



Security Council

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Letter dated 18 December 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, Special Adviser of the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “Threats to international peace and security” convened on Thursday, 10 December 2020. A statement was also submitted by the representative of Iraq.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the enclosed briefing and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jerry Matthews **Matjila**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Statement by 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, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan**

I am honoured to be able to address the Security Council this afternoon to present the fifth report (see S/2020/1107) on 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).

Today marks three years since the Government of Iraq was able to proclaim that the sacrifices and courage of the Iraqi people had prevailed and that all territories in their country had been liberated from the shadow of Da'esh. I wish to begin today by recognizing the continued strength and resilience of all communities of Iraq, which have been so central both in delivering that victory and in taking the subsequent steps, together with our team, to deliver justice for the victims and survivors of Da'esh crimes.

Last month, I was again able to personally bear witness to the strength and courage of those communities, standing side by side with the families of victims at the “grave of the mothers” site at the Solagh Technical Institute in Sinjar, as our Team supported its excavation. The mass grave serves as a reminder of the depths of horrors inflicted by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on the people of Iraq, containing the remains of teenage children and women executed after having been deemed to be past child-bearing age.

In speaking with the sons, daughters and other relatives of those whose remains lay in that grave, I was struck, as I have been so often in my engagement with impacted communities in Iraq, by the painfully present legacy of trauma that ISIL has left in its wake. Our work at those sites and the presence of those who have lost their family members at the hands of ISIL underline both the continued urgency of our task and the need to ensure that our work is conducted in a manner sensitive to the experiences of those whom we seek to serve.

The psychosocial support provided on site by UNITAD experts and the holding of a Yazidi religious ceremony upon the commencement of excavations reflect our attempts to ensure that those who have suffered from the crimes of Da'esh receive the compassion and understanding they need, as we work with them to hold the perpetrators to account. It is my personal commitment that, as we continue our excavations in Zaghrtiyah, Anbar and Mosul early next year, our Team will ensure that the work, and indeed all of our investigative activities, are guided by a trauma-informed approach.

The recommencement of mass grave excavations one month ago provides one example of the way in which the Team has developed innovative solutions and drawn on its partnership with survivors, Iraqi national counterparts and other actors in order to confront the unprecedented challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) over the past six months.

New approaches have been required across all aspects of our work. The collection of testimonial evidence has continued following the development of new protocols facilitating the conduct of remote interviews. The development of a new online portal allowing for the submission of evidence directly to the Team provides a safe, secure and user-friendly platform through which we have been able to empower members of impacted communities to come forward with their accounts.

Through collaboration with Iraqi security services, we have been able to develop enhanced procedures for the movement of investigators in Iraq, ensuring that the most high-priority field activities can continue in compliance with COVID-19 travel restrictions. In parallel, we have partnered with leading technology companies in order to bring cutting-edge analytical tools into our work, significantly reducing the time needed for large-scale data processing. Through a recent initiative with the Microsoft Corporation, the Team has strengthened its ability to utilize facial detection and recognition, machine translation, and automatic detection and labelling of videos with graphic content.

Drawing on those innovations, I can confirm to the Council that progress has continued in our key lines of investigation. As reflected in my report, that continued momentum allows us to now envisage the finalization of the first thematic case briefs in the first half of next year, addressing our investigations into crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar and the massacre of unarmed air cadets and other personnel in Tikrit.

In parallel, the Team has continued to expand its lines of investigation, with six dedicated field investigation units now in place, including three new units established in large part thanks to generous financial contributions made by the United States and the United Kingdom. As a result, investigations in relation to crimes committed against the Christian, Kaka'i, Shabak, Sunni and Turkmen Shia communities are also now progressing rapidly.

That diversification of our investigative work represents the realization of an undertaking I gave to the Council at the outset of our work — that we will ensure there is no “hierarchy of victim” (*S/2020/547, annex 1, p. 4*) in our approach to the implementation of our mandate. All communities in Iraq suffered at the hands of ISIL and all of them must be engaged in efforts to hold ISIL to account.

Faced with the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, UNITAD has further strengthened its cooperation with Iraqi authorities and those of the Kurdistan region. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the National Coordinating Committee of the Government of Iraq for the excellent support that it has provided during this extraordinary period.

That cooperation is reflected in a significant step we have recently taken with the Government of Iraq and the International Commission on Missing Persons through the establishment of a joint national mass graves excavation strategy. For the first time, the strategy provides a unified, coherent framework guiding action across all mass grave excavation work in Iraq.

Excavations are now clearly aligned with the criminal investigative priorities of both Iraqi authorities and UNITAD, with support provided by the Team in the deployment of advanced technological tools and evidence-collection practices to ensure that such sites are addressed in line with international standards. The utmost priority is also being given to ensuring the prompt return of remains to the families of victims, which, it has been confirmed, will commence before the end of this year.

A major evidence-digitization project is now under way, aimed at making the vast documentary archives held by Iraqi authorities fully accessible for use in criminal proceedings for the first time. More than 18 Iraqi authorities have now engaged in the project, completing initial evidence-assessment surveys and confirming existing challenges in evidence storage and processing.

That initial work has underlined the significant scale of evidentiary material that will ultimately be collected, stored and made available in criminal proceedings through the initiative. Through our recent engagement with one counter-terrorism

court in northern Iraq, the Team has identified tens of thousands of pieces of evidentiary material, including a wide range of internal ISIL records of potential relevance to ongoing cases against identified perpetrators.

During my recent meeting with His Excellency the Prime Minister of Iraq, we recognized that it is through such a unified approach that we can together ensure that the evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq is fully harnessed in domestic efforts to hold those responsible to account. That collaborative approach has also been reflected in my recent meetings with the Prime Minister and President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, to whom I am grateful for their ongoing support in the implementation of the mandate of the Team.

As reflected in my report, that commitment to delivering meaningful accountability for ISIL crimes has also extended to recent action taken by the Iraqi authorities with respect to the legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL members in Iraq. I have been very encouraged in recent months by the efforts made in the Iraq Council of Representatives to take forward legislation that would allow for the prosecution of ISIL crimes under Iraqi domestic law as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

That would be a significant step forward in responding to the calls of survivors for prosecutions to reflect the true nature and gravity of the crimes inflicted upon them by ISIL. I am further encouraged that such legislation contemplates a modality through which UNITAD may support such prosecutions in a manner consistent with its terms of reference. The initiative should engender the support of all Member States seeking to promote accountability for ISIL crimes.

In the past six months, our cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary has entered a new phase, with agreement reached on a new project through which the Team will provide training and support to Iraqi investigative judges in building case files for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. I am pleased to note that progress has already been made in that regard, with initial case files identified for development in relation to the widespread sexual slavery committed by ISIL and a high-level member of ISIL who is currently in detention.

I wish to emphasize that the arrangement for the provision of meaningful support by UNITAD to Iraqi investigative judges represents an important moment in the implementation of our mandate. Allied with the potential adoption of legislation in Iraq allowing for the prosecution of international crimes, we can, for the first time, begin to see a clear path towards the fulfilment of the promise made by the Council to survivors and impacted communities three years ago in resolution 2379 (2017).

As I have reflected previously to the Council, that commitment is not made good solely through the collection and preservation of evidence. It is not sufficient for us to simply gather evidence of ISIL crimes. Our commitment will be satisfied only when the evidence is presented in court and survivors of ISIL atrocities are able to see their abusers held accountable in accordance with the rule of law.

To that end, I can also confirm to the Council that I have continued to engage with the Government of Iraq with a view to establishing modalities for the sharing of evidence with the competent Iraqi authorities in accordance with the terms of reference. In parallel, we have also reinforced our engagement with national authorities in other jurisdictions through the provision of support in ongoing domestic proceedings in line with our mandate.

In the past six months, that spirit of partnership in the face of adversity has also extended to our engagement with all parts of Iraqi society. Our cooperation

with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in particular has been strengthened through the establishment and initial meetings of the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum. The creation of that platform represents the fulfilment of a priority I had set at the outset of our work to ensure that all parts of Iraqi civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations connected to the communities of Iraq, benefit from a dedicated space in which they can engage openly with our Team.

Those entities have already served as crucial partners in the implementation of our mandate through their role in facilitating engagement with impacted communities and empowering survivors to come forward with their accounts. I am delighted that we now have a forum in which we can benefit from their expertise and unique perspective.

In addition to our partnership with Iraqi civil society, I have continued to be profoundly grateful to the religious leadership of Iraq for the support of its representatives for our work. In July, building on the adoption of the landmark interfaith statement on the survivors and victims of ISIL earlier this year, I was delighted to host a joint meeting with the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and with Religions for Peace, at which the leaders of the Shia, Sunni, Yazidi, Christian and Kaka'i faiths in Iraq reiterated their common commitment to support the prosecution of ISIL members in fair trials, in cooperation with UNITAD.

As reflected in the interfaith statement itself, the collective support of faith leaders across Iraq for the work of our Team represents a crucial repudiation of any claim by Da'esh to scriptural legitimacy. It is by divorcing their criminal actions from any religious basis or justification that we can inoculate future generations in Iraq — and globally — from attempts to radicalize the most vulnerable members of society. In that spirit, I am delighted that His Holiness Pope Francis will visit Iraq in the coming year.

Two years after the arrival of our initial team in Baghdad, the progress that we have made in our investigative work, allied with the crucial partnerships that we have developed with our Iraqi counterparts, has allowed us to begin now to consider what the ultimate fulfilment of our mandate will look like. As reflected in my report, with a view to establishing a comprehensive framework for the next stages of our work, we have enhanced our investigative strategy in order to ensure the effective delivery of its three mutually supportive pillars.

Through the production of thematic case briefs outlining the constituent elements of crimes substantiated by our investigations, the finalization of individual case files tying Da'esh members to the crimes they have committed and the provision of targeted support for ongoing proceedings, I believe that in the coming year we will significantly strengthen the basis on which Iraqi authorities and those of other States can take forward domestic proceedings in relation to those members of Da'esh most responsible for its crimes.

While the challenges of the past six months have been unprecedented, the Team looks forward to the coming year with renewed hope that the legitimate demands for justice of survivors will be met. The unique partnership underpinning the Team's mandate — between independent investigations based on close collaboration with national authorities and international standards adapted to domestic contexts — is working. That innovative model of criminal accountability, developed by the Council three years ago, now provides an opportunity to instigate a paradigm shift in the investigation and prosecution of Da'esh crimes. In seeking to grasp this moment, the Team will continue to rely on Council members' unanimous support.

Annex II**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Philippe Kridelka**

[Original: French]

At the outset, I would like to thank Special Adviser Karim Khan for his report (see S/2020/1107) and, once again, enlightening briefing to the Security Council.

I will address three points today: the need to bring justice to the victims of atrocious crimes during the reconstruction and reconciliation process in Iraq; the contribution of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD); and, lastly, the support for efforts to comply with United Nations policies and best practices and international law.

First, Belgium commends Mr. Khan and the Team for the considerable progress made in the implementation of their mandate. Thanks in particular to the exchanges it has had with all segments of Iraqi society, the Investigation Team has broadened and diversified its avenues of investigation by ensuring an interest in the various communities that fell victim to Da'esh crimes — whether Christians, Sunnis, women or members of the burgeoning LGBTI community. Moreover, an increasing number of its investigative priorities have entered the phase of evidentiary consolidation and legal analysis.

All of that, combined with its work to rigorously structure its investigative outputs to support prosecutions, will finally enable UNITAD to pave the way for numerous criminal proceedings to begin. In doing so, that transitional justice mechanism will contribute to the reconstruction and reconciliation among the various communities in Iraq. The fight against impunity for all the crimes committed there must indeed constitute an essential component of the process. The Iraqi authorities' strengthened cooperation with the Investigation Team is in that regard a very encouraging sign, which Belgium welcomes.

Secondly, my country notes with satisfaction that the Investigation Team has strengthened its support for the national authorities of third States in response to their requests for assistance. That support is essential for two reasons. On the one hand, many procedures are under way in those countries, particularly in Europe. On the other hand, the resulting cooperation between the Iraqi judicial authorities and those of third countries will most certainly contribute in the longer term to the opening of specific cases in Iraq.

That brings me to my third and last point. In accordance with resolution 2379 (2017), which established the Investigation Team, the Iraqi authorities must remain the primary beneficiary of the evidence gathered by UNITAD. To that end, Mr. Khan and the Team have developed several cooperation activities with Iraq. Belgium particularly commends the support of the Investigation Team for the legislative work aimed at enabling the prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, as well as the assistance provided to Iraqi investigative judges so that they can build case files to make it possible to initiate such prosecutions.

My country also welcomes the continued collaboration with the Iraqi authorities to define modalities for the sharing of evidence, while taking into account United Nations policies and best practices, UNITAD's mandate and terms of reference and international law in general. That involves procedural safeguards, the protection of victims and witnesses and the non-application of the death penalty. Moreover, I also

recall the importance that Belgium attaches to the prosecution of the perpetrators of the most serious crimes, regardless of their affiliation.

In conclusion, I stress that, after ending its term on the Security Council, my country will remain fully committed to supporting UNITAD. Belgium will continue to support a mechanism that is essential for bringing justice to the victims of the most serious crimes committed in Iraq.

Annex III**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: English and Chinese]

I thank Special Adviser Karim Khan for his briefing.

Since the new Government was sworn in in May, Iraq has made positive progress in moving forward its domestic political processes, tackling economic and social challenges and developing peaceful and friendly foreign relations, among others. At the same time, terrorism remains a threat to peace and stability in Iraq. The international community should continue to support Iraq to combat terrorism, bring the terrorists to justice and consolidate the hard-won achievements in countering terrorism. 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) should be conducive to achieving that goal.

China takes note of the fifth report (see S/2020/1107) submitted by UNITAD and appreciates UNITAD's active implementation of its mandate, despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease. The support of the Iraqi Government and the trust of the Iraqi people are essential to the work of UNITAD. We hope that UNITAD will maintain its independence and impartiality and fulfil its duties in strict accordance with its mandate.

Pursuant to resolution 2379 (2017), Iraq is the main recipient of the collected evidence. Therefore, UNITAD should hand over the evidence to Iraq in a timely and comprehensive manner. The prior consent of Iraq should be obtained before information can be shared with other Member States and the principles of transparency and non-discrimination should be followed.

The international community should genuinely respect Iraq's sovereignty and jurisdiction over crimes committed on Iraqi territory and support Iraq in bringing the terrorists to justice in accordance with domestic laws. We welcome Iraq's legislative efforts to promote the accountability of former Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant terrorists and we hope that these efforts will produce results as soon as possible.

The parties concerned and the United Nations should also support Iraq in addressing the issue of foreign terrorist fighters and the Secretariat should closely monitor developments and effectively gather information, while the Member States concerned should shoulder their respective responsibilities.

Terrorism is the common enemy of humankind and knows no borders. All countries must uphold multilateralism, strengthen international cooperation, fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and resolutely crackdown on all terrorist groups designated by the Security Council, without practicing double standards. China will continue working closely with Council members to promote international cooperation on counter-terrorism.

Annex IV

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations

[Original: Spanish]

We are grateful to Mr. Khan for his detailed report (see S/2020/1107) and his professionalism in carrying out the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and we reiterate our strong support for his mandate pursuant to resolution 2379 (2017). I take this opportunity to wish him every success in his future undertakings.

First of all, we welcome the significant progress made to date and the highly creative way in which the Team has adapted its investigatory work in response to the restrictions put in place and the work disruptions in the wake of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We greatly appreciate their efforts in undertaking their challenging task.

We acknowledge the fact that the Team has maintained harmonious cooperation with the authorities of Iraq, the Kurdistan Region and the local communities, which has been key to achieving the current results.

In that regard, we welcome the agreement between the Investigative Team and the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq to provide technical assistance and training to investigating judges so as to facilitate domestic legal proceedings. We hope that this spirit of collaboration will be strengthened over time.

We also underscore the strong commitment of the Iraqi Government to combating terrorism and facilitating processes that ensure accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the Islamic State on its territory, as well as the willingness shown by other States to conduct prosecutions, in particular European States.

Accordingly, we welcome the progress made on the draft legislation establishing the legal basis for the prosecution of members of the Islamic State for international crimes, which is an important first step towards accountability. We hope that the needs and concerns of the victims will be addressed via a thorough process of consultation with the various communities of survivors, as we understand that their participation in the judicial process cannot be omitted.

With regard to the initial priorities — Sinjar, Mosul and Tikrit — we welcome the progress made in the excavations, evidence collection and approaches by the Team to the various survivor communities and their religious representatives. We therefore encourage the Team to continue its efforts, while demonstrating full respect for religious norms, customs and practices.

Developments in new priority areas are also satisfactory, including the strategy of paying greater attention to cases of sexual and gender-based violence and crimes against children perpetrated in Christian communities. We would like to highlight the technical and financial cooperation, as well as the new tools provided by some States and organizations, with a view to directing and expanding the new investigation units.

Similarly, we would like to highlight the active collaboration between the Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes and Crimes against Children Unit and the victims, which has led to the identification of the alleged perpetrators of such crimes. We deem those to be important steps in investigations. In that regard, we view the

development of a digital platform to be an excellent initiative, as it will allow victims and witnesses to provide information and documentation related to crimes and their identity to be protected.

In conclusion, in the short time since the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant was established and began its investigations, we acknowledge the fact that considerable efforts have been made, which have allowed it to make significant progress in fulfilling its mandate. These joint efforts must not be diminished, as they ensure that crimes perpetrated by the Islamic State do not go unpunished, thereby answering the call for justice of survivors and the relatives of deceased victims, as well as the call of an entire population longing for peace.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

Estonia acknowledges the successful work done by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) during the reporting period despite the challenging circumstances in the political and security sphere, as well as the coronavirus disease restrictions.

We remain concerned about the recent eruption of violence in Sulaymaniyah, which endangers stability in northern Iraq.

Estonia welcomes the recent renewal of UNITAD's mandate for another year. We value the continued efforts of UNITAD to contribute to ongoing accountability processes in Iraq, with full respect for the principles and best practices of the United Nations.

We fully support the strategic priority of UNITAD to strengthen the capacity of Iraqi authorities and commend the significant progress made by UNITAD in collaboration with the Iraqi authorities in the identification and collection of new sources of evidence.

We stress the importance of the continued work of UNITAD on issues of sexual and gender-based violence in the field of witness protection, as well as psychological support for witnesses and survivors to avoid secondary trauma, through the respective UNITAD special units.

Annex VI**Statement by the Legal Adviser of France to the United Nations,
Diarra Dime Labille**

[Original: English and French]

First of all, I would like to thank the Special Adviser of the Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), Mr. Karim Khan, for his briefing and commend all the work conducted in recent months under difficult circumstances. I also welcome the presence of the Iraqi Ambassador, which is a sign that the international community and Iraq work hand in hand to fight impunity, in response to Iraq's request to the Council.

I would like to begin by reviewing the progress made by the Team over the past few months. As we can see, the Investigative Team is fully capable of conducting the task entrusted to it by the Council in resolution 2379 (2017) — to collect, preserve and store evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide committed by Da'esh in Iraq.

As stated by the Special Adviser, despite the Team having to work under the difficult circumstances caused by the health crisis, interviews with witnesses and survivors continued via video-teleconference. And, thanks to digital technology, secure tools, such as the platform allowing witnesses and survivors to submit information remotely, were developed, which is a positive step forward. The continued digitization of evidence is equally crucial.

Lastly, it is also important that work on the exhumation of mass graves, in particular at the sites mentioned, be able to continue, following the suspension of activities at the beginning of the year due to the coronavirus disease. The analysis on mass graves is essential in order to shed full light on the facts and hold accountable those responsible — before Iraqi courts or in third countries. France will continue to support these efforts to enable victims to obtain justice, while being protected.

We also welcome the important and good cooperation between the Investigative Team and the Iraqi authorities, in particular the Iraqi judicial authorities. The dialogue initiated with the Iraqi authorities is very positive. We hope that it will enrich the Team's database. Progress on national legislation to enable the prosecution of members of Da'esh suspected of committing international crimes is essential and demonstrates the commitment of the Iraqi authorities.

The ultimate goal is the use of evidence in trials involving the members of Da'esh, in accordance with United Nations principles and best practices. In this respect, it is important to recall the consistent position of the United Nations regarding the non-transmission of evidence in judicial proceedings that could result in the death penalty, regardless of locale.

Cooperation is also crucial with the relevant United Nations mechanisms, in particular the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, which has an important expanded mandate to strengthen the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that France remains fully committed, alongside Iraqis, in the fight against Da'esh in all its aspects, including within the global coalition against Da'esh. The fight against the impunity of all perpetrators of crimes must be fully integrated into efforts to stabilize, rebuild and reconcile all components of Iraqi society, which are the key to preventing any resurgence of Da'esh. The creation of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

(UNITAD)-Non-Governmental Organization dialogue forum, which allows for the involvement of all communities, is essential in this regard.

The Council must remain mobilized to prevent the resurgence of Da'esh in all its forms, by continuing its support for the efforts of the Iraqi authorities to meet these challenges and by helping UNITAD to make its work sustainable.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

Let me start by commending Special Adviser Karim Khan and his team for the very important work they are doing. His description of the mass graves reminded us of the dimension of the horrendous crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We appreciate the compassion he demonstrates by working with survivors and their family members. The description he gave reminded us of what the communities in Iraq have suffered — crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. Germany stands behind his efforts and will continue to support him financially, politically and by providing personnel.

With regard to war crimes, let me recall our first Security Council presidency, in April 2019, when we invited to the Security Council Nadia Murad, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and survivor of sexual violence committed by ISIL (see S/PV.8514). She was among 1,000 Yazidi women we invited to Germany for a chance to heal their wounds and survive. In the Council, we were faced with the reality of what they had to encounter in Iraq. The perpetrators who committed these horrendous crimes have to be held to account. We owe it to the victims, the survivors and traumatized communities, such as the Yazidi. Only if we are successful in this work will we give these communities a chance to heal and find peace. By being successful, we also prevent similar crimes from being committed in other places.

It is very important that the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) work with local authorities, including the Kurdish Regional Government, and affected communities. With non-governmental organizations, UNITAD promotes a spirit of partnership. It is also very important to engage in training the Iraqi judiciary so that the necessary legislation be adopted. The objective will be fair and independent criminal proceedings, consistent with applicable international law. For Germany, this includes the prohibition of the death penalty.

Let me end by thanking the Ambassador of Iraq. I thank him very much for the very close cooperation between UNITAD and his Government. This is very important. We look forward to the finalization of the case briefs and seeing perpetrators sentenced.

Annex VIII**Statement by the First Secretary of Indonesia to the United Nations, Rayyanul Muniah Sangadji**

I thank Special Adviser Karim Khan for his briefing today. Despite the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, my delegation is reassured by his leadership and his team's commitment and efforts to adapt and ensure the continued implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). Let me make three brief points.

First, with regard to the innovative approach to the situation, we are fully aware of the situation, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Investigative Team's operational work on the ground during the reporting period. We are pleased to note the progress and positive developments that the Team has continued to achieve. We continue to be encouraged by the innovative response, including in the field of evidence collection, especially the continued cooperation with the Iraqi national authorities in this matter. As protecting survivors and witnesses should always be a priority, we believe that it is also important to continue to engage closely with relevant community groups in the process of evidence collection.

That leads to my second point — capacity-building initiatives. From the report (see S/2020/1107), we are pleased to learn that the Investigative Team has made significant progress regarding cooperation in strengthening the capacity of Iraqi judicial and executive organs. We commend UNITAD's engagement and continued efforts to share knowledge and provide technical assistance and training to the Iraqi authorities.

We also note with appreciation UNITAD's partnership with non-governmental organizations as well as its continued engagement with religious actors, survivor groups and community leaders.

That brings me to my final point — the future work of the Investigative Team. We would like to reiterate that the ability of the Investigative Team to fulfil its mandate will also depend on its ability to maintain the trust and support of the Iraqi Government and, most important, the Iraqi people. Therefore, all elements of Iraqi society must continue to be engaged. In addition, we believe that they also need to be empowered and involved in UNITAD's activities.

Today we have witnessed significant developments in UNITAD's work, as compared to almost two years ago, when for the first time, we engaged with the agency's file in the Council. No doubt that plenty of work still needs to be done, but we believe that we are a step closer to holding to account those responsible for the atrocities.

Let me once again applaud Iraq's commitment to prosecuting the perpetrators of those crimes, rebuilding the country and bolstering national unity among all components of Iraqi society towards preserving its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We must continue to show our support for their endeavours.

Before concluding, I wish to reiterate the commitment of Indonesia to continue cooperating with the Investigative Team in support of its activities and mandate, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

As this will be our last intervention on this file during our current term in the Council, I would like to wish Special Adviser Khan and his team the best of luck with the valuable and substantial tasks that lie ahead of them.

Annex IX**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Niandou Aougi**

[Original: French]

I thank the President for convening today's debate. I also thank Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, 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), for his briefing. Similarly, I would like to congratulate the members of the Investigative Team for conducting their work in particularly difficult circumstances due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

My delegation believes that the quest for accountability for crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is an important component in the fight against terrorism. Our wish is that no crime committed by the fighters of Da'esh terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria and around the world should go unpunished. That is why my country, the Niger, hosted a visit by the Investigative Team, led by Special Adviser Khan, from 30 April 2019 to 2 May 2019. During the visit, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Government of the Niger and the Investigative Team in support of the implementation of the UNITAD mandate.

Turning to the report presented to us (see S/2020/1107), I would like to focus my speech on the three main points developed therein, namely, the strategy for collecting and storing evidence, the establishment of responsibility and the prospects envisaged by the Investigative Team.

With regard to the strategy for the collection and storage of evidence, we welcome the progress made by the Investigative Team during the reporting period. We particularly welcome the innovative approach adopted by UNITAD in the context of COVID-19, which involves the use of remote interviews and the ability of survivors and other witnesses to directly submit evidence relating to crimes committed by ISIL to the Investigative Team.

In terms of the establishment of responsibilities, we are pleased to note the good cooperation between the Investigative Team and the relevant Iraqi authorities, both executive and judicial, which has led to significant progress in the investigations, in particular in Sinjar, Tikrit and Mosul. Similarly, the training provided by UNITAD to Iraqi judges will help them in the preparations for the prosecution of ISIL members.

My delegation also welcomes the Iraqi Parliament's consideration of draft legislation establishing a legal basis for the prosecution of Da'esh members on Iraqi soil for war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide. We dare to hope that such a text would take into account the wishes expressed by many survivors and victims' families.

With regard to the way forward, my delegation takes note of the main priorities identified by the Investigative Team for the next six months, as mentioned in the report. We particularly encourage efforts aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Iraqi investigative judges in order to build the case files necessary for the prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my country's support for the work of the Investigative Team and for the mandate of the Special Adviser, Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, to promote accountability worldwide for acts that may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or crimes of genocide committed by Da'esh.

Annex X**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Gennady Kuzmin**

[Original: Russian]

I would like to thank Mr. Khan for his briefing. We have closely studied the fifth 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/2020/1107).

Combating terrorism is key to stabilizing the situation in Iraq. It is of principal importance that external stakeholders remain committed to the sovereignty of Iraq and coordinate their actions with Baghdad. In that connection, we welcome the information regarding cooperation between the Investigative Team and the Iraqi authorities. Such cooperation is a central element of the mandate of UNITAD, an international mechanism created by the Security Council in order to support Iraq's domestic efforts aimed at bringing Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorists to account within the framework of its national judicial system.

At the same time, we must underscore that, so far, the Investigative Team has refrained from handing over the evidence to Iraqi authorities required to launch legal proceedings against terrorists. Moreover, according to the report, a number of countries are already taking advantage of the work of the Investigative Team. It is our understanding that the Team is waiting for the Iraqi Parliament to approve a special law on international crimes. However, that holding pattern should not negatively impact the implementation of the main part of UNITAD's mandate.

I wish to stress that resolution 2379 (2017) does not oblige Iraq to criminalize any particular form of act. Rather, the resolution clearly defines the Iraqi authorities as the main recipients of evidence collected by the Team. We would be very interested to see information in future reports concerning the transfer of evidence collected by the Investigative Team to the local judicial authorities within the framework of existing legislation and legal proceedings. We do not consider it right to give preference to other jurisdictions simply because the legislation of the affected State is supposedly lagging behind. There is no such thing as an ideal legal system.

We would once again like to recall the importance of receiving evidence first hand. Above all else, UNITAD should be able to rely on its own capacities and the assistance of the Iraqi Government. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should serve only as an additional supporting tool. Excessive dependence on NGO-sourced information could result in a distorted image of the crimes committed and steer the activity of the Investigative Team, a body created by the United Nations, to suit the interests of particular organizations and their sponsors. We would therefore appreciate it if the Security Council could be provided with a full list of partner organizations.

I will end my statement on a positive note by welcoming the fact that, despite the constraints imposed by the coronavirus disease, the Team's investigative activities are gaining momentum. We acknowledge the know-how and innovations employed by UNITAD to collect and process evidence and hope that, in the near future, we will be able to uncover the true scope and character of crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq.

Annex XI**Statement by the Political Coordinator of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Isis Gonsalves**

I would like to thank Special Adviser Khan for his insightful briefing and continued efforts in Iraq.

We begin by welcoming the enhanced cooperation between the new Government of Iraq and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), noting that such cooperation has resulted in important agreements concerning action on key activities, including the excavation of mass grave sites, support to Iraqi authorities with respect to witness protection measures and the implementation of UNITAD's evidence digitization project. The mutually reinforcing relationship between the Iraqi Government and UNITAD facilitates the implementation of UNITAD's mandate and provides necessary support to the Government of Iraq, with respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

We recognize the constructive engagement of UNITAD with national authorities, such as the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Judicial Council, which has led to an agreement on the provision of support to Iraqi investigative judges pertaining to the development of case files for the prosecution of members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We cannot overstate how critical those confidence-building and capacity-building measures are in sustaining peace and enhancing stability and security in Iraq and, by extension, the wider region.

A stronger Iraq can be built only from within. At the same time, we emphasize that the international community has a role to play in supporting Iraq in its reconstruction and development.

We encourage the Iraqi Government to take a victim-centred approach as it works to secure accountability for the crimes of ISIL and its affiliates, which have assaulted the people of Iraq. To that end, we welcome the fact that the Council of Representatives has formally commenced its consideration of legislation to establish a legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. We urge the authorities to build on that momentum and finalize their work.

UNITAD plays a critical role in Iraq, as was recognized by the Council in its unanimous adoption of resolution 2544 (2020) in September. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes UNITAD's steps towards discharging its mandate, as well as its engagement with diverse parts of Iraqi society, including religious actors, survivor groups, non-governmental organizations and community leaders. We also welcome the critical work of the Sexual and Gender-based Crimes and Crimes against Children Unit.

Witnesses play an important role in facilitating UNITAD's work, and we commend the steps that have been taken to ensure their protection. Attempts to strengthen UNITAD's trauma-informed approach to all interviews, including the role of the Witness Protection and Support Unit, must be commended.

In conclusion, we emphasize that, unless perpetrators are held accountable and justice secured for victims, sustainable peace in Iraq will not be possible. The primary responsibility for that rests with the Iraqi authorities. However, all States and actors at the international and regional levels are encouraged to support Iraq. We reaffirm our support for Special Adviser Karim Khan and his team, whom we thank for their dedication, and express our hope for a secure, prosperous and stable Iraq.

Annex XII

Statement by the Political Coordinator of South Africa to the United Nations, Marthinus Van Shalkwyk

Over the course of the two years that South Africa has served on the Security Council, we have greatly valued the opportunity to closely follow the steady progress that the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) continues to make in its mandated task.

We would like to thank the Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Mr. Karim Khan, for his briefing and express our appreciation for the work that is being done by him and his dedicated, a multinational team of experts from various specialized fields. Under Mr. Khan's able leadership, UNITAD continues to make great strides and is to be commended for having achieved such progress in the context of the severe challenges imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We note that UNITAD has been forced to adjust its operations to ensure business continuity and continued delivery on its mandate.

We take note of and welcome the achievements described in UNITAD's latest report (see S/2020/1107), which include, inter alia, the provision of training and support to Iraqi investigative judges in building case files for the prosecution of members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide; extensive efforts to create a digital repository of evidentiary materials; the development of the Shuhud digital platform, providing a digital platform for the secure submission of relevant information by witnesses and survivors; significant progress in formulating a common approach with the Government of Iraq to the sensitive matter of excavation of mass graves; and, importantly, the accompanying expansion of the necessary psychosocial care for survivors and affected family members.

We also welcome UNITAD's renewed strategic vision, which is focused on ensuring that the evidence it collects and preserves can ultimately be used effectively before national courts through the structuring of its workflow in order to deliver outputs across three mutually supportive areas of that task.

The close cooperative and collaborative relationship that UNITAD has cultivated and grown with the Government of Iraq has always been of critical importance to its success. UNITAD has assisted Iraq in closing a terrible chapter in the country's history through justice and accountability. That partnership that has also yielded an important additional benefit for Iraq, as a result of assistance in strengthening and modernizing aspects of its criminal justice system in line with international best practices and with the integration of cutting-edge technology. That constitutes a valuable legacy that will contribute to strengthening the country's efforts to rebuild its institutions and structures as it seeks to open a new chapter of peace and development after much suffering.

South Africa believes that the close collaborative approach between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq, which has gone from strength to strength, is one that can serve as a model of best practice from which we might draw important lessons in other similar situations.

We were also encouraged to learn of UNITAD's continued efforts to build on its engagement with Iraqi religious leaders in the framework of the interfaith statement on the victims of Da'esh, as well as civil society, in the establishment of the dialogue forum between UNITAD and non-governmental organizations. Such efforts can only bolster the important gains that UNITAD has made in establishing

credibility in the fractured country. We would encourage it to expand upon efforts of that nature going forward.

South Africa believes it is very important that the Security Council should continue to support UNITAD's important work, as well as that of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, as complementary and reinforcing pillars in Iraq's return to peace and stability. That will afford its people an opportunity to pursue prosperity with security and dignity, which is the right of all of humankind, and even more important given the various crises that the Government of Iraq is presently contending with in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by the significant pressure of early elections taking place in 2021.

It is critical that we collectively marshal our full support for Iraq and its people at this delicate juncture in the country's history. We welcome the role that UNITAD continues to play in helping to bring healing to all of Iraq. We also commend those States Members of the United Nations that have supported UNITAD's work through financial means and otherwise.

Annex XIII

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations

I thank the Special Adviser, Mr. Karim Khan, for his briefing.

Tunisia welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) by the Security Council in September 2020, at the request of the Iraqi Government, demonstrating the Council's recognition of the cooperation efforts between Iraq and the Investigative Team, as well as our collective attachment to achieving accountability and holding all perpetrators of terrorist acts to account for their crimes.

We also welcome the significant progress made during the reporting period, highlighted particularly through the entry of several investigative priorities into the phase of evidentiary consolidation and legal analysis, the identification of additional lines of inquiry, the expansion and diversification of the actors and victim communities involved, the deepening of relations with the national authorities and the provision of capacity-building and training to Iraqi officials.

We recognize the impact of the coronavirus disease on the work of UNITAD, especially with regard to its field-based activities. However, we commend the Team for its efforts to find innovative ways to mitigate the impact of restrictions imposed by the pandemic, including through the use of advanced technologies. We are also glad to see tangible results being achieved, including the production of case briefs and case files, the adoption of a common mass graves excavation strategy, the completion of the construction of forensic laboratory facilities and support for ongoing domestic proceedings provided by other Member States.

We continue to underline that, while terrorism spares no one from its atrocities, vulnerable groups are often subjected to more violence than others. At the same time, their specific needs are not always properly taken into account in the conduct of investigations and the provision of remedies. We therefore appreciate the gender-based and survivor-centred approach undertaken by the Team, which gives due consideration to the mental health and well-being of survivors while reiterating the importance of full collaboration with the Iraqi Government and the need to ensure respect for national ownership and priorities.

In resolution 2379 (2017), the Security Council recognized the gravity of the atrocious crimes committed by Da'esh, which amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. In that connection, we continue to follow discussions in Iraq around the legislative initiative aimed at establishing a legal basis for such crimes. We note that the prosecutions and punishments need to reflect the gravity of the crimes committed, in accordance with Iraq's national framework and legislative philosophy.

Tunisia expresses particularly its deep appreciation to the Government of Iraq for its invaluable and constructive cooperation with the Investigative Team. The report (see S/2020/1107) highlights the contributions of the Iraqi authorities in the collection of evidence related to crimes committed by high-level Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant terrorists through the provision of witness statements, case files, audio and video recordings and other documentary evidence.

In that regard, Tunisia reaffirms resolution 2379 (2017), in which the Security Council stipulates that the relevant Iraqi authorities are the primary intended recipient

of collected evidence and that the Investigative Team shall operate with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its jurisdiction over crimes committed in its territory.

We therefore look forward to the full implementation of resolution 2379 (2017) by moving forward with the trials, with the aim of serving justice for victims and survivors and ensuring accountability for those responsible for such hateful crimes. It is important that the Security Council remain united and supportive of the Government and the people of Iraq in that endeavour.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Political Coordinator of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Sonia Farrey**

I welcome Special Adviser Karim Khan's report on the continued progress made by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) in recent months (see S/2020/1107) — the first report since the Team's mandate was extended for a year in September. I wish to underline that this is extremely important work and we continue to support efforts to ensure accountability for the victims of Da'esh.

The United Kingdom notes UNITAD's flexibility in implementing its mandate while responding to challenges posed by the coronavirus disease, particularly in terms of limitations on field-based investigative activities. The fact that six dedicated investigation units are now in place is to be commended. We also welcome the addition of thematic units, particularly in the area of gender-based crimes.

The United Kingdom will continue to support the Investigative Team to ensure that it is able to fulfil its mandate. That is why the United Kingdom has provided assistance to minority-focused investigations, as well as supporting the development of Shuhud, a digital platform allowing witnesses and survivors to submit information related to Da'esh crimes remotely, securely and confidentially.

We welcome contributions from other countries. Holding Da'esh to account should be a truly international effort, just as the Global Coalition against Daesh was.

The United Kingdom is seized of the enormity of the task ahead to find a solution that enables UNITAD's evidence to be used effectively to bring those responsible to account in Iraq. We welcome progress on draft legislation to provide the domestic legal basis for the prosecution of Da'esh members for international crimes in Iraq. We urge the Investigative Team, the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to collaborate closely in order to agree upon a way forward and secure an evidence-sharing mechanism that provides assurances on the use of the death penalty. We also welcome continued collaboration with the Iraqi judicial authorities.

Justice also means assisting the victims of Da'esh to rebuild their lives. We welcome the Team's expanded capacities for assisting with witness protection and support, including psychosocial care and gender-attuned services for survivors and family members.

Regular updates to the Security Council are key in allowing us to see the progress the Team is making. The Team must seek to engage both with us at the United Nations and with individual Member States that are providing staffing, funding and support.

The United Kingdom continues to support the work of the Investigative Team, hence why we have contributed £2 million and continue to engage in New York, London, Baghdad and Erbil. The work undertaken by the Team is unique and we must ensure that it continues to provide a sustainable and internationally supported mechanism in the future. The United Kingdom welcomes continued support for the Team from Security Council members through funding, staffing and engagement to demonstrate the Council's commitment and to ensure that evidence is gathered to hold Da'esh to account.

Annex XV**Statement by the Political Coordinator of the United States of America to the United Nations, Rodney Hunter**

I wish to thank both Special Adviser Khan and Ambassador Bahr Aluloom for their extensive briefings on this difficult topic.

The United States is committed to supporting the critical work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) to collect, store, and preserve evidence of atrocities by Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

We urge the Iraqi Government to recommit to fair, evidence-based trials that allow the victims and survivors of ISIS brutality and false ideology to have their day in court. Those evidence-based trials will not only establish the clear culpability of ISIS and its members for the perpetration of such atrocities, but will help showcase Iraq's justice system and its commitment to the rule of law.

We are encouraged to hear that the Iraqi Parliament is considering legislation that would allow Iraq to prosecute ISIS suspects for international crimes. We support such efforts. It is imperative that those heinous crimes be labelled for exactly what they were — genocide and crimes against humanity — so that no one can ever doubt what took place, and so as to reflect what the Iraqi people have overcome.

We also support UNITAD's expanded cooperation with the Government of Iraq, including with the Iraqi judiciary. We are confident that their increased cooperation will contribute to additional successful prosecutions of ISIS members in Iraq and abroad, and that the partnership between UNITAD, the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government will help to ensure positive outcomes for Iraq and the victims of those awful crimes.

We know that coronavirus disease further complicated that critical work, worsening already difficult conditions. But, despite those obstacles, Iraq's Mass Graves Directorate of the Martyrs Foundation and the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with UNITAD, continue to build the capacity of national Iraqi forensic teams to conduct evidence-based investigations and exhumations.

That was evidenced in late October when Iraqi authorities resumed the exhumations of mass graves left by ISIS in Solagh, known as the "grave of mothers", where dozens of elderly Yazidi women were executed by ISIS because they were deemed too old to be sold into sexual slavery. In that case, and in so many others like it, we must never forget the brutality that ISIS inflicted on their victims. We recognize and applaud the Government of Iraq for its plans to exhume all mass graves and to remember and honour all those victimized by ISIS brutality.

The United States also recognizes that while the evidence-based trials are absolutely critical to justice and to the healing process, so is support for victims and survivors. That includes psychosocial support, as well as the realization of victims' rights through legal proceedings. Exhumations are a painful process that can trigger difficult emotions, including sadness, anxiety, anger, loneliness and fear, and we commend UNITAD and its partners for providing psychosocial support to staff, survivors and family members. We also commend the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government for their continuing support of those goals.

In recognition of this critical work, the United States continues its financial support to UNITAD. As we noted in our last meeting on UNITAD, the United States

provided \$2 million in support of UNITAD's first exhumations of mass grave sites in Iraq in the Sinjar region. As of December 2020, United States funding for UNITAD totals \$8.85 million, which supports a wide range of different activities associated with UNITAD's mandates.

The United States once again urges Member States to repatriate, prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate, as appropriate, their citizens and nationals who travelled to Iraq to join ISIS. Iraq should not have to continue to shoulder responsibility for those foreign terrorist fighters and associated family members alone. We note the valuable support UNITAD can provide to other Member States in conducting such investigations and prosecutions.

We thank the Government of Iraq and UNITAD for their continuing cooperation and work to hold ISIS accountable for all its atrocities.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Tra Phuong Nguyen**

Let me begin by thanking Mr. Karim Khan for his valuable work and comprehensive briefing. I warmly welcome His Excellency Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom of Iraq.

Years after the atrocities that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) committed, the grief of the victims and their families has never ceased and will last for generations. Moreover, as ISIL continues to be a significant threat in Iraq, we remain concerned by its repeated attacks against civilians and foreign diplomatic premises. We are also worried that its extremist ideology may continue to spread beyond Iraq's borders.

In this context, we would like to reiterate the essential requirements to bring justice to the victims of ISIL and to prevent the terrorist group from committing further crimes. We appreciate efforts to achieve those goals, including the hard 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 Government of Iraq.

This is all the more remarkable in the past six months of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Special Adviser's report (see S/2020/1107) has shown advancements in almost all lines of inquiry into crimes committed by ISIL. A case in point is the provision of support by UNITAD to Iraqi authorities to implement witness protection measures, in accordance with the terms of reference. The significant progress in the support for Iraq in handling outstanding issues related to ISIL's crimes is commendable.

We also welcome the Iraqi Government's strengthened cooperation with UNITAD, which has facilitated the implementation of the Team's mandate in key areas. We note with satisfaction that the Team has gained wide support from not only central, regional and local authorities, but also religious community leaders. The agreement between UNITAD and the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq to assist Iraqi investigative judges in the development of case files for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide is a significant development. That enhanced cooperation has demonstrated domestic efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes.

However, the work ahead of the Investigative Team remain challenging. To advance further and fulfil its mandate, the mission should focus on its strategic priorities. It needs to strengthen cooperation with not only the Iraqi authorities, but also religious leaders, local communities, survivors, witnesses and families of victims. We encourage the Team to apply all the procedures and methods of protection so as to ensure that victims, witnesses and all other persons who cooperate with the Team can do so in safety and security.

In conclusion, we welcome the support of Member States to the Investigative Team through the provision of experts and financial contributions. We also call upon the international community to strengthen their support for UNITAD in the implementation of its mandate in accordance with international law, relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and unity of Iraq.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic and English]

On behalf of the Government of Iraq, I extend my congratulations to the Republic of South Africa on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December and express appreciation to Mr. Karim Khan, Special Adviser and Head of the Investigation Team for his valuable briefing.

We also applaud resolution 2544 (2020), which includes the approval of the Iraqi Government's request to extend the mandate of the Investigation Team to enhance accountability for the crimes committed by the terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) for a period of one year. We look forward to exerting more effort and the attention necessary to prosecute those involved with the terrorist organization financially and logistically and through cyber-related means — its supporters and financiers — as well as the crimes of smuggling oil and antiquities perpetrated by ISIS during its hold on Iraqi territories.

Expediting the detection of criminals will bring justice to the Iraqi victims of the terrorist organization, ensure that those terrorist organizations do not return again and thwart any terrorist plans aimed at undermining international peace and security.

We also call for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions concerned with combating terrorism aimed at monitoring airports and drying up financial sources to finance, monitor and exchange information about terrorist movements and determine their nationalities and control borders to ensure the cessation of the flow of foreign terrorist elements, monitor the methods, means and networks used by terrorist groups and work to dismantle them, through more coordination among States and international organizations in an effective manner.

My Government affirms its commitment to cooperating with the Investigation Team and providing assistance to the Team through the competent national coordinating committee to support and implement the mandate of the Investigation Team's work, with full respect for Iraqi sovereignty and its jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory and the right of its people. We believe that any use of forensic evidence outside the scope of Iraqi jurisdiction should be with the coordination and approval of the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi judicial authority, in accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 2379 (2017).

We also point out the need to expedite the completion of the investigation and provide investigative evidence to the competent Iraqi authorities, and we look forward to completing the appointment of Iraqi experts to the Investigation Team, as any delay in completing that task leads to the suspension of the relevant provisions of resolution 2379 (2017).

In conclusion, we cannot but extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to all countries that support Iraq in its war against terrorism. We also call on the international community to provide support and assistance to the Investigation Team to complete its mission to the fullest, with an emphasis on the need for full respect for the sovereignty and jurisdiction of Iraq.