence. My country's Government appreciates those efforts and acknowledges the difficulties in searching for and collecting evidence.

We are aware of the scope of the challenges facing the Team. However, the Iraqi Government is also aware of the mounting pressure from the Iraqi people in general and the families of the victims in particular to achieve accountability. We highlight that the Government of Iraq, in collaboration with the Iraqi National Coordinating Committee, looks forward to achieving the Team's mandate.

The Government of Iraq reaffirms its commitment to cooperating with the international Investigative Team and to providing all the necessary assistance through the Iraqi National Coordinating Committee and to support the Team in fulfilling its mandate, in full respect for Iraq's sovereignty and national jurisdiction over the crimes committed on its territory and against its people.

In conclusion, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to 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 perpetrators to justice before national courts. We would like also to express our thanks and appreciation to Special Adviser Ritscher and his team for their efforts and the progress made in UNITAD's activities despite the challenges facing them. We also thank them for exchanging experiences with Iraqi national authorities and shedding light on the violations committed by terrorist Da'esh against the Iraqi people. We wish Mr. Ritscher and his team every success in their work.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.