



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8462nd meeting

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New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Mr. Trullols Yabra
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Duclos
Poland	Mr. Lewicki
Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Twenty-first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2019/78)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2421 (2018) (S/2019/101)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Twenty-first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2019/78)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2421 (2018) (S/2019/101)

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

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/78, which contains the twenty-first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), and document S/2019/101, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2421 (2018).

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

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: I am honoured to brief the Council today for the very first time in current capacity.

As Council members know, the collaborative spirit between the leading parliamentary blocs four months ago allowed the consensual nomination of Mr. Adil Abd al-Mahdi as the Prime Minister-designate. However, to date the Government of Iraq remains incomplete. Four ministerial positions are still vacant, with three of them — Interior, Defence and Justice — being subject to fierce disagreements among political parties and political blocs. Within this context, multiple parliamentary sessions have been adjourned, interrupted or boycotted, and as a result the implementation of the

Government programme has made little headway. As we speak, the Iraqi Parliament is in a one-month recess and will reconvene only in early March.

Long Government formation processes are not new or unique to Iraq. However, in the Iraq context there is a real sense of urgency to complete the process without delay and to focus on rebuilding the country after years of conflict. Therefore, I would like to call upon the political actors once again to overcome political infighting and to demonstrate that political compromise can prevail in the greater interests of the Iraqi people. And in doing so, I would also like to remind them that there are excellent and experienced Iraqi women who are well-qualified to perform the job.

Ultimately, the people of Iraq are bearing the brunt of the political stalemate — bearing the brunt at a time when it is critical to address their needs and demands for better services at a time when the Iraqi citizens ought to be able to rely on strong democratic governance and viable state institutions. So yes, it is high time to shift focus from factional politics and to invest efforts in addressing the immediate needs of Iraqi citizens, as further delays could give space to significant repercussions on the stability of the country.

On a more positive note, I am pleased to inform the Council that the 2019 federal budget law was approved by Parliament on 23 January. Prior consultations, as well as effective cooperation, made this achievement possible. The good news is that it demonstrates that space for constructive political dialogue and partnership is out there, and I truly hope that we will see lots more of it in the months to come. The 2019 budget allocations for some key development sectors, such as electricity, reflect the Government's efforts to improve the delivery of basic services. But still, allocations for reconstruction in liberated areas are far less than the actual needs. Moreover, Iraq's State finances remain strongly reliant on oil-sector revenues and thus very vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices.

Another positive step was last week's decision of the Council of Ministers to convert the Government programme into an implementation plan. This will allow for close monitoring of progress, as well as accountability. Additionally, I would like to welcome the steps taken by the Government to address corruption by putting in place preventive measures. Within the past month, the Prime Minister has chaired three meetings of the Supreme Anti-Corruption Council with

a view to unifying efforts to combat corruption by any party or person, regardless of their post or position. The fight against corruption will not be an easy one, but it is a much-needed one as corruption is vast and pervasive at all levels in Iraq. It is a much-needed fight in order to revive public-trust. During our meeting in Najaf last Wednesday, Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani also underlined once again, among others, the urgent need to show progress in fighting corruption.

Turning to relations between Baghdad and Erbil, I would like to welcome the agreement reached on 16 January to unify customs duties. The speedy implementation of that agreement should now be a priority for both sides. Moreover, the finalization of the 2019 federal budget guaranteed federal funding for salary payments to the Kurdistan region civil servants and Peshmerga forces. I would like to call upon both Baghdad and Erbil to capitalize on this positive momentum and to overcome their differences.

At this very moment, there is little to report on the Government formation within the Kurdistan region, as to date negotiations continue. In my meetings with Kurdish leaders, both in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, I emphasized the need to expedite Government formation in order to serve the needs of the people of the Kurdistan region as soon as possible. Some developments seem to be unfolding, however, with a possible session of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament to be held on 18 February.

During the reporting period, Iraq's leadership made significant efforts in recalibrating its external relationships, reaching out to many international, regional and neighbouring partners. That is important, as strength abroad and strength at home are a package deal indeed. During this period, Iraq has also received high-level international delegations seeking to engage with the new Iraqi leadership, and I truly hope that support for sustainable stability in Iraq will continue to be on top of the regional and international agenda, building upon mutual interests and in accordance with the principles of respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Security remains a concern. Although terrorist activity has decreased, during the past month attacks have been carried out against both civilians and the Iraqi security forces. In short, despite its military defeat, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to pose a security threat to Iraq and the region.

Another concern relates to armed groups operating out of State control and/or expanding their economic and social control in Iraqi daily life. Regardless of their affiliation, the Government needs to take quick measures to reform its security sector and act resolutely against these groups and their activities.

As council members are also aware, Turkish military airstrikes near the Iraqi-Turkish border in northern Iraq have been condemned by the authorities of Iraq as violations of its sovereignty. Turkey maintains that these airstrikes are against targets linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party. I regret the loss of civilian lives and livelihoods during these operations. It is important that the Governments of both Turkey and Iraq accelerate their efforts to resolve this through bilateral dialogue.

With respect to election, the Independent High Electoral Commission has formally recommended that Iraq's provincial council elections take place on 16 November. UNAMI will continue to provide technical assistance and support to the Commission. However, in preparation for these elections a number of steps will need to be taken urgently by the Government of Iraq and the relevant institutions.

In speaking of human rights accountability, I would like to emphasize that promoting a more consistent adherence to international standards of due process and fair trial is of the greatest importance, as an impartial and transparent process of judicial accountability for the gross violations of human rights committed by ISIL will prove crucial in rebuilding peaceful coexistence and social cohesion. Equally important is the need to strengthen community cohesion and to counter collective community blame. Moreover, the marginalization of one group over another leaves communities vulnerable to extremist messaging.

As part of UNAMI's efforts to advance equal opportunities, on 24 January I launched the Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics. With that in mind, I would like to renew UNAMI's call on political leaders to fulfil the many pledges made during the time of the elections, and therefore appoint women to senior decision-making positions.

The United Nations and its humanitarian partners have finalized the 2019 humanitarian needs overview for Iraq and will soon launch the humanitarian response plan, in close cooperation with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. This year

the humanitarian community will focus on meeting the needs of 1.75 million vulnerable Iraqis, including internally displaced persons, living both in and out of camp settings, returnees in areas of severe need as well as host communities that have been strained by several years of armed conflict. The needs are vast indeed. The 2019 humanitarian response plan seeks \$700 million from donors and includes specialized programming to address protection needs. Of course, humanitarian programming will be implemented alongside recovery and stabilization efforts.

While significant efforts are under way to rebuild infrastructure and restore basic services, it will take many years and billions of dollars to rebuild the country. Iraq will undoubtedly need the continued attention of the international community to make the transition successful and sustainable. Thanks to the generous support of the international community, the United Nations Development Programme Funding Facility for Stabilization exceeded \$1 billion at the end of 2018; however, a gap of \$338 million still exists. In other words, additional funds are needed, including contributions by the Government of Iraq — which, by the way, acknowledges the quick impact and efficiency of the programme.

It goes without saying that the United Nations country team continues to assist the Government of Iraq in meeting the needs of its citizens. I could give many examples, but some from the past few months include the provision of medical kits and supplies to save lives, the digitization of Iraq's largest social safety net, the provision of food entitlements, the clearance of explosives, and, importantly, the finalization of a reconstruction plan for Mosul. The United Nations system also continues to support the Government of Iraq in the implementation of some key reforms, such as in the security sector. During my visit to Mosul, a couple of weeks ago, I witnessed the important contribution of the country team in assisting the Government in the rehabilitation of houses and the restoration of water plants, both of which are essential needs for the return of life to that war-torn city. As the Council knows, mine action organizations manage the threat of improvised explosive devices on a daily basis. That is of great importance. However, it has to be said that further action is required by the Government of Iraq to overcome certain challenges in facilitating those activities.

Since the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018, the Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme has been rolled out. With its national coverage, the Programme has a two-year budget of \$1 billion. Resource mobilization efforts are ongoing, with over \$300 million pledged so far for projects. I would like to encourage other donors to contribute.

With your permission, Mr. President, I would like to turn now to the twenty-first report (S/2019/78) of the Secretary-General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. First of all, let me emphasize my determination to engage on this issue. I emphasized that once again during my first official visit to Kuwait, 10 days ago. While UNAMI continues to assist the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait on this important humanitarian issue, I would like to call upon Member States to strengthen their support — for example, through the procurement of field equipment, the provision of forensics and capacity-building for Iraqi and Kuwaiti technical teams. The return of valuable Kuwaiti property last November was a positive and long-awaited step. I encourage the Iraqi Government to continue its search for the still missing national archives.

I would like to underline that, yes, the atmosphere of despair during the period of ISIL's occupation has given way somewhat towards hope and optimism for the future in Iraq. However, one cannot shy away from the fact that the road to well-deserved long-term stability will be long and far from easy. Realism and great determination will be necessary in facing the challenges ahead, including on our side. Obvious ownership and engagement by all Iraqi components will prove crucial, political will be a precondition and taking pride in a shared history and a common future will be a necessity. And, yes, continued support from the international community will be of paramount importance.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to UNAMI and the staff of the United Nations country team for their dedication and commitment. I am truly delighted to be working with them. I look forward to reporting back to the Council on — I hope — some substantive achievements over coming months.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing.

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

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations to help the Government and the people of brotherly Iraq at this important juncture. We also appreciate the work and coordination with the Iraqi Government pursuant to resolution 2421 (2018) through the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on her appointment as Head of UNAMI and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq. I thank her for her valuable and comprehensive briefing and appreciate her efforts, as well as those of her predecessor, Mr. Ján Kubiš, to whom we wish every success in his future endeavours.

With regard to the situation in the brotherly Republic of Iraq and the responsibilities entrusted to UNAMI, allow me to express my gratitude for the efforts of the Mission and the United Nations in Iraq to build a bright future for the country, beginning with creating conditions conducive for security and stability, meeting humanitarian needs and providing the prerequisites for sustainable development. I should like to reiterate the full continuing support of the State of Kuwait and our cooperation with UNAMI and the country team in the proper discharge of their functions.

We recognize that the upcoming phase is important for Iraq in order to overcome the difficult conditions it is experiencing, especially following the defeat of the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Iraq now requires international efforts to support, assist with and meet the humanitarian needs of the affected Iraqi people and ensure their security. That is also our responsibility as one of Iraq's neighbours, as well as of other countries in the region and the international community at large — especially as we know that we must make greater efforts so that Iraq can enjoy unity, security and stability, free from crises and division

Since Iraq began its rebuilding phase after the previous regime, the State of Kuwait has provided assistance to its brothers in Iraq in order to help the country maintain its independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. We also welcome the comprehensive national dialogue and hope it will make it possible for Iraqis to achieve national reconciliation, combat extremism and terrorism, enhance the rule of

law and provide welfare and security for all segments of Iraqi society without exception. We wish our brotherly and neighbourly Iraq all progress and prosperity.

Since the emergence of the terrorist Da'esh group in Iraq — and recognizing the scope of the destruction the country has suffered — the leadership, the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait have provided assistance to the Iraqi people and have spared no effort to stand by them. I would like to refer to the initiative of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to host the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq, held in February 2018, to help alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people so that they can move towards stability and reconstruction. We hope that countries that pledge to provide assistance during the conference will honour their obligations.

We share the concerns of the Secretary-General, as set out in his report (S/2019/101), that sleeper terrorist cells remain a threat to the stability and security of Iraq and the region as a whole. We must all make additional efforts and take further decisive measures to eradicate terrorist activities and practices and hold accountable those who have perpetrated such heinous crimes. They must be brought to justice, in cooperation with the United Nations mechanism established by the Security Council, pursuant to resolution 2379 (2017).

Concerning international obligations and remaining humanitarian issues pertaining to the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, today's meeting takes place as we mark the twenty-eighth anniversary of the liberation of the State of Kuwait from Iraqi aggression. However, we cannot fully commemorate that anniversary so long as the fate of our missing people remains unknown. That humanitarian issue will remain our top priority. We will make every possible effort to determine the fate of our martyrs now that we have almost lost all hope of finding them alive. We appreciate the concern of the members of the Security Council and the fact that they have kept this humanitarian issue on the agenda for all these years, as well as their follow-up with respect to the implementation of all commitments set out in relevant Council resolutions, in particular those pertaining to the main remaining obligations that have not been honoured since the liberation of the State of Kuwait in 1991.

We commend the serious and genuine desire of brotherly Iraq to meet all its remaining international obligations towards the State of Kuwait. We have been able to identify the remains of 236 individuals of the 605 missing persons, which would not have been possible without Iraq's cooperation. We hope that we will continue to cooperate and work in the same spirit with Iraq. However, we have been unable since 2004 to find the remains of any other missing persons. We reiterate our readiness to support and assist Iraq in order to expedite the implementation of the remaining obligations, as set out in relevant Security Council resolutions.

We appreciate the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross, through its chairmanship of the Tripartite Commission, as it seeks to honour its obligations to complete the humanitarian dossier, as appropriate. We believe that tangible progress is possible if we scale up efforts and implement agreed plans and programmes within the framework of the Tripartite Commission and its Technical Subcommittee. The State of Kuwait will spare no effort to support endeavours to determine the fate of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals.

At the same time, we urge UNAMI to continue to implement its mandate regarding the issues of detainees, missing persons and the return of property, including Kuwait's national archives, pursuant to resolution 2107 (2013). We call on Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert to adopt a new approach to ensure that we achieve progress on the issue.

Other obligations to which I would like to draw the Council's attention include Kuwaiti property, including our national archives. They are just as important as other obligations because our archives and property represent true historic wealth — important heritage for the national memory of the State and the people of Kuwait. It is unfortunate that the fate of the archives has remained unknown since the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. We share the disappointment of the Secretary-General in that regard.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait realizes that the new Iraq has nothing to do with the Iraq of the past. It is high time that the international community supported the efforts of Iraq to recover and play its role in the region and the world — following the painful events it has endured over the past few years in fighting terrorist

Da'esh — and build on the victories of its people. They can overcome that difficult phase.

We hope that the formation of the Iraqi Government can be completed in order to build the Iraq of the future. We wish the Government every success in meeting the aspirations of the Iraqi people. They deserve to live in a stable, prosperous and safe country. The State of Kuwait reiterates its solidarity with the leadership, the Government and the people of Iraq in any step they take to consecrate Iraqi national unity, roll back terrorism and maintain their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): At the outset, let me thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her very informative and comprehensive briefing. I also congratulate her on her appointment.

Since this is the first meeting on Iraq for Indonesia as a Council member, I would like to congratulate the Government and the people of Iraq on the completion of their national election last year. We have observed the situation in Iraq very closely and hope that our Iraqi brothers and sisters will soon achieve what they fully deserve — enduring peace, stability and prosperity. Indonesia is certain that the new Government can build on the important progress made in recent years in order to achieve durable harmony and peace. Allow me to highlight some key issues from the briefing.

First, with regard to the political situation, Indonesia commends Iraq on the formation of the new Government within the constitutional time frame and looks forward to the appointments to the remaining ministerial positions. We are confident that the appointments to the Cabinet will be completed soon. We commend the sustained efforts made under three presidencies to facilitate compromise and work constructively to that end. We also welcome the election held last year in the Iraqi Kurdistan region and the progress made in relations between Baghdad and Erbil. We encourage Iraq to capitalize on that positive trend and to resolve all outstanding issues through dialogue and consensus, based on the Iraqi Constitution.

Secondly, security challenges must be addressed effectively. Despite the remarkable progress made recently, we note that terrorism remains a serious challenge. The members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remain active in a number of Iraqi provinces, hiding in areas that are hard to reach. We laud the tireless work of the Iraqi security forces in their ongoing clean-up of areas that have been cleared of

explosives and other dangerous materials, as well as for their persistent search for ISIL remnants, who threaten security and advancement in the country. There is a need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the security challenges and ensuring durable peace. In that regard, enhanced regional and international cooperation is critical. We commend the Iraqi Government for its continued efforts to reach out to neighbouring countries and other international partners to strengthen relations and advance mutual political and security interests.

Thirdly, the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) remains vital. We applaud the essential work conducted by UNAMI, which is perceived positively and favourably in various areas of Iraqi society, such as the public sector, electoral assistance, human rights and the rule of law. We also welcome UNAMI efforts to help enhance bilateral relations between Iraq and countries of the region, such as Kuwait, on the settlement of remaining bilateral issues. The proper discussion and completion of the file on the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property will further strengthen the already very good bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

It is very important that UNAMI continue to lend and enhance its support to the new Government of Iraq as it embarks on implementing its new programmes to resolve the many complex and difficult challenges it faces and put the country firmly on the path to sustainable peace and development. Indonesia stands ready to support the brotherly country of Iraq in achieving that goal.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and thank her for her briefing. I would also like to commend the work of her predecessor, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jan Kubiš.

China welcomes the progress made in forming the Iraqi Government and commends the efforts of Iraq's leaders to resolve their differences through consultations and dialogue, while promoting economic development, improving people's living standards and accelerating the reconstruction process. Iraq is at a critical stage in promoting peace, stability and reconstruction. I would like to underscore the following points.

First, we should continue to adhere to the general direction of seeking a political solution to the Iraqi issue. Achieving inclusive reconciliation and harmonious coexistence among the Iraqi parties is in line with the fundamental interests and development needs of all Iraqis. The international community should earnestly respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, support the good offices of the United Nations, and provide constructive assistance in achieving an inclusive political solution.

Secondly, we should continue to support Iraq in its fight against terrorism. Iraq is at the forefront of this fight and terrorist remnants continue to pose a threat. All parties concerned should strengthen their counter-terrorism cooperation, unify standards, crackdown on all terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council, consolidate the achievements of counter-terrorism efforts and resolutely curb the return of terrorist forces and the spread of their activities. The international community should support Iraq in its efforts to bring terrorists to justice, in accordance with relevant domestic laws. We support the efforts of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, in close consultation with the Government concerned, to actively carry out its work based on its mandate.

Thirdly, we should actively promote the economic recovery and accelerated reconstruction of Iraq. The Iraqi Government should focus on developing infrastructure, promoting economic reconstruction and progress, enhance its capacity to provide public services and improve people's living standards. The international community should continue to provide support and assistance to Iraq, help ease its humanitarian situation, assist in its economic recovery and create a favourable environment for its reconstruction.

UNAMI has played an important role in supporting the Iraqi Government in promoting inclusive political dialogue, national reconciliation and reconstruction, and it has continued to support Iraq's efforts to improve its bilateral relations with countries of the region, such as Kuwait, and to resolve historical issues. China supports the efforts of UNAMI to carry out its work in accordance with its mandate.

In recent years, the Chinese Government has provided Iraq with multiple deliveries of humanitarian supplies and economic assistance, some of which have

been used in areas affected by terrorism. In addition, the Red Cross Society of China has also provided medical-facility assistance to the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, which has been used to alleviate the difficulties faced by the Iraqi people.

As always, China supports any effort aimed at achieving a political solution to the Iraqi issue and combating terrorism. It will actively participate in the economic reconstruction of Iraq and will continue to provide assistance to the best of its ability.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): We welcome and thank the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her briefing. We look forward to working with her on her assignment. We would also like to welcome our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

South Africa would like to highlight the following three areas in our intervention today: the political situation, the security situation and the role of the region in assisting Iraq.

First, with regard to the political situation, South Africa commends the Iraqi authorities on the progress achieved in forming a national Government. We encourage all stakeholders to work together to finalize the Cabinet. All political forces should close ranks and reach an agreement on the outstanding Cabinet posts so that the Government is able to start delivering on its promises to the public for better security and the dignified return of internally displaced persons, rehabilitated public services, a revitalized economy and the implementation of reconstruction and development projects.

Additionally, it is very important for the Government of Iraq to promote the meaningful inclusion of women in the political process and their representation at all levels of political structures. We welcome the announcement by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert of the launch, on 24 January, of the Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics. That is a very positive development indeed.

Secondly, with regard to the security situation, we note with concern the assessment in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/101) that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remains a threat in Iraq. This threat must be addressed, as the continued presence of

ISIL has ramifications not only for the instability of Iraq, but also for the entire region. We support Iraqi efforts to hold those accountable for crimes committed in the country, in line with resolution 2379 (2017), which established the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to support domestic Iraqi efforts to that end.

Furthermore, South Africa reaffirms its support for the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq. We encourage all stakeholders to continue to support and engage in the efforts initiated by UNAMI in an effort to achieve effective post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable peace in Iraq. We are particularly concerned about the increase in violence against women and children, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report. In this regard, we support the efforts of UNAMI and UNICEF to address this scourge.

Thirdly, with regard to the role of the region, we welcome the increased involvement of regional organizations in the political process and reaffirm their role in assisting the Government of Iraq in the reconstruction of the country. We also welcome the renewed cooperation and talks between the central Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, and encourage both parties to continue to reach consensus on areas of concern. We also share the views of regional actors that Government formation in Iraq is an important step towards building a stronger and more balanced relationship among the countries of the Middle East region.

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and will continue to support UNAMI in the implementation of its mandate. Furthermore, we continue to support the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, as part of UNAMI's mandate, and emphasize the importance of the independence and impartiality of the mechanism, while working in line with the principles of the United Nations Charter, United Nations policies and best practices.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation extends its sincere congratulations to Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on her appointment as

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and wishes her every success in her new mission. It also thanks her for her detailed briefing on the developments in Iraq. In the light of that update, my delegation would like to comment on the political process, humanitarian and human rights situations and security issues.

With regard to the political process, my country notes with regret that dissension among the country's various political forces persists, thereby preventing the formation of a new Government by Prime Minister Adil Abd Al-Mahdi. However, after Da'esh's military defeat, the establishment of an inclusive Government would have made it possible to implement the urgent reforms that are needed to address the many challenges facing Iraq, namely, finding sustainable solutions to the issue of the return of internally displaced person by providing them with basic administrative and social services; accelerating the reconstruction of conflict-affected areas; creating the conditions for genuine reconciliation among Iraqis, with due respect for the unity of the country and sociopolitical and ethnic diversity; and ensuring an equitable representation of women in institutions and decision-making structures.

Côte d'Ivoire therefore urges all political actors to prioritize the national interest by overcoming their differences with a view to the early formation of a new Government. Furthermore, Côte d'Ivoire encourages the continuation of a constructive dialogue between the central Iraqi authorities and the authorities of the Kurdistan autonomous region in order to find a peaceful solution to the dispute on the organization of the referendum on the self-determination of that autonomous region on 25 September 2017. In that respect, it welcomes the negotiations between the two parties, which in 2018 made it possible to reopen the Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports to international flights and to reach an agreement on oil exports from Kirkuk province. My country hopes that the forthcoming meetings between Mr. Adil Abd Al-Mahdi, Prime Minister of Iraq, and Mr. Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region, will resolve the remaining points of disagreement.

The humanitarian situation is characterized by extreme poverty, including insecurity, in which more than 1.8 million people have been displaced since 2014. Côte d'Ivoire urges the Iraqi authorities, with the help of the international community, to find solutions to

the plight of those people, improve their security and include them in local reconciliation initiatives with the view to their full integration in the host regions.

With regard to the question of human rights, my country notes with satisfaction that, at the request of the Iraqi authorities, our Security Council adopted resolution 2379 (2017), on 21 September 2017, on the effective implementation of the principle of Da'esh accountability. In that regard, our Council followed with interest the briefing in December 2018 (see S/PV.8412) delivered by Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team established pursuant to resolution 2379 (2017), on his first report on the steps that the Team intends to take for the effective implementation of resolution 2379 (2017).

The acceleration of the investigations of the Team led by Mr. Khan is all the more urgent as 202 mass graves with more than 12,000 bodies have been discovered in the northern and western provinces of Iraq. Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its support for Mr. Khan and calls on the international community, including our Council, to provide him with all the assistance necessary for the success of his mission.

On the security front, despite its recent military setbacks in Iraq, Da'esh continues to pose a serious threat to the stability of the country and to international peace and security. Côte d'Ivoire therefore calls on the international community to pursue its efforts by providing the necessary assistance and training to the Iraqi armed forces with a view to putting an end to the activities of that group as soon as possible. In that respect, it welcomes the rise of the Iraqi armed forces and anti-terrorist forces, which are playing a major role in the fight to eradicate Da'esh.

In conclusion, my country urges the international community, including our Council, to continue to support the efforts of the Iraqi authorities to restore security and peace, which are essential for lasting stability in Iraq.

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

I would like to begin by joining others in welcoming Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We thank her for her clear and informative

briefing and wish her success in her new responsibility. We have no doubt that her political and diplomatic experience will be useful to the Security Council and UNAMI in making positive progress in the process. She can count on the full support of the delegation of Equatorial Guinea.

My delegation congratulates the Iraqi people who, despite the disagreements following the local and parliamentary elections last May, were able to peacefully elect their new President, His Excellency Mr. Barham Salih, in October, who in turn appointed his new Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Adil Abd Al-Mahdi, who presented an ambitious political programme that enjoys much popular support, meets the basic needs of the country and facilitates transparency and the reforms that the country so badly needs. We believe that those events of 2018 represent an important step towards democracy, political stability and the promotion of a sustainable, secure environment for Iraq. In that regard, it is important to highlight the importance of the work of UNAMI, which has always been available to support local authorities in various aspects of the Iraqi State reconstruction process.

However, we are concerned about the difficulties being experienced in the process of forming the new Government. We had believed that the easy acceptance of the appointment of the Prime Minister by the main political blocs would facilitate the composition of the rest of the executive branch, submitted to the Council of Representatives. In that regard, and in order to avoid impacting the political and economic reconstruction process that is already under way in the country, it is urgent and necessary for the parties to try to bring their positions closer together in order to facilitate the formation of the Government, the work of which is essential to promoting and advancing the development process.

We welcome last November's tour by the new Iraqi President to the countries of the region. We hope that Iraq's rapprochement with neighbouring countries will focus on establishing good cooperation in strategic areas, such as the fight against terrorism, which would facilitate information-sharing among Governments. That would help the Iraqi security services, which remain on alert given that there are still remnants of radical extremists of the Islamic State, who continue to pose an asymmetrical threat in the north and centre of the country. In the light of that situation, it is appropriate that, on the basis of the principles of

good-neighbourliness and respect for sovereignty, the Governments of Iraq and Turkey urgently address the security situation in the northern part of the country, which evidently also poses a danger to Turkey.

We welcome the statement issued by the Iraqi Ministry of Finance in January, in which he indicates that the central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government have agreed to unify customs duties at all border crossing points in the country and eliminate customs checkpoints between the Kurdistan region and the rest of Iraq. Similarly, we welcome Kirkuk's agreement on the resumption of oil exports, as well as the important meetings held in November by the authorities of both parties. All that demonstrates the good will of the political leaders, who are working to unify and integrate all parts of the country.

Finally, we encourage the efforts of the Iraqi Government, which in November handed over to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait a number of assets appropriated during the invasion of Kuwait, including books, an archive of Kuwait television video tapes, a sword and a valuable painting. We look forward to the full cooperation of the Government of Iraq in meeting that important requirement.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and express our thanks for the efforts that you have made as President of the Security Council. We also thank the Dominican Republic for its efforts during its presidency of the Security Council last month. We congratulate Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and wish her every success during her stewardship. She has demonstrated a distinguished presence from the early days in office. We also thank her predecessor, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his work. We thank the Special Representative as well for her briefing and look forward to strengthening our bilateral cooperation to serve the interests and needs of Iraq, within the framework of the UNAMI mandate. She can count on our full support.

On the political level, Iraq has done an enormous amount of work in the preceding period. The legislative

elections were transparent and characterized by integrity. That was followed by the formation of the three presidencies within the deadline stipulated by the Constitution. The different political blocs are now working to overcome every obstacle so that they can reach agreement on the completion of the Government through national partnership that puts Iraq's highest interests first, make progress, ensure stability and guarantee social peace, which will also contribute to the stability of the entire region.

On the economic level, the Parliament adopted a national budget for 2019 within the time line stipulated by the Constitution. The federal Government plans to pay salaries to all officials in the Kurdistan region in 2019, including the Peshmerga. Furthermore, Iraq has set up a development plan for the period 2018-2022, so as to achieve a rate of growth of 7 per cent and reduce rates of poverty and unemployment, all in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A high anti-corruption council has also been established to implement a strategy in that area.

On Iraq's cooperation with United Nations agencies, we have worked recently with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as with United Nations Children's Fund in order to implement the provisions of the joint statement in accordance with the executive plan launched during the visit to Iraq by Ms. Pramila Patten in 2018. Furthermore, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund, Iraq opened its first shelter for women victims of sexual violence. A United Nations team on implementing the pertinent laws also visited Iraq to work with our Supreme Judicial Council to help align Iraqi laws with United Nations provisions.

Iraq's competent bodies are working to complete the second report on the national plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000). We were among the first States in the Middle East and North Africa to have promulgated a national plan of action to implement that resolution. The plan is focused on increasing the representation of women in political, social and economic spheres and protecting them against gender-based violence. Similarly, we are working to integrate resolution 1325 (2000) into all of our national strategies and development plans.

In addition, the Iraqi Government has begun to implement joint projects with the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism

Committee (CTC) Executive Directorate. They include measures for capacity-building and work opportunities for young people, countering the financing of terrorism, and the fight against violent extremism. We are also working to contain the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) by responding to four of the 16 priorities outlined by the CTC in 2015, which Iraq adopted. We have also appointed a representative to develop a national counter-terrorism strategy. Last week we received a visit by a CTC representative and carried out a workshop on WMDs.

I have just brought to the Council's attention a number of our achievements and told it about the path followed by the new Government in the recent period. The Iraqi Government is working to address the challenges posed by reconstruction so that we can ensure sustainable development for future generations. That requires a safe and healthy environment. In that regard, my Government believes in the role to be played by the international community in support of our efforts. We endeavour to cooperate with the international community in the following areas.

First, strengthening the education sector whereas in the 1970s we had an exceptional education system. We want to undertake real efforts to develop a clear vision of the reality of education in Iraq, so as to allow us to put forward options in this area and develop that sector.

Second, we want to achieve development that guarantees access to psychosocial and psychological services. The wars that have been waged against Da'esh have left deep psychological scars on women and girls, in particular those who have been displaced or were victims of violence, as well as people with special needs.

Third, we call on friendly and brotherly countries to keep the commitments they undertook during the conference on Iraq's reconstruction that took place last year in Kuwait. We encourage the international community to support Iraq and its Government in rebuilding infrastructure throughout every Iraqi town and city. That is essential for achieving economic prosperity.

Fourth, we call on Member States to help rehabilitate archaeological areas destroyed by Da'esh terrorists. We call, as well, for support in placing the Babylon site on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

Fifth, capacity-building is also important to guarantee a criminal justice system that is viable.

We call for the principles of sound governance to be respected in combating corruption, which is one of the main obstacles to good-governance in Iraq.

Sixth, the national plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000) faces a number of challenges. The initial implementation period for the plan coincided with the terrorist gangs of Da'esh taking certain regions in Iraq. Although the ministerial and institutional teams took training courses in the areas of monitoring and assessment of women and peace and security, the national team still needs greater capacity and support so that it can be more effective.

Seventh, we call on Member States to strengthen their cooperation on intelligence for counter-terrorism and organized crime. We also need to build the capacity of the Iraqi armed forces in all categories, including the army, police, counter-terrorism apparatus, the popular mobilization forces and the Peshmerga.

On 10 December 2018, Iraqis celebrated the first anniversary of the victory against the terrorist gangs of Da'esh and the liberation of all Iraqi cities from the control of those terrorist groups. Since then, my country has turned the page on the battlefields so that the era that cost so many lives can end.

We are now in the phase of a security challenge. That requires eradicating the breeding grounds for terrorism and rooting out any residual terrorism, but there is also an intellectual battle that must be waged so that we can put an end to extremist thinking.

Furthermore, my country's Government is working to ensure the security of our borders and to restore the normalcy that prevailed before Da'esh gangs took control of areas in Iraq. We are trying to reconstruct the areas that were damaged so that displaced persons can return to their homes and receive financial compensation and reparations for mental harm.

On Iraq's relations with the neighbouring countries, there have been repeated Turkish attacks in Kurdistan,

northern Iraq. They represent a blatant violation of Iraq's sovereignty. We vehemently condemn and reject such attacks regardless of the justification. They are a violation of the rules of international law and are contrary to the principles of good-neighbourliness. In that regard, we reiterate our commitment to rejecting any notion that our territory be used to carry out actions that could undermine the security of neighbouring countries.

The relations between Iraq and the State of Kuwait have significantly developed. My country notes that there is potential for further brotherly relations between the two States. We can reinforce peace, security and stability in the region. We are therefore working to develop and to strengthen sustainable development so that we can achieve positive results for the two brotherly peoples and for the region. We hope that we will be an example for the future if we achieve that.

In that regard, I wish to reiterate the importance that we attach to finding and repatriating the remains of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals who went missing, in addition to the repatriation of the Kuwaiti property that was lost. We have recently returned part of such property to Kuwait, including certain Kuwaiti national archives.

Iraq is a rich country. It has many material and human resources. That puts it in an ideal position to play its role in ensuring stability and security in the region. Our policies are based on economic openness and on cooperation with all brotherly and friendly countries.

In conclusion, we once again thank the Special Representative and wish her every success in her task of supporting Iraq in the context of the UNAMI mandate.

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

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.