

UNAMI Herald

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New SRSG Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, pledges continued UN support for Iraq's post-conflict recovery

Baghdad, 17 December 2018 - Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert assumed her responsibilities today as Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), pledging continued UN support for Iraq in its post-conflict recovery.

"I am delighted to be here in Baghdad and ready to get down to work. We will continue our efforts in support of Iraq as the country recovers from the fight against terrorism and looks towards a brighter future," the Special Representative said. "I count on the support of the experienced staff in UNAMI and the UN family in Iraq, and the continued excellent cooperation of the host country so that together we can deliver on our pro-

grammes in the service of Iraq and the Iraqis. It is my intention to make the wellbeing of the Iraqis a top priority, and work towards that goal in the security, humanitarian, political, economic and development fields."

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, of the Netherlands, brings over 20 years of political and diplomatic experience, having served in several high-level Government and parliamentary positions. She was Minister for Defence of the Netherlands (2012-2017). Ms. Plasschaert also served as a member of the House of Representatives of the Netherlands (2010-2012) and a member of the European Parliament (2004-2010). She worked for the European Commission in Brussels and in Riga, Latvia, and for the City of Amsterdam.



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert on 31 August 2018. She succeeded Mr. Ján Kubiš who has served in the post for almost four years.

SRSG Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert's New Year 2019 message

Iraq is a beautiful country with an ancient past and rich diversity.

It is also a country which has suffered immensely due to conflict.

With the military defeat of Da'esh, the atmosphere of despair has given way to hope and optimism for the future.

There are tremendous opportunities for Iraq.

Yet the road to well-deserved long-term stability and prosperity will not be easy.

Despite its military defeat, Da'esh continues to pose a security threat.

More than 1.8 million displaced Iraqis are yet to return to their homes in safety and dignity.

Liberated areas are littered with tons of unexploded material and awaiting support.

Iraqis call for the delivery of services, education, jobs and meaningful reforms. And rightly so.

I am certain that through the determination of its people Iraq will over-

come the challenges and emerge stronger.

The United Nations has supported Iraq in its most difficult times and will continue to assist.

I am truly honored to be serving the people of Iraq and working closely with the government of Iraq as the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I would like to wish you and your loved ones a very healthy and happy New Year. Thank you.

SRSG Mr. Ján Kubiš's farewell message



Baghdad, 12 December 2018 - Dear Friends, Dear Colleagues, There is always a time to say wel-

come and there's always time to say good-bye. And, this is - for me - a time to say good-bye to both us in the UN family, in UNAMI, but in the Country Team; and also to our friends and my friends here in Iraq - the Iraqi people, representatives, politicians, civil society, tribal leaders - all of these people with whom I've been working in the past almost four years in the country. And it was a great honour and a privilege that I was given this opportunity by the Secretary-General to serve here not only the United Nations but, first of all, Iraq and the people of Iraq.

I can look back these almost four

years - these were not the easiest years and it was not the easiest period in the life of the country. When I arrived, the country was divided. One-third of the country was controlled by the terrorist, brutal Daesh. People were not sure about a future. Close to six million IDPs and refugees had to leave their homes in different ways. The fighting was going on; people mobilised to protect the country, to save the country. People from all parts of Iraq, but notably from the southern provinces.

The economic crisis was deep. Oil prices hit the economy and hit the people. And the country, whether

SRSR Mr. Ján Kubiš, farewell message *(continued)*

one would wish to recognise it or not, was a little bit isolated. It had ties with a number of countries but, as regards the region, it was underdeveloped. Many of the States in the region were not on good terms with the government then. And, if I look now quickly to what is the situation today, it's a completely different story.

The country victoriously, and the people with great sacrifices, victoriously defeated the bandits and terrorists of Daesh, although some security risks still remain. But this battle continues. We know that it is not only about the ideology; it's about the return of IDPs, it's about justice and reconciliation; it's about accountability; it's about dignified future; it's about everything that the country must have and the people must receive because they need it, they deserve it.

People, IDPs are coming back. Majority of them return but still there is a big number that needs to be supported. And they need to have places where to go, where to return, homes, cities; so, it is nec-

essary to reconstruct also the cities that were destroyed in this fight. But all the people are equal. They have equal needs, they have equal aspirations; and it is for the government to provide, to act, to reflect this kind of needs that were under the security imperatives to fight Daesh pushed away to the side.

Now is the time to respond to the needs, now is the time to give services, to give jobs, to give good water, to give health, to give dignified future to all the people, all the citizens that should have equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities.

The country is united, and I am very much encouraged to see how political forces are trying to work together, learning lessons. They need to socialise these lessons of the past and indeed to work together for the benefit of the country, not only in pursuit of their particular interests. I am glad to see a very strong representation of political forces from the Kurdistan Region - they returned back to Baghdad. They are working together with the country for the benefit of the country and for the benefit of the Kurdistan Region and the

Kurdish people everywhere. There are many other tasks that are in the future and must be priorities of the government, of political forces, and of the people of the country.

But the future is bright. When I arrived, the country and the situation was a country of conflict, a country of war, a country of disunity. What we have now, is a country of future, a country of opportunities for all the people; a country that has returned back to its rightful place in the region, has established deep contacts with all the regional - not only neighbouring, but other States - and, of course, is back to its rightful place as a strong partner in the international community.

Once again, my gratitude to all of you, my UN colleagues in particular, for helping me, for supporting, but notably to the people of the country; to all the forces. And my special gratitude to His Eminence Sayed Sistani, who gives continuous positive guidance to all those that care about the future of Iraq and the people of Iraq.

Thank you very much.

In this edition ...

Remarks by SRSR Ján Kubiš at the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence

Erbil, 25 November 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš, attended today the launch ceremony for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence... *More on page 33*



USG and the UN Secretary-General's Advisor on Policy Menéndez visited Anbar Governorate

Ramadi, 17 November 2018 – Witnessing firsthand how the protection, development and stabilization work of the United Nations in Iraq in areas liberated from Da'esh can contribute to the prevention of crisis, Under-Secretary-General and the UN Secretary-General's Advisor on Policy, Ms. Ana Maria Menéndez, visited Anbar Governorate in western Iraq on 17 November 2018. *More on page 61*



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In the UNAMI Herald articles are sorted according to the topic and in a chronological order.

Briefing to the Security Council by SRSB for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq

New York, 13 November 2018 – The United Nations Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq at its 8396th meeting. Here is the text (as prepared) of the briefing to the Security Council by SRSB for Iraq, Ján Kubiš:

Mr. President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

I would like to begin my briefing by reiterating my congratulations to the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winners, Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege, for their campaign to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon in armed conflict. Ms. Murad receives this award on behalf of all Yazidis and other Iraqis who were victims of the genocidal barbarism of the terrorist Da'esh ideology. This international recognition provides further impetus to efforts to locate and liberate more than 3,000, mostly Yazidi, men, women and children who remain missing after being kidnapped by Da'esh; to hold accountable those responsible for these crimes; and to urgently return Yazidis and other IDPs to their homes in safety and dignity. The Nobel award has re-energised the Iraqi population and authorities, and the whole international community. As Ms. Murad stated: "We must work together with determination – to prove that genocidal campaigns will not only fail but lead to accountability for the perpetrators and justice for the survivors. We must remain committed to rebuilding communities ravaged by genocide. Survivors deserve a safe and secure pathway home or safe passage elsewhere. We must support efforts to focus on humanity and overcome political and cultural divisions. We must not only imagine a better future for women, children and persecuted minorities, we must work consistently to make it happen - prioritizing humanity, not war".

Mr. President,
Following the certification of the election results by the Federal Supreme Court on 19 August, the government formation process moved forward with the election of Mohammad al-Halbousi as Speaker of the Council of Representatives (the Parliament) on 15 September, and Barham Salih as President of Iraq on 2 October. On the same day, President Salih nominated Mr. Adel Abdul Mahdi, as Prime Minister (PM)-designate. The PM-designate received the endorsement of multiple prominent parliamentary blocs to choose his min-



isters freely, on the basis of their electoral results, and not based on the sectarian and political quota systems. To modernize appointment methods, to establish a pool of competent professionals for future employment in the ministries, and to energize the public, Prime Minister-designate (PM-D) Abdul Mahdi's office launched an online application process open to all Iraqis. Tens of thousands applications were reportedly received, of which some 15,000 were judged eligible. PM Abdul Mahdi is committed to drawing on the applicant pool for employment in diverse positions in the administration, and has already nominated some from the pool to high governmental positions.

Mr. President,
On 24 October, the Iraqi Parliament reviewed the new governmental programme, endorsed 14 out of 22 Cabinet ministers, and confirmed Mr. Abdul-Mahdi as Prime Minister. Of the five sovereign ministries, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Oil were endorsed, but the ministries of Defence and Interior remain are yet to be allocated along with the ministries of Justice, Migration, Education, Planning, Culture and Higher Education. No female or minority candidates were appointed to ministerial positions, but the PM intends to consider them for governmental posts and other key positions in subsequent rounds of government formation. On 25 October Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, in an official letter, requested the Justice and Accountability Commission to clarify the status of the newly appointed ministers with regard to the Commission's regulations.

It is reported that the eligibility of some 2-3 ministers is being scrutinized.

Mr. President,
Between 13 and 17 October, former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, the erstwhile PM-designate Abdul-Mahdi, Speaker Halbousi, and several prominent national political leaders held meetings with the respective leaderships of both the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan on the formation of the new government. On 17 October, the Kurdistan Region's Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani, travelled to Baghdad. These consultations resulted in agreement, on the part of the KDP, to participate in the federal government.

Members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party were subsequently selected for the posts of Deputy PM, Minister of Finance, and Minister of Housing and Reconstruction. This is in addition to the earlier appointment of the First Deputy Speaker, who is also a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

The first anniversary of the federal forces' redeployment to Kirkuk governorate on 16 October 2017 has drawn diverse reactions across the Iraqi political spectrum, particularly in the Kurdistan Region. Muqtada al-Sadr, the cleric and leader of the Sa'iroun, tweeted conciliatory messages, calling for unity and "making Kirkuk a model of peaceful coexistence for all sects and ethnicities".

Mr. President,
While the government formation process has not been without controversy, the political blocs have demonstrated a willingness to act in support of the Prime Minister. Competition and differ-

Briefing to the Security Council by SRSB for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

ences have been largely political and not sectarian, and in this way, a break from the past. The guidance of the Supreme Shia religious authority Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani has significantly influenced the process. The main negotiations with PM Abdul-Mahdi have been led by cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr (Saïroun) and Mr. Hadi al-Ameri (Fateh) on behalf of their alliances – Islah and Binaa respectively. All of these primary partners and political forces now share a responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the new PM and government, to deliver on its programme, and for its stability. The support of all the political forces represented in parliament will be essential, including those who will now be in the opposition, for the first time since 2003. Barring this, Iraq's political forces and leaders will fail their people - again.

Mr. President,

The Government's new programme, which includes advisory inputs from the UN, i.a. recommendations to align the government's plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030, represents a general outline of national project to respond to the needs and demands of the Iraqi people. As stated in the programme, its focus and pillar should be the citizen. The programme outlines specific plans for reform, investment and the private sector, and for transitioning Iraq from a crisis context to sustainable development, recommends steps to tackle corruption across all sectors, and sets out a framework to guide the planning and work of each ministry. The programme builds on several key strategies agreed by the outgoing government, including the National Development Plan 2018-2020 developed with inputs from the UN. In addition to delivering tangible improvements in the daily lives of Iraqi citizens, key focus areas of the programme include job creation for the



unemployed, young people in particular, and greater governorate-level participation in decision-making and in administering the country. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of liberated areas and the return of IDPs are also priorities. The programme focuses on strengthening security, fighting terrorism, enhancing law and order and the rule of law, i.a. by putting all arms under the strict control of the State. It also stresses the prevention of militia formation outside the framework of the State, and the withdrawal of troops from the cities. The programme of the government confirms that special attention will be given to resolving pending challenges with the Kurdistan Region, including the issues of budget allocation and financial resources, oil and disputed areas. It aims at furthering foreign relations, notably with all neighbours, with the Arab world based on mutual interests and respect for Iraq's sovereignty. PM Abdul Mahdi intends to present a more detailed programme, following consultation with incoming ministers, within the first hundred days of the Government.

Since taking office, Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi has convened sessions of the Council of Ministers and other meetings in the premises outside of the Baghdad's protected Green Zone that he promised to gradually abolish. As he said, "We would like to consider all of Iraq the Green Zone".

Mr. President,

I commend the exemplary democratic transfer of power between the outgoing Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, and incoming Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi, within the Constitutional timeline. At the handover ceremony on 25 October, Mr. Abadi recalled the achievements of his government in defeating Da'esh and uniting the country based on the Constitution, at a time when the economic situation deteriorated due to deep-rooted corruption and a massive decrease in oil prices. He recalled the return of millions of displaced families to liberated areas and the establishment of a national army and security forces. He also noted improved relations with all of Iraq's neighbours, including the Arab countries. Finally, he underlined that political processes in Iraq have witnessed a gradual departure from sectarian approaches and rhetoric. For all of this, he and his government, the Kurdistan regional government, diverse armed forces and formations, and the people of Iraq deserve

acknowledgment and gratitude.

Iraq must now build on these foundations. The new Government intends to start immediately, particularly on the delivery of services and jobs, justice, on reforming and energizing the economy, and effective governance, including fighting corruption and administrative red-tape. In this regard, Iraq will require and counts on the continued support of the international community. We must not let them down.

Mr. President,

Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi also intends to significantly strengthen cooperation between the Government and the Parliament to expedite law making and to enhance compatibility between the two branches. With a view to increasing its oversight role, the Council of Representatives (CoR) decided i.a. to establish a Committee on Strategic Planning and Monitoring of the Government Programme. Next steps will include voting on the membership composition of its committees, including the finance committee that will consider the draft budget.

Among the priority tasks for the CoR is to discuss the election-related files. This includes legislation and management bodies – such as the Independent High Electoral Commission, particularly with Provincial Council elections planned for 22 December 2018.

For the first time since 2005, the Kirkuk governorate will participate in these elections. This is a critical step on the path to the normalisation of Kirkuk's status and of politics in the governorate. Negotiations on the reactivation of the Kirkuk Provincial Council continue, with UNAMI-supported discussions between local political actors from the Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen communities. My Deputy for Political and Electoral Affairs is in charge of the effort and meets frequently with the relevant interlocutors in Kirkuk.

Mr. President,

Regional countries and other international partners reacted positively to the formation of the new Iraqi government. They sent messages of congratulations, while pledging support and cooperation, including through mutual visits of high-level delegations.

Meanwhile, Iraq's new leaders have acted without delay in engaging regional governments. On 26 September, Speaker Halbousi travelled to Kuwait and held separate meetings with Emir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with

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other government officials including his counterpart Marzooq Al-Ghanim. Discussions focused on bilateral relations, regional issues and matters related to the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq that was held in February this year. The two sides discussed proposals to unify efforts in the framework of strengthening the parliamentary work between the countries, including the activation of joint committees between the Iraqi parliament and the Kuwaiti National Assembly. On 3 October, Speaker Halbousi addressed the Arab Parliament Conference in Cairo, calling for a comprehensive programme to tackle terrorism and enhance economic cooperation. On 9 October, Speaker Halbousi attended a Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments in Antalya, Turkey, highlighting Iraq's vulnerability to environmental degradation, water shortages and diminished agricultural production. On the side-lines of the Conference, Halbousi met separately with his Qatari and Kuwaiti counterparts, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud and Marzooq Al-Ghanim respectively, and called on both nations to contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq by investing in its economy. He also met his Iranian counterpart, Ali Larijani, and stressed the need to protect the sovereignty of regional countries. On the same day, while meeting with his Turkish counterpart, Binali Yıldırım, he requested Turkey to increase the amount of water released into the Tigris River. Speaker Halbousi was received by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 10 October in Istanbul who agreed to an Iraqi request for more water supplies. On 16 October, the First Deputy Speaker, Hassan al-Kaabi, attended a session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva. On 22 October, Iraq announced its decision to open a permanent delegation at the headquarters of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Exchanges of delegations with Iran focused also on the security challenges of managing some 2 million, mostly Iranian, pilgrims for Arba'een – a holy day for Shiites in the world. Meetings between former Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari and his Syrian counterpart Walid al-Muallem focused on combatting terrorism, alongside an announcement that the Abu Kamal border crossing will be reopened. Minister Ja'afari also met the Lebanese President Michel Aoun, as part of a regional

tour to discuss enhancing regional cooperation.

A two-day visit on 11-12 October to Baghdad of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu focused on counter-terrorism, water supply and Iraq's reconstruction. Since ratification by the Turkish Parliament in early October of a motion to extend deployment of its troops to cross-border military operations in Iraq, the two countries have accelerated discussions on security measures along the border, including forming a joint security committee. Responding to concerns expressed by Iraq on recent water shortages, Minister Çavuşoğlu confirmed that Turkey would increase the amount of water released to Iraq – a topic raised with the Turkish authorities also by the Parliament Speaker.

On 1 November, the Jordanian Foreign Affairs Minister Ayman Safadi visited Iraq and met with President Salih and the Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi, as well as with his counterpart the new Iraqi Foreign Affairs Minister, Mohammad al-Hakim – the former PR of Iraq in New York and ESCWA Executive Secretary. Minister Safadi's meetings with the Iraqi officials focused on furthering bilateral relations and enhancing economic cooperation. On 10 November, the Saudi Minister of Oil Khalid al-Falih visited Baghdad. On 11 November, President Barham Salih commenced a regional tour of Arab States, starting with a visit to Kuwait. On 12 November, he arrived in the UAE.

Mr. President,

Following the announcement of the preliminary results of the Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections on 4 October, the Change Movement (Gorran), the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) and the New Generation Movement (NGM) protested electoral fraud and also requested that the Iraqi Ministry of Interior launches an investiga-

tion.

After reviewing the political parties' complaints, the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission on 20 October announced the final results of the Kurdistan parliamentary elections as follows: 45 seats for the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), 21 seats for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), 12 seats for the Change Movement (Gorran), eight seats for the New Generation (NG) Movement, seven seats for the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), five seats for the Towards Reform Coalition, one seat for the Sardam Coalition (Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party Coalition), and one seat for the Freedom List. Eleven minority quota seats are shared among eight entities as follows: three seats for the National Union Coalition (Christian), one seat for the Rafidain List (Christian), one seat for the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (Christian), two seats for the Turkmen Development Coalition and one each for the Milat List, Turkmen Front, Turkmen Reform Coalition (all Turkmen) and an Armenian independent candidate. A total of 36 out of 111 members of the new Kurdistan Regional Parliament are women, making up 32 percent of the total number of members.

Following that, the Kurdistan Region Court of Cassation received and reviewed a total of 38 appeals, filed by political entities and individual candidates. On 30 October, the Electoral Judicial Panel of the Kurdistan Region Court of Cassation approved the election results. The first session of the new KR Parliament took place on 6 November but failed to elect its Speaker and the two deputies.

The dominant Kurdistan Democratic Party intends to consult with all Kurdistan Region political parties on the government formation. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan announced that it would work closely with others to form



Briefing to the Security Council by SRSB for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

a new Kurdistan Regional Government. The Kurdistan Islamic Union and the New Generation Movement announced that they would constitute an opposition in the Kurdistan Parliament.

In the run up to the Kurdistan Region's 30 September parliamentary elections, UNAMI provided technical electoral assistance upon the request of the Kurdistan Region's Independent High Electoral Commission. Electoral experts worked closely with their Commission counterparts and provided advisory support in such areas as field operations, data entry and tabulation of elections results and electoral complaints management. In addition, UNAMI deployed teams of election watchers on election day in select polling stations, throughout the region. I and my Deputy for Political and Electoral Affairs visited several polling stations in Erbil and in Sulaymaniyah respectively and took the opportunity to highlight the importance of electoral participation in consolidating the democratic processes in Kurdistan Region, in particular, and in Iraq as a whole. I also met with the Board of Commissioners of the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission on election day and again during the tabulation of election results. On 1 November, the Commission sent a letter expressing their appreciation and requesting for continued UN electoral support in a number of areas as the Commission builds on its learnings and experiences in organizing the recent elections.

Mr. President,

The Turkish Armed Forces continued their air operations in northern Iraq against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), as well as ground operations along the Iraqi-Turkish border. On 10 October, the Iraqi Border Guard Force established a base in the Kani Masi area of Dohuk along the Iraqi-Turkish border, to secure the border in coordination with the Turkish Army.

The government programme of PM Abdul Mahdi stated that opponents of foreign governments seeking asylum in Iraq cannot be there without the approval of the Iraqi government, and that Iraq shall never accept using its territory by any group to attack any neighboring country.

Mr. President,

The new government intends to introduce robust measures to further improve and achieve sustainable security throughout the country, intensifying efforts to uproot Da'esh terrorist cells.



There are almost daily reports about arresting or eliminating Da'esh terrorists, their leaders, sleeper-cells and hide-outs.

Security measures put in place for the Arba'een pilgrimage were successful. Among the 15 million pilgrims, close to 2 million foreign visitors were recorded to have legally and safely entered Iraq. Efforts to disturb this massive movement of people failed. The effects of enhanced security measures taken this year were also evident in crime detection and arrests, including the detention of a number of individuals for attempted robbery of pilgrims.

Most Da'esh movements in recent months have been reportedly through the extensive desert joining central Iraq and its Anbar and Ninewa provinces to the western border with Syria. In response, Iraq has deployed thousands of troops on its border with Syria to curb Da'esh, who remains in control of several areas across the borders in the Syrian Deir ez-Zor province. Also, Da'esh remains active in some other Iraqi provinces, notably in Kirkuk, Salah ad-Din and Diyala.

As regards civilian casualties, the overall trend is their fall. In August, at least 90 civilians were killed and 117 were wounded. In September, at least 75 civilians were killed and 179 were wounded. In October, 69 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 105 injured, the lowest monthly casualty figures since UNAMI began publishing them in November 2012.

Notwithstanding this, terrorist attacks continue. On 23 October, a car exploded in a public market in Al-Qayara city, south of Mosul city in Ninawa gover-

norate, killing six civilians and wounding twenty-five others, including children. On 4 November, at least 7 civilians were killed in a series of low-yield blasts in the predominantly Shia areas of Baghdad, at least one inside a minibus, as several times before.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to kill and wound hundreds. So far in 2018, UNAMI has recorded 939 civilian casualties from IEDs. This constitutes almost half of the total civilian casualties recorded thus far in 2018, although a significant reduction compared with the same periods in 2017 (2,021) and 2016 (7,723).

Another concern is hit-and-run attacks on security forces, the targeting of police. In the last six months, 43 police officers have been killed and 49 others wounded, with police in Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates at greatest risk. On 21 October, three police officers were killed when an IED, allegedly planted by Da'esh, detonated under local police patrol in Mosul district. Meanwhile, Da'esh's infiltration and attacks targeting Iraqi Security Forces also increased, mainly in Mosul, Hatra, Ba'aj and Tal Afar districts, Da'esh also continues killing local tribal and community leaders, i.e. mukhtars. On 8 November, another terrorist attack took place in Mosul.

Mr. President,

Following the demonstrations in Basra and other southern governorates, civil society activists, notably women were reported to have faced threats, harassment and intimidation at the hands of armed groups belonging to political parties to deter them from joining public protests. At least three female activ-

Briefing to the Security Council by SRSB for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

ists have subsequently fled their homes, following threats. Also, two women were assassinated, Suad al-Ali and Tara Fares, in addition to the sudden death of two others in September, all of them active in political and social spheres. Other civil society activists, including women, are targeted by social media and political threat campaign for their contacts with foreign embassies. This is unacceptable.

On 21 October, the National Security Council decided to form a committee chaired by the Minister of Interior to propose and take effective measures against harassment of women.

Mr. President,

Iraqi courts continued to issue death sentences for terrorism-related crimes. So far in 2018, the High Judicial Council has publicly announced the imposition of 111 death sentences against 25 women, 23 of whom were foreigners (17 Turkish, 3 Kyrgyzstan, 2 Azerbaijani, 1 German) and 86 men. Executions following terrorism-related convictions continue to be announced. So far in 2018, the Ministry of Justice has announced the execution of 45 Iraqis (adult males). On 17 October, the Ministry of Justice announced that six male convicts had been executed for crimes under the Anti-Terrorism Law. Despite repeated requests by UNAMI, the Iraqi Ministry of Justice has not provided any information regarding the implementation of the death penalty. I reiterate my call for a moratorium on executions pending the eventual abolition of the death penalty, and for legal reform to address due process and fair trial concerns.

Mr. President,

UNAMI continues to advocate for justice and accountability for international crimes. On 6 November, UNAMI and

OHCHR jointly launched a report entitled “Unearthing Atrocities: Mass Graves in territory formerly controlled by ISIL.” The report advocates for mass graves to be protected and treated as crime scenes, with evidence preserved for criminal prosecutions in line with international standards and for a victim-centred approach, focused on the right to truth, justice and reparations. At least 202 mass graves have been discovered in Iraq, with most believed to contain the remains of victims of Da’esh-perpetrated atrocities.

Here, I am pleased to advise that the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for Da’esh crimes (UNITAD) has arrived in Iraq on 30 October and to convey UNAMI’s full support for Mr. Karim Khan and his team’s efforts. I strongly encourage Iraqi authorities and society to support Mr. Khan and his team as they commence their operations in Iraq. I also call on Member States, regional and intergovernmental organisations to facilitate the work of UNITAD, including by providing appropriate capacity-building to the Government of Iraq and funding for the mission.

Mr. President,

From over 6,400 Yezidi men, women and children enslaved by Da’esh only 3,300 have been saved. Some 350,000 Yezidis have been displaced in Iraq, out of whom only 65,000 have returned. Many of them remain in camps, notably in the Dohuk Governorate of the Kurdistan region and require assistance. UNAMI remains deeply concerned about the fate of more than 3,000 Yazidis still unaccounted for, particularly those who remain in Da’esh captivity. Returning the missing to their families is a top priority and no effort should be spared in achieving this.

On 29 October, My Deputy for Political and Electoral Affairs accompanied by UNESCO Country Director paid a visit to Kocho village to meet survivors of the August 2014 Da’esh massacre.

I am also deeply concerned about reports of increasing tension between the Yazidi community and Sunni Arabs in Ninawa province, including areas of Sinjar. I emphasise the need to foster reconciliation and social cohesion, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Without this, the cycle of violence and retribution might further escalate.

Mr. President,

On 21 October 2018, in the context of the Global Open Day on UNSCR 1325,

UNAMI organised a consultative forum with civil society, women’s rights activists, human rights defenders, journalists and members of the Iraqi Bar Association and the High Judicial Council to discuss civil society concerns regarding the application of Article 38 (9) of the Iraqi Penal Code, which permits the nullification of rape charges when perpetrators of rape marry their victims. UNAMI will work with the incoming Council of Representatives to amend these sort of discriminatory provisions against women to ensure that laws meet international standards.

To further implementation of the UN-Iraq Joint Communiqué on Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, UNAMI has continued to engage with tribal leaders from Ninawa and Dohuk governorates to enlist their support for the reintegration of survivors of sexual violence and children born of rape. At the federal level, the Government of Iraq High-Level Focal Point on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence has held consultations with members of the High Judicial Council, Ministries of Health and Interior and UN entities to discuss the process of establishing specialist mobile courts to register children born of rape, to counter the shame and stigma that have hitherto prevented mothers from registering their children. The initiative will support ongoing efforts to address the wider needs of children born of rape as well as their mothers, under a UNAMI-UNICEF project on ‘Coordinated Action to Respond to the Needs of Children Born of Rape, Children Born to ISIL Fighters and their Survivor Mothers’.

UNAMI held discussions with Data-Gathering Organisations which are members of the Global Gender-based Violence Integrated Management Systems (GBVIMS) Team to agree a way forward for data-sharing on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence between the GBVIMS and Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) Working Group on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. NGOs working on conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq have expressed concerns at how data is shared and used, and the need for formal arrangements on sharing sensitive information.

Mr. President,

In October, UNAMI established a Women Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics in Iraq (WAG). Comprising twenty-two women from diverse backgrounds, the WAG that will serve



Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

as a political inclusion mechanism to ensure that the voices, concerns and experiences of Iraqi women are included in political processes that shape national reconciliation, based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, respect for diversity and non-discrimination. The group will act as an independent source of expertise and advice to my successor in support of UNAMI's good offices. On 17 September, to complement my advocacy in bilateral meetings I sent letters to political figures and heads of parliamentary blocs urging them to elect women to leadership positions in the Council of Representatives and to ministerial and other senior positions in the future government. There are many excellent, well qualified and experienced Iraqi women who are active in politics and would be strong candidates for many of the ministerial roles. I reiterate my concern at the lack of representation thus far of women in the new Cabinet, despite assurances from political leaders to nominate women to top positions. Mr. President,

I am encouraged by the support of the diplomatic community in Baghdad for the Iraq Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda. A Group of Friends of CAAC, co-chaired by Sweden and the Netherlands, was recently established. In parallel, a draft Action Plan to counter the use and recruitment of children by Popular Mobilisation Forces has been formulated and shared with the Iraqi authorities for consideration. I hope that formation of the new government will now allow finalisation of the Action Plan and its formal signature. Mr. President,

My Deputy for Humanitarian Affairs and Development continued working with the Government, diplomatic missions, and other partners on humanitarian, stabilisation and development issues. On 10 October, she engaged in high-level coordination with representatives from the Kurdistan Regional Government to discuss displacement patterns and trends, as well as responsive transition planning towards Government and international development frameworks.

Also, on 10 October, she chaired an Iraq Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board meeting to review the status of donor support and programming for Iraqis in need of assistance. As of 5 November, donors have contributed \$482.1 million towards the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, 85 per cent

of the plan's requirement, making it the best funded appeal globally.

Nearly two years after the defeat of Da'esh by Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition allies, more than 1.9 million Iraqis remain displaced, primarily in the north and west of the country. Although four million people have returned home since the end of the conflict, the rate of return has decreased significantly. Over half of the population of current IDPs has been displaced for more than three years. Surveys indicate that a majority currently intend to stay in their areas of displacement due to destroyed or disputed housing, an absence of employment opportunities, weak basic services, community tensions, and security concerns. To accommodate this population of longer-term displaced, humanitarian programming in Iraq is shifting, in part by determining those areas where the severity of conditions may prevent returns and considering options for durable solutions. Humanitarian actors and the UNAMI Senior Women's Protection Advisor are also concentrating on how to best strengthen the centrality of protection around women and children with perceived affiliations to extremist groups. This vulnerable population faces segregation within communities and denial of humanitarian assistance. Distinguishing between legitimate security concerns and promoting the return and/or integration of these women and children is important to prevent future radicalisation.

In response to the rights violations faced by Iraqi civilians with perceived affiliation to extremists, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), has developed and adopted a position paper on "Recommendations for the Way Forward: Protection Concerns and Pro-

posed Solutions for Iraqi Citizens with Perceived Affiliation" to serve as the basis for the humanitarian community's engagement with Iraqi authorities on how to address the situation. The position paper was endorsed by the HCT in October 2018, and will be disseminated to the wider humanitarian, recovery and development community in the coming weeks. An adapted version with recommendations directed to the Iraqi authorities will be discussed with key government stakeholders for possible endorsement by the Government of Iraq.

Mr. President,

Since my last briefing to the Council, UNMAS has expanded its clearance operations to Kirkuk Governorate with the deployment of two clearance teams and two teams capable of carrying out survey, risk education and community liaison. The area is a high priority for the local authorities and the teams are working on a power line, which is expected to benefit one million people in Kirkuk following clearance and rehabilitation.

A critical barrier to the returns of IDPs is that the need for residential buildings to be cleared of mines by mine action actors remains unmet. On 17 October, UNMAS started a pilot project to clear 41 houses damaged during the conflict in West Mosul prior to their rehabilitation by the Funding Facility for Stabilisation (FFS) Programme managed by UNDP.

FFS reached a significant milestone, having now completed 1,517 projects across all nine sectors of work in the five liberated governorates of the country. Inspired by the success of the programme, government officials are requesting more projects from UNDP to rebuild electricity grids, water supply



Briefing to the Security Council by SRSB for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

systems, schools, and healthcare facilities. There are 245 new projects already tendered, but these will not be implemented without additional donor support.

We also urge the Government to begin making its own contributions to donor-funded international development programmes including those under the FFS, which have delivered critical responses to improve the lives of the Iraqi people. In parallel, substantial investments need to be made throughout Iraq in livelihoods, services, security and social cohesion—only through such dedicated efforts can the country continue to build on the momentum achieved after the defeat of Da'esh.

In line with the United Nations General Assembly Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and the Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security, UNDP began establishing Youth Peace Groups (YPGs) in the liberated areas. The YPGs gather young people, between the ages of 18 to 29, who are willing to advocate for social cohesion in communities and promote values of peaceful coexistence as tools for preventing violent conflict.

Mr. President,

The need for concrete results in public projects beyond the current focus on liberated areas is perhaps most evident in the southern city of Basra. There, a combination of water scarcity and high levels of contamination in drinking supplies led to more than 100,000 people being admitted to the hospital with gastroenteritis symptoms between mid-August and mid-October.

During October, UNICEF continued supporting the most vulnerable children and families affected by the ongoing water scarcity crisis. Technical support plans to implement seven USAID financed water projects in Basra are being developed, and five water pumps have been installed in the main 'R-Zero' water project. With the start of the new academic year in October, UNICEF is ensuring that children from schools in most-affected districts have access to safe water alongside health promotion and water conservation awareness-raising messages delivered by trained youth groups.

The situation has stabilised but remains fragile. Iraq and its neighbours should continue constructive dialogue in the efficient management of shared water resources.

Mr. President,

On 28 October, the Government of Iraq

chaired the first formal meeting of the Executive Committee on Recovery, Reconstruction and Development. This high-level committee is mandated to provide a coordination platform for strategic guidance on national priorities, bringing together the Government, civil society the UN, World Bank and other international partners to take forward the work set out in the Kuwait Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq in February of this year. This signals a Government's determined shift towards development.

In support of this shift, preparation has begun for the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2020-2024). The UN System in Iraq is carrying out a Common Country Assessment (CCA), with broad consultations, that will inform the future UN priorities in support of the national development priorities of Iraq.

Mr. President,

On 17 October, UNESCO within the framework of the 'Protection of Religious Heritage as a Tool for Reconciliation' project, undertook the first technical training workshop to build the capacity of provincial government heritage professionals in multi-disciplinary survey techniques. This workshop represents the first phase of a wider regional survey programme. With over 294 historic religious buildings damaged within five governorates, the practical dimension of the initiative forms an extremely important element.

During the reporting period UNESCO also started conducting Back-to-School campaigns as part of 'Improving access to quality and inclusive education with gender equity' for out-of-school children in Iraq. This campaign is in partnership with local NGOs and coordinated with the Ministry of Education and Directorate of Education in Ninawa Governorate. As a result, approximately 3,700 children, in different parts of Ninawa including Mosul, have been registered. The registrations will continue, and students will be followed up to ensure their retention in the educational system.

Mr. President,

Allow me to now turn to the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

I am delighted to report that on 11 and 13 November 2018, after over a year of preparations, President Saleh and respectively Iraqi Foreign Ministry representatives delivered to the Kuwait Min-

istry of Foreign Affairs numerous property items taken during the invasion of Kuwait, including a sword and a valuable painting, over 2,300 books, and an archive of Kuwait Television video tapes. UNAMI representatives observed the official handover in Kuwait City.

I welcome this clear indication of commitment by the Government of Iraq to resolving the complex file of outstanding issues with Kuwait. When I met the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mohammad Al-Hakim, on 5 November, he assured me of his highest attention to, and support for, efforts on this important file.

While I am particularly encouraged by this positive step forward, I also recognize that the search must continue for the invaluable National Archives.

Mr. President,

During my tenure in Iraq, I have witnessed renewed energy and resolve in the efforts of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence to pursue the matter of missing persons, including by carrying out excavation and exploration missions, identifying new witnesses and collecting information to complement the search. Meetings of the Tripartite mechanism remain a valuable platform to discuss the best way forward in an informative and constructive way. The latest meetings on 20-21 October demonstrated the commitment of all members to persevere, notwithstanding challenges and the accumulated frustration from lack of results. The acquisition of new imagery and mapping material provided by individual Tripartite members is another promising step in pinpointing burial locations. We expect to reach agreement on a forward-looking, technology-orientated Plan of Action before the end of the year.

Mr. President,

Over the past three years, UNAMI has taken on its mandated responsibility with the vigour and importance it deserves and has become a valued partner to the governments of Iraq and Kuwait. The Mission has become a proactive member of the Tripartite mechanism, focusing on where we can best add value and putting forward several initiatives, including the Ground Penetrating Radar pilot project.

In my final address before this Council, I would like to note the following:

- Encouraging signals from the Government of Iraq to approach the file on missing Kuwaiti persons and property with renewed vigour. A focused public

Briefing to the Security Council by SRSG for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on the situation concerning Iraq (continued)

outreach campaign might provide an avenue for progress;

- the Iraqi Ministry of Defence should continue searching for new witnesses and information that could point to potential burial locations;
- the international community should support these reinvigorated efforts by further assisting in procurement of field equipment, provision of forensic, DNA and anthropological training and capacity-building for Iraqi and Kuwaiti technical teams.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, as this is my last report to you in my current capacity, I would like to express my gratitude to you and your predecessors, to the members of the Security Council for the support you have kindly provided to me during the 3 years and 9 months I have served in my tenure.

I would also like to express my highest appreciation to UNAMI and the UNCT staff, for their dedication, professionalism, proactive efforts and unwavering commitment to work in support of UN-

AMI's and UN mandates, serving Iraq and its people.

I would also like to express my gratitude to and appreciation of Madame Alice Walpole, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance and Madame Marta Ruedas, my Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs and Development, for their cooperation,



capable leadership and management of UN activities across Iraq.

Finally, I would like to warmly welcome my successor, Madame Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and wish her success in leading the Mission, in helping Iraq toward a durable and sustainable peace, stability and prosperity for its people. I encourage the authorities and society of Iraq to offer Madame Hennis-Plasschaert the same generous support and cooperation that they have shown to me during my tenure.

Mr. President,

I have had the honor of serving the UN and Iraq during a particularly difficult period that has against all odds and scepticism ended well, with a promising future prospect for the country and its people. Iraq is a success, a positive story, in a region marked by many negative trends and developments. The UN in Iraq has shown its relevance and will continue to build on the firm foundations of its strong partnership with Iraq and its people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Political affairs

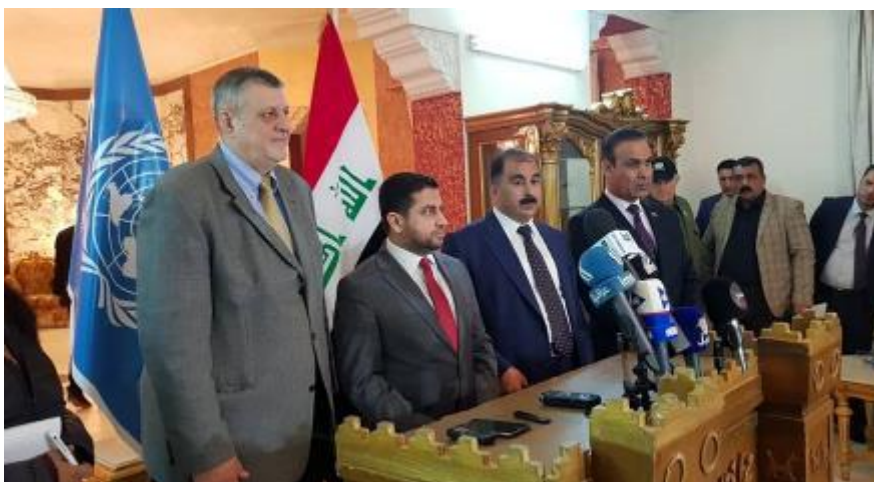
SRSG Ján Kubiš visits the Governorate of Babel in central Iraq

Babel, 2 December 2018 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, visited today the Governorate of Babel in central Iraq. He met with local officials and toured the ancient ruins of the city dating back thousands of years. In his meeting with Governor Karrar Al-Abadi, Chairman of the Provincial Council Raad al-Jubouri, and other PC members, Mr. Ján Kubiš discussed ways for additional UN support going forward. He said with the military defeat of Da'esh terrorists, the UN will

focus, in addition to the ongoing humanitarian effort, on economic and social reforms, development and investment projects to support the delivery of services and productive job creation in Iraq.

Development, encouraging investment to strengthen local economies, water management, including transboundary waters and effective use of water for agriculture to deal with climate change and water shortages, are matters of extreme importance that the UN is engaged in and will continue in the

future, the Special Representative said. Mr. Kubiš heard from the officials requests of support to list Babel on the UNESCO list of world heritage sites. The Special Representative said he will raise the matter with the relevant UN bodies, adding that the Iraqis also should enquire about the requirements for eligibility. He added that an area with such a rich history will always be a place for tourists to visit irrespective of its listing. "Babel will remain Babel and there is only one Babel," he stressed.



The “Sérgio Vieira de Mello Hall” inaugurated at the Al-Rafidain Centre for Dialogue in Najaf

Najaf, 04 December 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, today inaugurated at the Al-Rafidain Centre for Dialogue in Najaf the “Sérgio Vieira de Mello Hall”, named in honor of the late United Nations Special Representative for Iraq who was killed, along with 21 other staff members, in the terrorist bombing at UN headquarters in Baghdad in 2003.

Members of the Najaf Provincial Council and other local government officials, academics and representatives of civil society organisations participated in the event. In her remarks and subsequent discussion with the audience, Ms. Walpole addressed a number of political, electoral and security issues, including recent developments in the democratic process in Iraq.

Remarks of DSRSG Walpole:

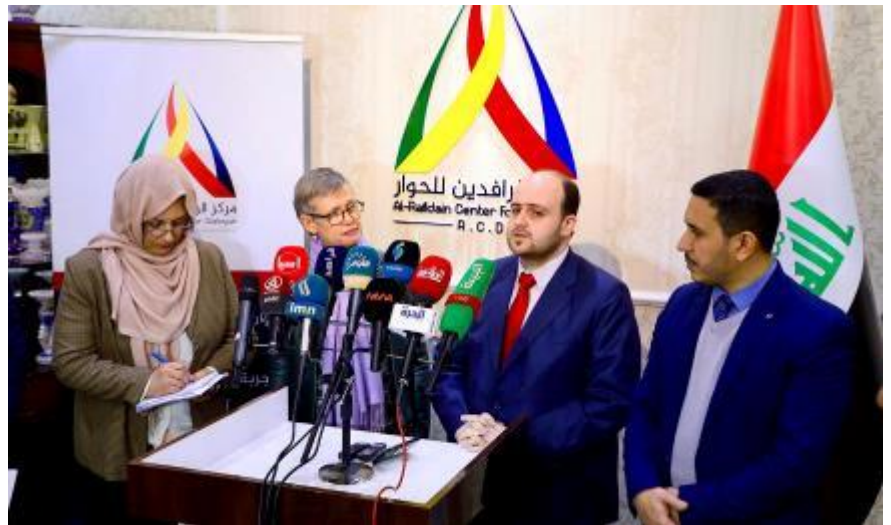
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Thank you for the invitation to speak here today, at the Al-Rafidain Center, on Iraq’s democratic experience.

2018 has been both an encouraging and challenging year for Iraq and its citizens. On the positive side, we witnessed two broadly successful electoral processes, consolidating Iraq’s democratic credentials. In May, within the constitutional time-frame, Iraq held its national parliamentary elections. Candidates and political parties conducted largely honourable campaigns, under an Electoral Code of Conduct drafted by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, free from sectarian-based discourse or inflammatory statements. There was, however, disappointing abuse of some, primarily female, candidates. Elections were held on time, and most people (including the displaced) were able to cast their votes and select their representatives freely and safely. The liberated areas witnessed an open voting process for the first time since the defeat of Da’esh. I commend the efforts of electoral officials, party agents and the security forces in making the elections largely peaceful, secure and orderly.

But we should not be complacent. The national elections were marked by a low voter turnout of just 44%. The decision by more than half of the voting population not to exercise their democratic right sends a strong signal of dissatisfaction to politicians over failures to meet people’s expectations or to provide for their needs, and a strong message to place the interests of the



Iraqi people and the nation above partisan, sectarian, individual or group interests. I encourage the Iraqi political elites, specifically incoming ministers and members of parliament, to draw the necessary conclusions on the need for improved representation, justice for all, democratic accountability and good governance free of corruption, sectarian quotas, nepotism and patronage.

You will recall that the post-election phase was marked by widespread complaints. Allegations of electoral fraud and mismanagement resulted in the decision, which the United Nations supported, to conduct a partial manual ballot recount. I would like to note the transparent, credible and well-organised conduct of the recount (which I myself witnessed in several recount locations). I commend the professionalism of all recount staff, both Independent High Electoral Commission and judiciary personnel, under the capable, impartial supervision of the Board of Judges. I believe the recount increased public confidence in the election results. I hope it also increased confidence more generally in the electoral process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout the post-election and government formation period, the people took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with the management of state affairs. Their demands must be taken seriously if the democratic process is to succeed in Iraq. The demonstrations which began in Basra in July and spread to other southern governorates including Missan, Muthanna, Qadisiya, Dhi Qar, Najaf, Karbala, Babil, Wasit, and then to Baghdad, were a clear call on the government to address the basic rights and needs of the people. The gravity of further vio-

lent protests in Basra in September sent a signal to the government to find tangible solutions to local problems of lack of delivery of basic services, shortages of electricity, lack of jobs and pervasive corruption. The protestors accused national leaders and successive governments of ignoring them and expressed deep and growing frustration with the political system, including a sectarian quota system they deem corrupt and dysfunctional, and perceived foreign interference in internal affairs. While many political leaders expressed their support for the demands of the protesters, there has been little actual progress in effecting change. Former Prime Minister Abadi and the Council of Ministers made commendable efforts to implement some rapid relief measures, but these remain insufficient to address the depth of people’s needs and concerns. The new government now needs to prioritise political, economic and social reforms, justice, equality and accountability, reconciliation and the fight against corruption. Job creation will enable economic development, stability and prosperity, while Iraq should maintain its sovereignty and independence, free from foreign interference. The challenges faced by Iraq are deep-rooted and can only be tackled by strong and unified governance. Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi and his cabinet of ministers must engage in a fight against corruption, while the new Council of Representatives should reform laws that do not embed justice and equality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I commend the successful completion of the Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections. Again, accusations of electoral fraud were fully investigated. On 30 October, the Electoral Judicial Panel

The “Sérgio Vieira de Mello Hall” inaugurated at the Al-Rafidain Centre for Dialogue in Najaf *(continued)*

of the Kurdistan Region Court of Cassation approved the election results. The Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan have assured us of their intention to consult closely with all local political parties on government formation. The Kurdistan Islamic Union and the New Generation Movement have announced that they will form an Opposition in the Kurdistan Parliament. All this is welcome progress. However, to date there have been no formal agreements on government formation. In this regard we urge the Kurdish parties to complete negotiations and the formation of the parliament to ensure that the needs of the people can be proactively addressed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations was reassured to note that Mr Abdul-Mahdi, as PM-designate, received the endorsement of many prominent parliamentary blocs to choose his ministers freely, on the basis of their capabilities and experience rather than sectarian or political quota systems. We commended the democratic transfer of power between the outgoing Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi and incoming Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi within the Constitutional timeline. At the handover ceremony on 25 October, Mr. Abadi recalled the achievements of his government. He and his government, the Kurdistan regional government, the armed forces and the people of Iraq do indeed deserve acknowledgment and gratitude for the progress made thus far. While the government formation process has not been without difficulty, the political blocs have demonstrated willingness to act in support of the Prime Minister. Competition and differences have been largely political and not sectarian, and in this way, a break from the past. Iraq must now build on these foundations.

I remain concerned that the government formation process has stalled as disagreements over some ministerial posts continues to divide political parties and blocs. The United Nations urges Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi and the political parties to reach agreement and complete the cabinet. All political forces now share a responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the new Prime Minister and government to deliver on their programme and for ensuring political stability. The Government's new programme, on which the United Nations was invited to offer advice is ambitious and forward looking. It outlines specific plans for reform, investment and the private

sector, tackling corruption and for transitioning Iraq from a crisis context to sustainable development. It prioritises job creation, greater governorate-level participation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of liberated areas and the return of the displaced. It focuses on strengthening security, fighting terrorism, enhancing law and order and the rule of law. Special attention will be given to resolving pending challenges with the Kurdistan Region, including the issues of budget allocation and financial resources, oil and disputed areas. For this programme to be achieved, Iraq will require the continued support of the international community but also sustained political support from political leaders and parties within the parliament. On international relations, I commend Iraq's new leaders who have acted without delay in engaging regional governments - fostering bilateral relations, tackling regional challenges such as terrorism, water issues, and discussing economic cooperation and investment for the reconstruction of Iraq.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Among the priority tasks for the new parliament is preparing the upcoming provincial council elections. With the expanding role of provincial councils in governance, the candidate choices made freely and fairly by the electorate will be extremely important for the country's development. I welcome the Electoral Commission's announcement of resumption of the biometric voter registration process. And I am pleased that for the first time since 2005, the Kirkuk governorate will participate in these elections - a critical step on the path to the normalisation of Kirkuk's status and of politics in the governorate. Negotiations on the reactivation of the Kirkuk Provincial Council continue, with United Nations-supported discussions between local political actors from the Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased that several female candidates received a high number of votes within their political lists, and that 19 female candidates were elected to parliament on this basis. Our expectation for the future is that the 25% quota which currently guarantees 83 seats for women, will represent a minimum threshold, not a fixed number. I urge political leaders to ensure the full participation of women within the new government and their representation at the highest levels in Iraq's political and

decision-making structures in the parliament and the government. I very much regret that no female or minority candidates have yet been appointed to ministerial positions; and while I welcome assurances that Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi will include them in future governmental posts, I feel that an opportunity has been missed. Women must get a full chance to play key roles in shaping the post-Da'esh future of their country. Equality and empowerment of women must be central to all peace, justice, legislative, reconciliation and reform efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Democracy and improved standards of living cannot be realised within an environment of persistent insecurity. Although Da'esh's so-called caliphate has been defeated, the terrorist organisation continues to pose a threat. Iraqi Security Forces and the Popular Mobilisation Forces have maintained constant pressure on the remaining Da'esh presence and activities across North, Central and West Iraq throughout the year through successive security clearance operations. Challenges however remain for improving the overall security environment. The new government must reform and rehabilitate its security sector, putting it firmly under state control.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations works hard to support Iraq and its people. With the government formation process now close to completion, we hope that the country will continue on its journey to democracy. We will continue to offer advice and engagement. We will continue to work in partnership with the government and the people of Iraq to build progress. A prosperous future built on democracy and the rule of law – an Iraq in which the rights and needs of every citizen are recognized and fulfilled.

Thank you.

Photos: Courtesy of Al-Rafidain Centre for Dialogue



UN-led effort seeks reconciliation for troubled Tuz Khurmatu district in Salah al-Din Governorate

Tuz Khurmatu, November 2018 – In Tuz Khurmatu district in Salah al-Din Governorate, once the scene of conflict between its Arab, Kurdish and Turkman components, the residents are looking to put the past behind them and work together to achieve sustainable peace, and they are welcoming UN-AMI's support towards that goal.

Ms. Alice Walpole, the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, recently visited the city to meet with residents and local officials and hear their grievances and demands.

"We wish that the United Nations, as they are visiting the District, take the Turkman component into consideration. As the Turkman component has been the main victim among the three components. Each of them thinks it's the most affected component, but I think none is affected more than the Turkman, especially in Tuz District," said Ms. Hanaa Asghar Mohammed Ridha Albayati, former member of the Iraqi Parliament.

"Our hope, as politicians, is that we engage with the UN and all other entities to stabilize security in this area. We also presented our 42 demands to the UN related to the situation in the District in general. In addition, a question we raised is that we wished that the visit had come earlier; the damage inflicted would probably had been less. Because if the three components had sat together and agreed upon these demands I think we wouldn't have reached this far" added Ms. Albayati.

Mr. Mulla Hassan Girmiyani, Member of Salah al-Din Provincial Council from Tuz Khurmatu, said: "Today, we, the Kurdish component, with our brothers from Turkman and Arab components, held a meeting with the UN for the purpose of national reconciliation among the three components; Kurds, Turkman and Arab. We wish all success for the UN in facilitating the national reconciliation among Tuz Khurmatu components".

"The situation in Tuz Khurmatu is almost stable, thanks to the professional Quick Reaction Forces that were here in Tuz. They were unbiased in their work with all the components. We wish our beloved city of Tuz Khurmatu to be for all the three components. And peaceful and brotherly coexistence is restored to the city. This can be achieved through dealing with administrative and security matters in Tuz in a balanced way. And first of all, compensating all affected components based on the scale of damage due to Da'esh and



the military operations which started in October 2016" stressed Mr. Girmiyani.

Sheikh Shukur Murshid Tu'ma from Buli Tribe said: "The situation in Tuz has deteriorated and became chaotic specifically in 2015, 2016, 2017. But after the Quick Reaction Forces arrived, security was duly restored, and things went well. This District is a homogeneous mixture of various ethnicities and faiths. We wish that the UN take care of people who were affected by the harsh conditions in this area, such as the destruction of houses, displacement, and to help (IDPs) return and compensate them and report their tragedy. The whole District has experienced tragedies, I mean all the components."

"I'm very optimistic about the future of Tuz Khurmatu because I detected among all the communities the real desire to work together and to build the future for their children, the joint future for all communities here," said Alice Walpole, the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq, and added "I don't underestimate the challenges. There are some real issues that we need to tackle collectively that have arisen in the past and are real problems. But I am overall extremely optimistic be-

cause I know people wish to move forward as a community."

Dr. Hasan Zain Al-Abedeem, Mayor of Tuz Khurmatu district said: "We hope for the best, and, from the delegations present today and the points raised, I believe that the outcome will be a Charter of Honour among the three components, and there will be compensations. And at the same time, encourage the security forces carrying out their duties on the ground. In any case, stability will be the ultimate outcome of this high-level UN delegation's visit to Tuz. There are areas that are very sensitive, especially where Turkman live. These are the key to Iraq's stability and unity. Such areas could be from where instability and partition of Iraq begin, God forbid, and also they could be places from where stability and unity begin. And Tuz Khurmatu is at the heart of such areas".

"Some see Tuz as a city, I think Tuz is a Region of its own. If you can see its boundaries; Hamrin mountains with Diyala and Salah al-Din Governorates, adjacent to Kirkuk Governorate, and then there are the mountains with Kurdistan, Suleimaniya Governorate. A very strategic location. Stability here means the stability and unity of Iraq," concluded Dr. Al-Abedeem.



Consultative meeting on the drafting of a strategy on minorities in the media held in Baghdad



Baghdad, 26 November 2018 – Government and media representatives, academics, civil society activists and other personalities gathered for a consultative meeting today to discuss drafting a strategy on minorities in the media. The meeting, which comprised over 85 personalities, was organized by the Followup and Implementation Committee on National Reconciliation at the Prime Minister's Office, with support from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The purpose of the strategy is to strengthen national unity, protect the diversity of

the country, address marginalization



and stereotyping and prevent hate speech and incitement.

Issues raised included the concerns of minorities and how they are depicted in the Iraqi media and how to devise ways to have positive visibility through engagement with media and civil society, the proposals of laws, launching of campaigns, proposing films and documentaries, TV programmes, social media campaigns and other products. UNAMI supports this project for it contributes to the theme of coexistence and the process of national and community reconciliation, especially in the period after the military defeat of Da'esh. Another meeting to finalise the strategy will take place in the coming days.



Neighborly Relations

DSRSG Walpole visited MOFA and discussed Kuwait file

Baghdad, 10 November 2018 – On 08 November 2018, the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, met today with the Undersecretary of State for foreign affairs at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Al-Tangerine. Ambassador announced that Iraq, in compliance with the United Nations Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), would shortly return found Kuwaiti archives and documents to the Kuwaiti. Ms. Walpole said that it was a positive step and confirmed that the United Nations would monitor the formal delivery process. Ms. Walpole commended the efforts of the Iraqi government in dealing with outstanding issues in bilateral relations between the two countries.

On 10 November 2018, DSRSG Walpole met with the Undersecretary of the Ministry, Ambassador Hazem Al-Youssafi. The Undersecretary expressed his thanks and appreciation for the efforts of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in various hu-

manitarian and relief fields and for resolving the outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait, expressing the hope for continued cooperation between Iraq and the UNAMI.

Undersecretary stated that next week Iraq will deliver the Kuwaiti Archive in compliance with the resolutions of the Security Council in this regard, the most recent of which is Resolution 2107 (2013) which includes Kuwaiti TV archives. He also called for the presence of UN representatives as an observer of the event.

On her part, Mrs. Alice Walpole expressed her happiness for these efforts, which would have a positive and important impact in addressing and ending the file between Iraq and Kuwait and relevant to Security Council resolutions. She also confirmed that the forthcoming report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council would include reference on Iraq's hand over of the Kuwaiti archives to the Kuwaiti side and that she would inform the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister about that during her upcoming visit to Kuwait.



Iraq hands over archives to Kuwait in the presence of UN

Kuwait City, 13 November 2018 -

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry represented by the Undersecretary of the Ministry, Ambassador Hazim Al-Youssifi, today handed over to the Kuwaiti side the archives in compliance with the resolutions of the UN Security Council 2107 (2013).

The archive consists of (28) boxes weighing about three tons, including valuable paintings by Picasso and Amiri sword handed over by the President of the Republic to the Prince of the State of Kuwait.

The Undersecretary also stressed the importance of establishing good relations on the basis of soundness and commitment of the Republic of Iraq to the principles of good neighborly relations with the State of Kuwait as well as implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

On his part, Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organiza-



tions Affairs, Mr. Nasser Al-Hameen, said that this is an important step in strengthening relations between the two countries and that the file of Kuwait archives is the most important file. On the other hand, the UN coordinator in Kuwait, Dr. Tareq Al-Sheikh,

commended the Iraqi and Kuwaiti foreign ministries for their work and keenness to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries and stated that this had been a positive step in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

UNAMI welcomes Iraqi repatriation of located Kuwaiti property to Kuwait

Baghdad, 13 November 2018 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) warmly welcomes the repatriation of a consignment of located Kuwaiti property to the Kuwaiti authorities in a handover that took place in Kuwait City today and was observed by the United Nations.

"This is an encouraging positive step taken by the Iraqi authorities in compliance with UN Security Council resolution 2107 (2013). It shows the determination of both countries to forge ahead with strengthening bilateral ties, putting behind them the bitter legacy of invasion and violence, and demonstrates the best of good neighbourly relations," said Ms. Alice Walpole, Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General. Preparations for the transfer of the Kuwaiti textbooks and other items have taken over a year. H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq Mohammed Al-Hakim has made exceptional efforts to ensure swift action on this important

and complex file of outstanding issues with Kuwait since taking office a few weeks ago.

UNAMI has been actively involved with Iraq and Kuwait as an observer in facilitating the efforts for a resolution of the outstanding issues. While UNAMI commends the Iraqi movement on the missing property file and their commitment to resolve all remaining outstanding issues with Kuwait the UN Mission

recognises that the search must continue for the invaluable National Archives of Kuwait.

Despite strong support demonstrated by Kuwait, and commitment to their international and humanitarian obligation shown by Iraq, full normalization of relations will only take place once all outstanding issues have been resolved, the Deputy Special Representative said.



UN Secretary-General welcomes Iraqi repatriation of Kuwaiti property

New York, 14 November 2018 - The Secretary-General welcomes the repatriation by the Government of Iraq of a consignment of Kuwaiti property to Kuwait on 13 November. This marks an important step towards the full normalization of relations between the two countries.

The Secretary-General commends the efforts of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait towards resolving outstanding issues between them and calls for their continued constructive engagement to closing the file of Missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the nation-

al archives, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2107 (2013).

The Secretary-General reiterates that the United Nations will remain fully committed to the resolution of all outstanding issues between Iraq and Kuwait.

The leadership of UNAMI and UN Country Team in Iraq continued intensive political consultations within Iraq and the region.



Baghdad, 31 October 2018 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš, met today the former Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi. SRSR commended Mr. Abadi's leadership over the past four years and the achievements achieved during his government's term of office, including the liberation of Iraq's territory.
Photo courtesy of Mr. Abadi's office.



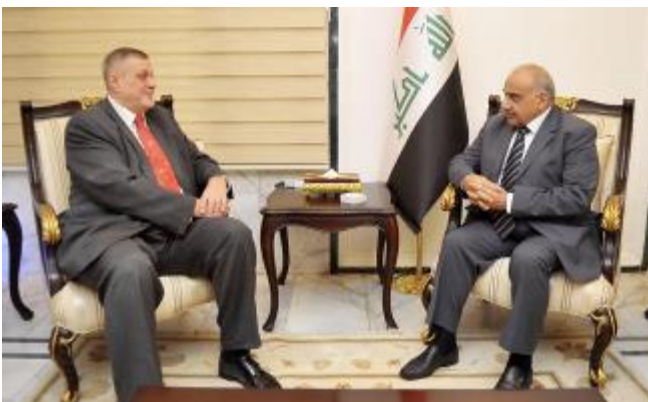
Baghdad, 04 November 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, met today with the Leader of the Wisdom Trend, Ammar al-Hakim. They discussed the current political situation as well as the prospect for the completion of the government formation.
Photo courtesy of the Wisdom Trend.



Baghdad, 05 November 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met with the Leader of the National Axis Alliance, Khamis al-Khanjar. The discussion focused on the political processes in Iraq, notably the forming of the government and on the outlined government programme and its strategic priorities. The need of domestic political support as well as international assistance to the government and implementation of its programme was also emphasized.
File photo.



Baghdad, 5 November 2018 - The minister for foreign affairs of Iraq, Mr. Mohamed Alhakim, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš. The two sides examined the specific government programme, in particular regarding the foreign and security policy, as well as the UNAMI mandate and its implementation. Foreign Minister stressed the importance of the support of the international community and the United Nations for Iraq in the coming stages, as well as in the implementation of international commitments from the Kuwait international conference.
Photo courtesy of MOFA.



Baghdad, 05 November 2018 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, was received today by the Iraqi Prime Minister, H. E. Adel Abdul-Mahdi. They discussed the outlined government programme and ways UN can assist the government of Iraq in its implementation. Efforts to advance investment, stabilization, reconstruction, return of IDPs and security sector reform were also discussed.
Photo courtesy of the PM Office.



Baghdad, 5 November 2018 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš, met with the Minister of Finance, Fuad Husein. The current political situation was discussed.
File photos.



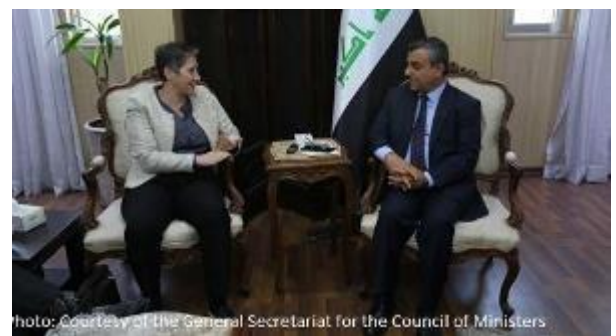
New York, 06 November 2018 - The Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Ambassador Mohamed Hussein Bahr Al-Uloum, met with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who will begin her duties as head of the UNAMI mission in Baghdad in mid-December in Iraq and wished her success in her new tasks. The two sides discussed the priorities that should be emphasized during the coming period, which is considered the period of recovery, reconstruction and stability in Iraq, stressing the importance of enhancing the role of women and youth, which are the largest group in Iraqi society and the basis of building a stable and productive society. The success of the formation of the new government was also discussed within the specific constitutional dates. Photo courtesy of the PM of Iraq to UN.



Erbil, 07 November 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš, was received by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region Government, Nechirvan Barzani. They discussed the political situation in the country, with special emphasis on the post electoral developments in the Kurdistan Region. Photo courtesy of the Office of the KR Prime Minister.



Erbil, 07 November 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš, was received by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region Government, Qubad Talabani. They discussed the political situation in the country and in the Kurdistan Region. Photo courtesy of the Office of the KR Deputy Prime Minister.



Baghdad, 13 November 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Marta Ruedas, met with the Secretary-General of the Iraqi Council of Ministers, Mr. Mehdi al-Alaq. They agreed that coordination between the Iraqi government and the international donors was taking place very well, but serious challenges remained to create the conditions for the return of displaced families to the liberated areas. Photo courtesy of the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.



Baghdad, 28 November 2018 – Iraqi Prime Minister, H.E. Adel Abdul Mahdi, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš.

SRSR Kubiš was encouraged to learn from PM Abdul Mahdi that he would soon select the remaining Cabinet members free from pressure, imposition or rejection in a balanced way to avoid further procrastination and frictions among political blocs and leaders. He welcomed the intention of the Prime Minister to open the Green Zone in Baghdad to the public.

SRSR Kubiš said that the United Nations would continue to support reconstruction and development agenda of the government in the whole of Iraq from Basra to Kirkuk and Mosul, from Al Qaem to Khanaqin.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.



New York, 29 November 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, met today with the permanent representative of Kuwait to the United Nations, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. The two sides discussed the latest developments in the activities of UNAMI, in particular files of the missing Kuwaiti and Kuwaiti property pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 2107 (2013).

Photo courtesy of the Permanent Mission of Kuwait to UN.



Baghdad, 01 December 2018 – The Acting Country Director of UNDP Iraq, Gerardo Noto, met today with the Head of MOFA International Organizations and Conferences Department, Dr. Abdulrahman Hamid Al-hussaini. They discussed possible fields of cooperation between MOFA and UNDP.

Photo courtesy of MOFA.



Baghdad, 02 December 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, Ms. Marta Ruedas, met today with Iraq's Minister of Finance, Dr. Fuad Hussein, at his office in Baghdad. She was accompanied by the OCHA Head of Office and UNDP's Head of Stabilization.

Discussion covered the Government of Iraq's possible contribution to UNDP's stabilization programme, which to date has completed more than 1,500 projects helping millions of Iraqis with education, health care, water supplies, jobs, and electricity. They also discussed the work of UN agencies assisting the remaining 1.8 million internally displaced persons, many of whom are living in camps that were recently affected by floods.

Photo courtesy of the Office of Iraq Ministry of Finance.



Erbil, 03 December 2018 - Kurdistan Region Prime Minister, H.E. Nechirvan Barzani, received the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš. They discussed the political situation in Iraq and in Kurdistan Region and efforts for the formation of the government.

Mr. Kubiš is on a farewell tour of various Iraqi interlocutors before he leaves his post later this month after nearly four years as UN Special Representative in Iraq. The Special Representative thanked Mr. Barzani and the Kurdistan Regional Government for their cooperation and support in facilitating the humanitarian and political work of the UN.

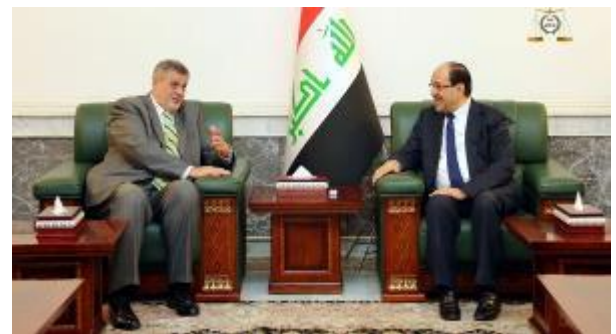
Photos courtesy of KRG.



Baghdad, 2 December 2018 - The Speaker of the Council of Representatives, H.E. Mohammed al-Halbousi, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš.

They discussed the political situation, including the completion of the government formation and the support of the parliament for the work of the government. In addition to the ongoing humanitarian effort to care for the displaced and ensure their dignified safe return to their homes, they stressed the importance of continuing reconstruction and community and national reconciliation for the stability of the liberated areas, and development and investment across the country to boost the economy and create employment opportunities.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Speaker.



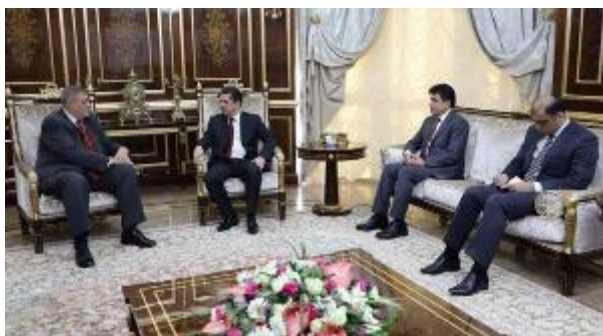
Baghdad, 03 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met with Mr. Nouri Al-Maliki, Head of the State of Law Coalition. They discussed the political situation in Iraq and efforts for the formation of the government.

Photo courtesy of the Office of Mr. Al-Maliki.



Erbil, 04 December 2018 - President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), H.E. Mr. Masoud Barzani, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, in Erbil. They discussed the political situation in Iraq and in Kurdistan Region and efforts for the formation of the government.

Photo courtesy of KDP.



Erbil, 04 December 2018 – The Chancellor of the Kurdistan Region Security Council, Mr. Masrour Barzani, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, in Erbil. They discussed the political situation in Iraq and in Kurdistan Region and efforts for the formation of the government. Photo courtesy of KRSC.



Baghdad, 5 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, met today with the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Mohammed Alhakem, to bid farewell at the end of his mandate as UN Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Mr. Kubiš expressed gratitude to the host authorities for their cooperation in facilitating the work of the UN in Iraq during his nearly four-year tenure.

For his part, Mr. Alhakeem expressed appreciation for Mr. Kubiš's contributions and UNAMI and the UN family for its efforts on humanitarian issues relating to the IDPs, and support for the rights of women and children, and affirmed continued Iraqi cooperation with UNAMI.

Photos: UNAMI and Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Geneva, 5 December 2018 - The new Chief of the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Iraq, Ms. Danielle Bell, met today with the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Ambassador Mouayed Saleh, at the Iraqi Permanent Mission.

They stressed the importance of joint action to promote and protect human rights in Iraq. Ms. Bell expressed enthusiasm at working in Iraq and was optimistic in achieving tangible results in light of the high level of cooperation shown by the Iraqi authorities and the political will to promote human rights on the ground. Mr. Mouayed welcomed continued cooperation and said his country aspires for more partnership with the UN.

Photos: Courtesy of the PM of Iraq to the UNO in Geneva.



Baghdad, 05 December 2018 – His Excellency President Barham Salih received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš. Mr. Kubiš is bidding farewell at the end of his duties in Iraq.

Mr. Kubiš thanked the President for Iraq's support for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and expressed hope for continued cooperation. He stressed the importance of concerted efforts to form a government that meets the aspirations of the Iraqi people, offering continued UN support Iraq in all areas.

The President commended Mr. Kubiš's efforts as Special Representative in Iraq and highlighted the importance of the role of the United Nations in supporting the democratic process and its institutions in the country.

Photo: Courtesy of Office of the President



Baghdad, 5 December 2018 - On the end of his tenure, Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, called on His Beatitude Cardinal Mar Louis Raphael I Sako, the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Babylon and the head of the Chaldean Catholic Church.

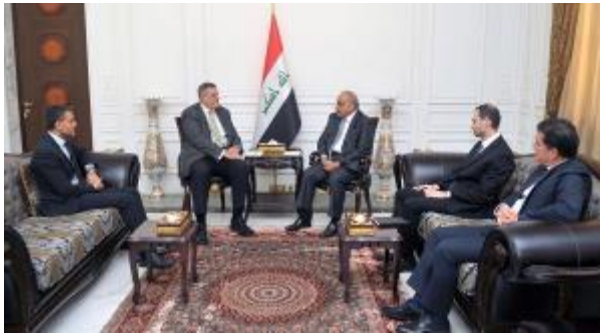
Cardinal Sako thanked Mr. Kubiš for his engagement with minorities, separately or as part of national reconciliation. The SRSR reiterated that support to minorities constitutes part of UNAMI's mandate and that the Mission will spare no occasion to advocate support for protection of the minorities and their representation in senior political positions in Iraq.



Kuwait City, 6 December 2018 - Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš. They discussed the latest developments with regards to the issue of Kuwaiti missing persons, Kuwaiti property and national archives, as well as the work of UNAMI.

Mr. Kubiš, whose tenure as UN Special Representative in Iraq is coming to an end later this month, thanked Kuwait for its support for and cooperation with UNAMI, notably the Kuwait conference on Iraq reconstruction earlier this year. He noted that UNAMI will continue to engage with Iraq and Kuwait in facilitating their efforts to find resolution to all outstanding issues.

Photos: Courtesy of Kuwait MoFA



Baghdad, 8 December 2018 – Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, whose tenure is ending later this month. Mr. Abdul-Mahdi commended the efforts of Mr. Kubiš, who thanked the government for the cooperation between the United Nations and various State institutions and expressed confidence the government will work towards meeting the people's aspirations.
Photo: Courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister



Baghdad, Iraq, 12 December 2018 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, accompanied by UNESCO Iraq Representative, Ms. Louise Haxthausen, UNAMI Chief of Human Rights Office, Ms. Danielle Bell, and UNAMI Senior Women Protection Officer, Ms. Idah Agba, met Nobel laureate Nadia Murad to congratulate her on her award. They underlined continuing UN support for Iraq's victims of conflict related sexual violence and discussed plans for a memorial to commemorate those Yazidis murdered by Daesh.



New York, 13 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner. They discussed possible areas of cooperation on Iraq Stabilization in critical areas such as parliamentary support, security sector reform and governance reforms.

Photo courtesy of UNDP.



Baghdad, 8 December 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, today hosted a call by a visiting Polish delegation led by Polish Minister for Humanitarian Aid, Ms. Beata Kempa, and accompanied by Polish Ambassador to Iraq, Ms. Beata Peksa.

Aidan O'Leary (OCHA) and Karen Whiting (UNHCR) briefed the visitors on the challenges of delivering humanitarian aid to Iraq's displaced and vulnerable communities.

Ms. Kempa noted recent Polish support to minority communities in Iraq and Syria, including a consignment of temporary housing for returnees in northern Iraq, which Ms. Walpole described as serving a valuable function in the rehabilitation of communities.



Baghdad, 12 December 2018 - Earlier this week, UNFPA Iraq Representative, Dr. Oluremi Sogunro, met with the Iraqi Minister of Health, Dr. Ala'a Al Alwan, with whom he discussed several health-related issues, with a particular focus on family planning, maternal health, and the clinical management of rape. The discussions emphasized the need for a national Family Planning strategy based on the best practices and lessons learnt and for a review of the reproductive health and Family Planning data in the country. Dr. Sogunro also urged the Minister to expedite the validation of the clinical management of rape protocol at Central level.



Baghdad, 17 December 2018 – Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Alhakim received today the new Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the occasion of the start of her tenure in Iraq.

The Minister congratulated Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert on assuming the new position in Iraq, affirmed the Iraqi government's continued cooperation with the United Nations and expressed readiness for more cooperation in all areas, especially in assisting the displaced people and in projects supporting women and children and other topics that support the Iraqi government and society.

For her part, SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert thanked the Minister and the Government of Iraq for their continuous collaboration with UNAMI and pledged continued UN support for Iraq as the country recovers from the fight against terrorism and looks towards a brighter future.



Baghdad, 17 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, Mr. Stef Blok. They discussed the current political and humanitarian situation in Iraq and possible ways how the Netherlands can support United Nations efforts in the country for the benefit of Iraqi people.



Baghdad, 18 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Mr. Heiko Mass. They discussed the current political and humanitarian situation in Iraq and possible ways how Germany can support United Nations efforts in the country to achieve sustainable development for the benefit of Iraqi people.



Baghdad, 19 December 2018 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Chief of Protocol, Mr. Mohamed Hisham, met today with the Chief of the International Organization for Migration Mission in Iraq, Mr. Gerard Waite. They discussed the enhancing of the cooperation between the Protocol Department and the International Organization for Migration in granting entry visas and shipments of the Organization.

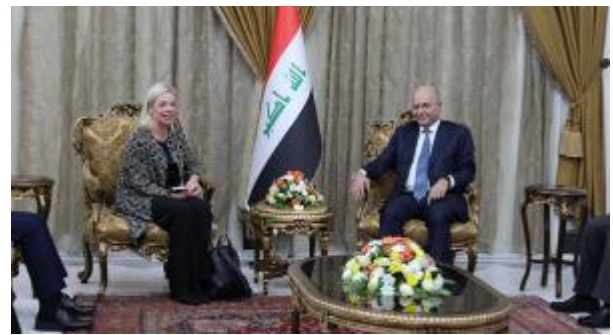
Mr. Waite and his team expressed their satisfaction with the facilities provided by the Foreign Ministry noting that he looks forward to further cooperation with the ministry.



Baghdad, 18 December 2018 – Iraqi Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Adil Abdul-Mahdi, received today the new Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the occasion of the start of her mission in Iraq.

The Prime Minister congratulated Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert on assuming the new position in Iraq, affirmed the Iraqi government's continued support to the United Nations in Iraq and expressed readiness for more cooperation in all areas.

SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert thanked the Prime Minister and the Government of Iraq for their constant collaboration with UNAMI and pledged continued UN backing for Iraq as the country recovers from the fight against terrorism and looks towards a sustainable development.



Baghdad, 19 December 2018 – His Excellency President of the Republic, Barham Salih, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the occasion of the start of her mission in Iraq.

The President congratulated Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert on assuming the new position in Iraq and affirmed continued support to the United Nations in Iraq.

SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert thanked the President and the Government of Iraq for their ongoing collaboration with UNAMI and pledged continued UN backing for Iraq as the country recovers from the fight against terrorism and looks towards sustainable development for the benefit of all Iraqi people.



Baghdad, 20 December 2018 – His Excellency Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mohamed al-Halbousi, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the occasion of the start of her mission in Iraq.

The Speaker congratulated Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert on assuming her new position in Iraq and affirmed the Iraq's continued support to the United Nations in Iraq.

SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert pledged continued UNAMI support to the Council of Representatives in passing of the necessary legislative acts that will enable a favorable environment for sustainable development for the benefit of all Iraqi people.



Baghdad, 20 December 2018 –The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the former Prime Minister of Iraq, Dr. Haider Al Abadi. They discussed current political, economic and security situation in the country.

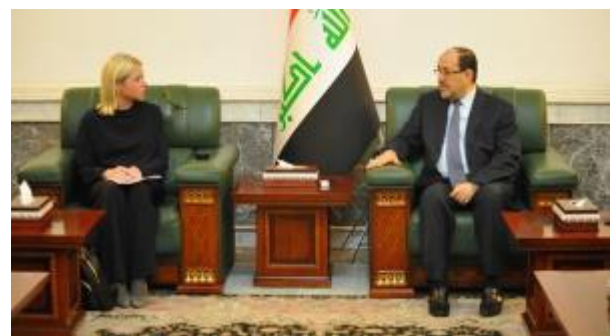


Baghdad, 23 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Netherlands’ Minister of Defence, Ms. Ank Bijleveld-Schouten, and State Secretary for Defence, Ms. Barbara Visser. They discussed the current political and security situation in Iraq and possible ways how the Netherlands can support United Nations efforts in the country to achieve sustainable development for the benefit of Iraqi people.

Photos courtesy of the Netherlands Embassy in Iraq.



Baghdad, 23 December 2018 –The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the leader of the Fateh block Mr. Hadi Al-Ameri. They discussed current political and security developments in the country, including the government formation.



Baghdad, 23 December 2018 – His Excellency Vice President of the Republic, Nouri Al-Maliki, received today the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on the occasion of the start of her mission in Iraq. They discussed the current political, economic and security situation in the country.



Baghdad, 24 December 2018 –The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the leader of the Wisdom Trend, His Eminence Ammar Al-Hakim. They discussed current political and security developments in the country, as well as the government formation.



Baghdad, 24 December 2018 –The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the former Vice President of the Republic and the leader of the Al Wataniya block, Ayad Allawi. Current political and security developments in the country and the region were discussed, including the process of the government formation.



Erbil, 26 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the KRG, Palah Mustafa. They discussed the current political, humanitarian and security situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region and possible ways how the United Nations can further assist Kurdistan Region in overcoming challenges that it faces.



Erbil, 26 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the leader of the Kurdistan's Islamic Group (KIG), Ali Bapir. They discussed the current political situation in the Kurdistan Region, including the post-election developments and the process of the formation of the regional government.



Erbil, 27 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Leader of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP), Masoud Barzani. The current political, humanitarian and security situation in Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region were discussed, including recent elections for the Kurdistan Regional Parliament and process of formation of the new regional government.
Photos courtesy of the KDP.



Erbil, 27 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani. They discussed the current political, economic, humanitarian and security situation in the Kurdistan Region, including post-regional-election developments and the process of the formation of the regional government.



Erbil, 27 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the KR Security Council Chancellor, Masrouf Barzani. They discussed the current political and security situation in the Kurdistan Region.
Photos courtesy of the KRG.



Erbil, 27 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Minister of the Interior of the Kurdistan Region, Karim Sinjari. They discussed the current political and security situation in Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region.

Security

UN Special Representative Kubiš condemns ‘heinous’ Baghdad bombings: ‘The unity of the people and decisive efforts of the security forces are certain to foil the terrorists’ evil designs’

Baghdad, 04 November 2018 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the cowardly bombings which targeted several residential areas of Baghdad and in Sadr City today, killing or injuring a number of civilians. The Special Repre-

sentative extends his deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and wishes the injured a speedy recovery. Mr. Kubiš urges the authorities to be extra vigilant to uncover the culprits and thwart further attacks. "These heinous acts aim to break the

spirit of the Iraqis, in particular Baghdadis who have started to enjoy the fruits of peace, and derail their country's steady progress towards stability, but the unity of the people and the decisive efforts of the security forces are certain to foil the terrorists' evil designs," the Special Representative said.

UN Special Representative for Iraq Kubiš condemns bombing in Tikrit as evil act targeting civilians

Baghdad, 19 November 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, strongly condemns the bombing that targeted civilians in the city of Tikrit in Salaheddin Governorate north of Baghdad on Sunday. Mr. Kubiš ex-

presses his deepest sympathies with the families of those who lost their lives and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

“This cowardly attack outside a restaurant in central Tikrit is pure evil. It has no aims other than to kill civilians and to try to destroy Iraq’s recovery and peace-

ful march after years of conflict. But the terrorists’ goal of undermining security and destabilizing the areas still recovering from the scourge of terrorism will fail with the unity of the Iraqi people and the vigilance of the security forces,” Mr. Kubiš said.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of November 2018, the lowest in 6 years

Baghdad, 02 December 2018 – A total of 41 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 73 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in November 2018*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

The figures include ordinary citizens and others considered civilians at the time of death or injury, such as police in non-combat functions, civil defence, personal security teams, facilities protection police and fire department personnel.

The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, said the continuing loss

of life is regrettable but the latest figures are the lowest since UNAMI began publishing them in November 2012.

“These are not just figures. They are human beings with families. But these figures, sad as they are, also reflect the continuing downward trend in the level of violence as the country recovers from its fight with terrorism and presses ahead towards a stable, prosperous future,” the Special Representative said.

Baghdad was the most affected Governorate, with 55 civilian casualties (23 killed, 32 injured), followed by Ninewa (08 killed and 19 injured) and Anbar (04 killed and 15 injured).

*CAVEATS: UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in certain areas; in some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. Figures for casualties from Anbar Governorate are provided by the Health Directorate and are noted above. Casualty figures obtained from the Anbar Health Directorate might not fully reflect the real number of casualties in those areas due to the increased volatility of the situation on the ground and the disruption of services. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.

UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of December 2018

Baghdad, 03 January 2019 - During December 2018 a total of 32 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 32 injured in acts of terrorism and conflict-related violence.

Ninewa was the worst affected Governorate with 26 civilian casualties (07 killed, 19 injured) followed by Baghdad with (17 killed and 03 injured) and Salahadin (03 killed and 03 injured). The figures include ordinary citizens and others considered civilian at the time of death or injury, such as police on non-combat functions, civil defence, personal security teams, facilities protection police and fire department personnel.

“UNAMI views these figures as more than mere statistics. Every civilian death documented by UNAMI over the years represents a family grieving and strug-

gling to come to terms with its loss. Each injury or maiming of a civilian represents immense individual and societal suffering,” Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said.

NOTE FOR INFORMATION:

UNAMI used to publish these casualty figures on a monthly basis as part of its broader efforts to highlight civilian protection needs, reduce civilian harm, and to encourage all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. However, UNAMI’s monitoring in recent months has shown a steady reduction in civilian casualties. UNAMI has therefore decided that it will no longer publish these civilian casualty updates

on a monthly basis but only if circumstances dictate. Whilst this decision is made in the context of a stabilizing security situation, and a consequent reduction in conflict-related harm to civilians, the conditions necessary for a sustained reduction in violence remain very fragile. UNAMI will, therefore, continue to monitor the situation.

*CAVEATS: UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in certain areas; in some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum. UNAMI was not able to verify casualty figures from Anbar Governorate and as a result they are not included.

Gender

Study “Iraq Gender Profile: A snapshot situation analysis on gender equality and women’s empowerment” launched in Baghdad

Baghdad, 28 October 2018 - UN Women in partnership with Oxfam launched the study ‘Iraq Gender Profile: A snapshot situation analysis on gender equality and women’s empowerment’, a comprehensive gender study on the status of women’s and girls’ rights in Iraq. The conference launching was held on October at Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad on the occasion of the 18th Anniversary of

the United Nations Council Resolutions 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, The Gender Profile, funded by the Government of Japan, aimed to inform and facilitate the development of gender responsive policies, strategies and programmes in Iraq. The launching conference presented the study in relation to identification of gaps and opportunities to advance the gender equality agenda

and women’s and girls’ empowerment, with a focus on the political, legal, health and economic sector.

The conference was attended by more than 100 representatives of the Government of Iraq, women’s parliamentarians, the police and justice sector, international cooperation agencies, the UN System and civil society organizations.

Iraq initiative to empower women candidates run parliamentary polls



Baghdad, 04 November 2018 - In order to promote the equal opportunities for women to play their role as an active agent of society and due to the importance of political empowerment, participation and mobilization of women in the Democratic Government in Iraq, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as part of its governance programme to strengthen electoral processes in Iraq, launched an initiative to empower and develop capacities of 200 women candidates, from various political coalitions, who took part in the recent parliamentary elections in Iraq.

Political and electoral processes should be inclusive of women and acknowledge a special circumstance and needs. Women's participation and representation is supported by many international frameworks, including CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UNSCR 1325, UN Resolution on Women and Political Participation, and the 2030 Agenda. These frameworks acknowledge that women's participation is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace.

This initiative was aimed at strengthening women candidates' capacities with a team of experts on electoral laws and regulations, leadership skills, communication using mass and social media (interviews and public speech), formulation of political messages, political campaigns and importance of gender equality. This training carried out in collaboration with Um-Alyateem for Development Foundation UDF, a local NGO, consisted of eight workshops targeting 25 women candidates each. An electronic platform for candidates who engaged in the program was created to exchange experiences and address

questions through Facebook and Viber. All candidates' interviews were collected and disseminated by a YouTube channel since April 15th.

The Country Director of UNDP in Iraq, Mr. Gerardo Noto said: "Gender equality and women's political participation are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and its target 5.5 aim to ensure 'women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life,' and are crucial to establish inclusive institutions at all levels, as called by SDG 16". The recent Report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2017/66) unveiled that "globally, women's participation in single or lower houses of national parliaments reached 23.4 per cent in 2017, just 10 percentage points higher than in 2000. Such slow progress suggests that stronger political commitment and more ambitious measures are needed to boost women's political participation and empowerment." In the Arab States, the average percentage of women's participation in national parliaments is only 18%. This constitutes the second lowest performing region for female representation.

UNDP Gender Specialist, Ms. Sundus Abbas stated "UNDP not only believes in the importance of supporting the participation

of women in the political process but also it is convinced of the key roles of women on political levels and the added value that women bring to policies, therefore UNDP promote gender team in IHEC with tools and methods to insure gender perspective in electoral process".

Dr. Amira Al Baldawi, the director of UDF and a member of the COR from 2005-2010, confirmed "Although the Iraqi Constitution, in Article (49 - IV) sets the quota for women in the CoR at not less than 25%, and although the number exceeded 84, yet the impact was very limited and did not meet people's expectations. In addition to the above, most electoral lists heads stated that they will present high percentage of new candidates, which requires more support to enhance and empower women capacities, to allow them to participate effectively in the election. This is why we think such initiative is critical to strengthen women participation in Iraq".

Dr. Nada Shaker, professor at Baghdad University and one of the woman MPs, stated "I participated in the polls in order to serve the people in need via legislation of Codes that deal with investment and basic services, UNDP initiative was very useful but it should be conducted months before the election so that women candidates can make full use of it". She said "Since I have the skills and tools, I am looking forward to create a parliamentary bloc that is able to make change". She added "I hope that Women MPs can form a bloc that play a key role in the parliament".



UN Women activities in Iraq discussed in New York

New York, 15 November 2018 - Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Al-Uloum, the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, received Ms. Dina Zorba, UN Women Country Director in Iraq, at the Iraqi House in New York. The role of the United Nations to enable Iraqi women and the programmes that will be implemented were among the topics of discussions.

Photo courtesy of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations.

UNAMI organized a consultative forum in the context of the Global Open Day on UNSCR 1325

Baghdad, 21 October 2018 - In the context of the Global Open Day on UNSCR 1325 and on the 18th anniversary of the adoption of the resolution, UNAMI organized a consultative forum with civil society, women's rights activists, human rights defenders, journalists and members of the Iraqi Bar Association as well as the High Judicial Council to discuss concerns of the civil society regarding the application of Article 38 (9) of the Iraqi Penal Code, which permits the nullification of rape charges when perpetrators of rape marry their victims.

Lawyers and volunteers from the Baghdad Women Association provided a detailed briefing on the activities of a network of 20 civil society activists, who in 2015 launched the campaign "#Marriage_Does_Not_Nullify_Rape".

The campaign raises awareness against rape, calling for accountability for perpetrators of rape who often marry their victims to escape conviction.

The meeting also discussed the lessons learned from the advocacy campaign and the development of new strategies and collaboration aimed at lobbying the Council of Representatives' (CoR) relevant Committees so that they may revise, amend or abolish the Article.

Participants called for:

- The possible revision, amendment or abolishment of Article 38 (9) of the Penal Code 111 of 1969
- The CoR to adopt laws to protect women and children from violence
- Enactment of a Sexual Offences Law to penalize the various types of sexual violence crimes
- Further Consultations with the High

Judicial Council, Council of Representatives Committees - Legal, Human Rights, Tribal, Women's Committees - as well as the newly established women caucus/bloc and the UN support to highlight the plight of victims of rape.



Meeting "Towards effective partnership to realize gender equity in peacebuilding" held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 21 November 2018 - Iraqi Al-Amal Association and the Iraqi Women Network, in collaboration with the Council of Representatives Women and Children Committee, with support of the Dutch PAX for Peace Organization, organized today a meeting "Towards Effective Partnership to Realize Gender Equity in Peace Building".

UNAMI Senior Gender Advisor, Ms. Mmabatharo Nono Dihemo, briefed the meeting on the establishment of the Women Advisory Group (WAG), a political inclusivity mechanism in Iraq aimed at addressing the historic marginalization and exclusion of women from political processes and decision-making positions.

She also elaborated on the activities of

UNAMI and UN Women undertaken with the aim to support greater participation and representation of women at all levels of decision making in Iraq and how the WAG will work closely with the Women Parliamentary Bloc, as well

as the Civil Society situation room, in advancing women, peace and security agenda and in ensuring effective engagement of women in reconciliation and political processes to enhance sustained peace.



The Iraqi Women Parliamentarians Caucus met in Baghdad



Baghdad, 23 November 2018 - The Iraqi Women Parliamentarians Caucus met in Baghdad to discuss means to activate its work in advocating women's causes in the legislature. The meeting was chaired by MP Ala Talabani, elected earlier to head the caucus for three months. Iraq has 83 women parliamentarians out of a 326-member Council of representatives, elected in May under a 25-percent quota system. The meeting was supported by UN Women with the participation of UNDP and NDI.



UN inter-agency Gender Task Force discussed preparations for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence

Baghdad, 25 November 2018 - The UN inter-agency Gender Task Force (GTF) held its regular meeting with the participation of the Gender Focal Points representing UN agencies in Iraq.

The meeting included a presentation of the UN Women/Oxfam "Iraq Gender Profile" study as well as UN agencies' update about the planned activities for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

The GTF is the UN main platform to share information about the agencies' programming, research and advocacy actions to advance the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. The Iraq task force is chaired by UN Women and co-chaired by UNDP and UNAMI. The meeting was held in Baghdad and video-linked with Erbil.



UNFPA denounces the attacks on directorates protecting women in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 November 2018 - The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iraq condemns the cowardly attack on the office of the Directorate to Combat Violence against Women (DCVAW) in Sulaymaniyah on 29 November by four gunmen using heavy weaponry.

While no casualties were reported, this remains a concern for UNFPA as Women Support Offices should continue to be a haven where women can find refuge from violence and abuse.

"We regret that such attacks happen,

especially during the 16 Days of Activism to Combat Violence against Women, when the whole world, including the Government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, is calling to put an end to abuse and violence against women. We all have the responsibility to protect women and girls, especially survivors of gender-based violence," said Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq.

"We call upon the Regional Government of Kurdistan to complete the investigation and arrest the perpetrators

to give women back the sense of security they seek," he added.

Throughout the year, three other attacks occurred against DCVAW's offices in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. The attacks took place while survivors were being transferred to safe locations.

UNFPA reiterates its commitment to support the Government of Kurdistan, and more specifically its partner, the General Directorate of Combatting Violence against Women (GDCVAW), in eradicating violence against women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Conference "Identifying needs of female IDP's and returnees" held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 15 December 2018 - "Iraqi Organization for Women and Future" today organized a conference "Identifying needs of female IDP's and Returnees" to discuss the situation of Anbar's female internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees' needs. The results of a research were presented that identified key needs of returnees and IDPs. A number of recommendations on the needs of IDPs for the executive, legislature and UN humanitarian agencies were highlighted that include protection issues, safety and security, women empowerment, localization of the implementation of the NAP as well as education needs for girls and boys. It was funded and supported by the French Embassy in Iraq and "Kvinna till Kvinna", a Swedish nongovernmental organization.



Participants included representatives of the civil society, Diplomatic Corps, members of provincial councils, parliamentarians. Representing UNAMI, the Senior Gender Advisor, Ms. Nono Mma-

batlharo Dihemo, opened the Female House Holding Bazaar (FHH) that supports widows and is an income generating activity for women headed households.

Iraq presents the National report on the implementation of Iraq National Action Plan for United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security

Baghdad, 16 December 2018 – Iraq Cross Sector Task Force for the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security presented today in Baghdad Iraq's first report on the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325. The event was organized under the patronage of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi. Participants included, Dr. Mahdi Al-Alaq, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and Chair of the Cross-Sector Task Force, Dr. Thikra Alloush, Chairperson of the National Committee on the Advancement of Iraqi Women, Ms. Jalal Amal representative of the High Council for Women Affairs, Kurdistan Regional Government, members of the Cross-Sector Task Force, MPs, members of provincial councils, diplomatic corps, international organizations, civil society, women activists and human rights defenders as well UN officials.

The Report was presented by Ms. Suzan Aref, Coordinator of Cross Sector Task Force, and Mr. Qasem Alzamili, Head of the Secretariat of Cross Sector Task Force.

Speaking on behalf of UNAMI, Ms. Nono Mmabatlharo Dihemo, Senior Gender Advisor, welcomed the presentation of Iraq's first report on the implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. "The report highlights the gaps, challenges and provide the recommendations and necessary guidance for the development of the second plan," said Ms. Dihemo.

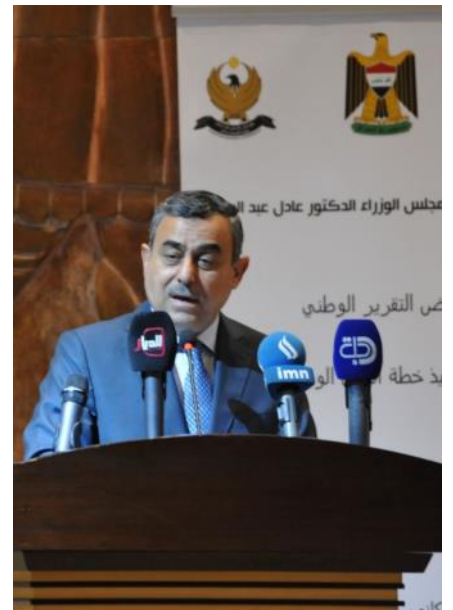
"While we commend this development, as well as the Iraqi federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government for their concerted efforts and strong coordination towards the implementation of the National Action Plan on women, peace and security, Iraq's ability to implement its 1325 National Action Plan will be dependent on allocation of a budget and implementation of related national frameworks including the Joint Communiqué to address Conflict Related Sexual Violence". The UN is still advocating for a national machinery or entity on women's affairs with adequate budget, human resources to coordinate the implementation of all national frameworks advancing women's rights. "As we have highlighted before, on our part, we will continue our advocacy for immediate progress, but also for long-term reforms to structural barriers that inhibit the full and meaningful representation and



participation of women in political decision-making. A lot of work remains to be done on the participation and protection pillar. Adoption of the Anti-Domestic Law as well as laws or policies that to enhance the representation of women in the Cabinet, Judiciary and other spheres of governance," said Ms. Dihemo.

The added value of the INAP is the broad collaborative and consultative process which provided space for all involved stakeholders to increase commitment and capacities on women's participation in decision-making, peace building and security.

UN Women Programme Specialist for Iraq Laila Hatahet presented the closing comments along with Boriana Johnson, chair of the Euro-med initiative, and Anwar Rubai from the cross-sector task force.



UN Women organized a consultative meeting for the National Cross Sector Task Force on the workplan for the preparation of the second Iraq National Action Plan (INAP)

Baghdad, 18 December 2018 - UN Women in partnership with the Euro-Med Feminist Initiative organized a consultative meeting for the National Cross Sector Task Force on the workplan for the preparation of the second Iraq National Action Plan (INAP) for the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The meeting took place following the launch of the national report on the first (INAP) this week.



Gender and displacement: What's it like to be a female Syrian refugee in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq?

Erbil, 04 December 2018 - Syrian female refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq face increased discrimination, inequality and risks of violence and exploitation exacerbated by shifting gender roles and responsibilities in displacement.

Through interviews with over 500 hundred Syrian female refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, UN Women's new report "Unpacking gendered realities in displacement: the status of Syrian refugee women in Iraq" examines how displacement has affected Syrian female refugees in Kurdistan and how the interplay of systemic gender discrimination, poverty and instability increase their vulnerability and isolation. Fifty-seven percent of women said that they now had a larger decision-making role than before displacement. While women in the study demonstrated agency and did not see themselves as victims, they were vocal about the negative impact that displacement has had on their lives and families. They did not view increased responsibility as a decision they have made themselves, but as critical for the survival of their families.

Women stressed the importance of receiving assistance in a clear and consistent manner. They also reported that current levels of financial assistance are not sufficient to reduce their reliance on negative coping mechanisms. Economic insecurity was cited as the primary concern for 82% of the women in the study. Despite the physical limi-

tations and threats of violence, many women expressed a strong desire to contribute to household income through paid work. While 78% of the women interviewed had a Kurdish residency permit, which also allows them to work legally, only 4% of women reported that they had access to any type of work. Despite their willingness and legal ability to work, employment remains elusive, forcing many to turn to informal and inconsistent work.

Moreover, many felt that displacement has increased violence against women, primarily in the private sphere. One fifth of the women said that gender-based violence has increased since the start of the Syria crisis. This has negatively impacted their mobility due to the actual and perceived risks of violence.

The increased stress of displacement, and especially the inability of many women to meet their basic living needs, has led to increased mental and psychological issues. Women generally expressed their desire for psychosocial support that could help them deal with their lives in displacement and the increasing tensions both in the household and larger community.

"Better protection for themselves and their families and access to work and livelihood were articulated by the women we spoke to as the foundation for their empowerment and equality." Said Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director of UN Women for the Arab States. "In the absence of this, women and girls

will continue to be forced to make decisions and compromises that put themselves at risk and limit their choices and opportunities."

To alleviate the hardships of displacement on Syrian female refugees in Kurdistan and empower them, the report has made the following recommendations:

Ensure that gender mainstreaming in humanitarian and resilience programming prioritizes women and girls' empowerment and access to services;

Increase access to employment services and financial resources for female Syrian refugees, actively targeting refugee women for livelihoods programming;

Support interactive, safe spaces for female Syrian refugees to meet, network and socialize. These centers should enhance reporting of gender-based violence and provide quality psychosocial support services;

Ensure information sharing and awareness raising on available services, pairing approaches that utilize technology with those that are based on word of mouth;

Promote accountability for violence against women and support the judicial system to investigate and prosecute cases of violence against women within the refugee community;

Recognize the positive correlation between the strength of women's movements and organizations and gender-equal societies and invest in women-led organizations as key drivers of short-term and long-term social equality.

UNDP supporting women CRSV and SGBV survivors of trauma

Baghdad, 04 November 2018 - After a long process of a series training and consultations meetings which started in October 2017 targeting 114 female social workers in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs/ Directorate of women protection, UNDP started developing a national analytical report for women survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) and Sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in Iraq. Through an advanced training on expressing writing and listening skills to collect women stories, social workers as first responders were capacitated on appropriate approaches for conducting interviews with survivors and how to handle potential challenges, such as the re-traumatization of survivors. These techniques enable women to share their stories, detail their needs, make their demands for rehabilitation and compensation in a sensitive and secure environment.

The next stage will be collecting stories by MOLSA social workers of women CRSV /SGBV survivors in Ninewah, Salahaldeen, Diyala, Anbar, Baghdad, Karbalaa, Babil, Misan, Kirkuk and Basrah. These stories will be analyzed to develop a national analytical report to be approved and adopted by the government. This report will be one of the resources that will inform efforts of the Iraqi government to strengthen its social protection and transitional justice policies.

H.E Minister Mohammad Shiaa Aloudany said: "Iraqi women faced many challenges in life, hence the Government with all its institutions as well as the local and international community must stand with the Iraqi women, who

represent patience, strength and willingness to move forward in life, in their long and painful journey. He added that. Mr. Aloudany stated, "Many women are exposed to violence and cannot speak out, which leads to psychological effects reflected on their families as well".

UNDP's Gender Specialist, Ms. Sundus Abbas said: "In Iraq, the biggest obstacle facing reconciliation is dealing with the past in ways that make a fresh start possible. Expressive Writing in Dealing with the Past is a key methodology in achieving community reconciliation in Iraq's post-conflict environment which help increasing the well-being of groups at risk". She added: "Women voices, roles and stories are often ignored; therefore, we came up with this initiative to reach out to a wider group of women and listen to their stories through our newly-established partnership with the MOLSA team of female social workers". Senior Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs Mr. Fahih Al-Amiry highlighted that "social workers play an active role in showcasing

what is happening within the society especially civilians that been subjected to violence". adding that: "this kind of documentation is much needed now in Iraq especially in post liberation phase".

Mrs. Uttor Almusawi, Director General of Women Social Protection Department at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs explained that, "women are the most targeted group in Iraq; therefore, we hope to be able to reach out to all women who have experienced violence through our teams of social workers across Iraq. With UNDP's support, we count on this project to help women victims to document their stories and to draw lessons through this initiative for future use. We also want to record all stories of those who play an active role as peace builders in their communities. And we are interested, not only in individual stories, but also those of communities". She added that: "This is one of our main responsibilities in the department of Women Social Protection".

Though its Support to Integrated Reconciliation in Iraq Project, the UNDP is working in partnership with the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation to develop, support and sustain civic participation in reconciliation and transitional justice processes at every level of society, with a focus on communities. The project is comprising three main pillars: 1) Public Awareness Raising 2) Local Peace mechanisms, processes and committees and 3) Documenting the experiences, needs and demands of Iraqi citizens for reconciliation with special emphasis on the redress of sexual and gender violence during previous conflicts.



UNICEF trained 68 police officers, social workers, and lawyers in the Kurdistan Region on how to manage cases of Gender Based Violence against women and girls

Erbil, 6 November 2018 - With the support from European Union Regional Development and Protection Programme, UNICEF recently trained 68 police officers, social workers, and lawyers working with the government in the Kurdistan Region on how to manage cases of Gender Based Violence against women and girls.



Initiative to establish mobile courts that will facilitate the registration of children born of rape and unregistered marriages in areas previously under Da'esh control discussed at a high-level meeting

Baghdad, 15 November 2018 – The United Nations Undersecretary-General, Ms. Ana Maria Menéndez, accompanied by the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, met with Dr. Ibteissam Aziz, Director-General of the Directorate for Empowering Women and High-Level Focal Point on Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

Among other topics, they discussed an initiative to establish mobile courts that will facilitate the registration of children born of rape and unregistered marriages in areas previously under Da'esh control.



UNFPA held an advocacy workshop in the Iraqi Parliament to discuss the coming National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women

Baghdad, 22 November 2018 – Today, Sweden's Ambassador Pontus Melander attended a UNFPA advocacy workshop in the Iraqi Parliament to discuss the coming National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women. The workshop was sponsored by the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Mohamed al-Halbousi, who urged Parliament to pass the necessary legislation to eradicate violence against women.

Ambassador Melander, on behalf of the embassies present, urged Iraqi institutions to rally around the National Strategy. He highlighted the link between sexual- and gender-based violence and structural discrimination against women in society, recognizing

the important contributions of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad to

support victims of human trafficking and sexual slavery.



UNICEF, UNFPA developed the Adolescent Toolkit

Baghdad, 22 November 2018 - With UNICEF, UNFPA developed the Adolescent Toolkit to ensure young girls, especially those in camps for refugees and internally displaced people, receive awareness raising on key issues on life skills, reproductive health, gender-based violence (GBV) and financial education. Together, we work to prepare young girls to become knowledgeable about their rights.



Joint UN statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Baghdad, 23 November 2018 - Statement by the Heads of UN agencies, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and UN WOMEN, calling for solidarity with survivors and survivor advocates and women's human rights defenders who are working to prevent and end violence against women and girls.

To commemorate this year's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign is calling upon us to stand in solidarity with survivors and survivor advocates and women's human rights defenders who are working to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Our duty is not only to stand in solidarity with them but also to intensify our efforts to find solutions and measures to stop this preventable global scourge with a detrimental impact on women's and girls' lives and health.

The last year has been extraordinary in terms of the awareness that has been raised on the extent and magnitude of the different forms of violence inflicted on women and girls. The #MeToo campaign—one of the most viral and powerful social movements of recent times—has brought this issue into the spotlight. This awareness has been further reinforced by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 to two remarkable activists, Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege, who work on ending violence against women in conflict situations.

More than a third of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Furthermore, research indicates

that the cost of violence against women could amount annually to around 2 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP). This is equivalent to 1.5 trillion dollars[1].

Beyond raising awareness, governments, the private sector, the artistic community, civil society organizations, academia and engaged citizens are again looking into new ways to urgently address this global scourge.

For more than 20 years, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women has been investing in national and local initiatives that translate policy promises into concrete benefits for women and girls and contribute to the prevention of violence in the long run.

As part of the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls, a global, multi-year partnership between the United Nations and the European Union, we are working with different partners to increase the scale and level of ambition of our interventions. We understand that reducing and preventing violence against women is transformational: it improves the health of women and children, reduces risks of acquiring HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), improves economic productivity and educational attainment, and reduces the risks of mental illness and substance abuse, among other benefits.

Through the Spotlight Initiative, our agencies are mobilizing an array of stakeholders to address both the root causes of violence as well as its most immediate consequences. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the initiative fully integrates

the principle of leaving no one behind. Spotlight will also build on existing good practices and evidence-based programming, as well as incorporate new solutions for accelerated results.

The UN family is working tirelessly with our partners to strengthen legal frameworks and institutions, to improve services for survivors, and to address the root causes of violence by challenging social norms and behaviours and tackling the wider gender inequalities.

Ending violence against women and girls is not a short-term endeavor. It requires coordinated and sustained efforts from all of us. Showing that these efforts yield results is the best tribute to survivors and the survivor advocates and women's human rights defenders that we are celebrating today.



Makin dolls to raise awareness on gender-based violence



Mosul, 25 November 2018 - "I choose blue for the eyes, blonde for the hair and orange for the dress of my doll,"

says Deemah, after she was consulted by her mother on what colors she would like to use for her custom-made doll.

Deemah, her mother, and 35 other pairs of mothers and daughters, worked together to make the dolls during an activity in the Community Resource Center in west Mosul. The activity aimed at raising awareness on gender-based violence, and took place on Wednesday 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which marks day one of the 16 Days of Activism.

Participants had to write on the doll a message against violence. Deemah's mother wrote "Hear Me Too" recalling the main theme chosen for the 2018 campaign.

This awareness raising activity was supported by Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete.

Remarks by SRSG Ján Kubiš at the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence [as prepared]

Erbil, 25 November 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ján Kubiš, attended today the launch ceremony for the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. Here is the text of his remarks (as prepared for delivery):

Your Excellency, Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government,

Your Excellency, Qubat Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister

Your Honor, Judge Bangin Qasim, Head of the Judicial Council,

Your Excellency Mr. Karim Sinjari, Minister for Interior, Excellencies Ministers,

Your Excellency, Ms. Pakhshan Zangana, Secretary-General, the High Council for Women's Affairs,

Honorable Members of Parliament and Heads of Blocs, Governors, members of the Judiciary,

Distinguished religious authorities and representatives,

Distinguished Members, Cross-Sector Task Force,

Distinguished Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished civil society representatives,

Distinguished guests,

UN colleagues,

I am honored to be here today as we mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence under the theme "Hear Me Too".

I'd like to open my intervention with quotations from the message of the UN Secretary General on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women:

"Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. It is a moral affront to all women and girls, a mark of shame on all our societies and a major obstacle to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. At its core, violence against women and girls is the manifestation of a profound lack of respect – a failure by men to recognize the inherent equality and dignity of women. It is an issue of fundamental human rights. This year, the global United Nations UNiTE campaign to end violence against women and girls is highlighting our support for survivors and advocates under the theme 'Orange the World: #HearMeToo'. With orange as the unifying colour of solidarity, the #HearMeToo hashtag is designed to send a clear message: violence against women and girls must end now, and we



all have a role to play."

Distinguished participants,

The upcoming months and years will be extremely challenging for the new Governments - both at the federal level and in the Kurdistan Region. They will have to cope with the impact of the grave crimes of the brutal terrorist Daesh, that amongst others brought destruction of lives of many, with a devastating impact in particular on women. They will have to establish justice and accountability and pursue societal and political reconciliation. They will have to introduce profound political, social and economic reforms that will finally address the needs of the people of Iraq, of the Kurdistan Region. Reforms that must start with education – for respect and equal rights, opportunities and treatment of men and women and against exclusion, prejudice and harmful cultural and religious practices and traditions. Here protection of women and girls, furthering of their rights, empowering them,

also economically, is more critical than ever.

Distinguished participants,

While public awareness of harassment, of violence against women and girls has in the past period increased through media attention, social media activism, public health campaigns and social research, violence against women and girls has not abated. Authorities have reported an increase in the number of cases of violence against women this year compared to last, often because of women breaking their silence.

Despite increased awareness of sexual and gender-based violence and important efforts to combat it, there are still an alarming number of women and girls who continue to face this horrific violation of their rights. Domestic violence remains a serious concern. Early and forced marriage continues to be reported, including in IDP camps. Conflict-related sexual violence in the context of the fight against ISIL remain a significant problem, however, survivors



Remarks by SRSG Ján Kubiš at the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence [as prepared] (continued)

are at a visible disadvantage due to lack of attention, ineffective policies and lack of resources to support survivors.

Nonetheless, progress continues to be seen. Here I'd like to commend the work of the KRG, of the High Council of Women's Affairs, of the civil society in the Kurdistan region. More cases dealing with violence and other abuses against women have been positively resolved. The Region has abolished provisions still existing in the Iraqi Penal Code, that allowed for softer sentences in honor killings, has amended



other laws and discusses how to bring also the Kurdistan Region Law on Combating Domestic Violence more in line with international standards, with the needs of women. A hotline 119, established by UNFPA in cooperation with the General Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women in the Ministry of Interior, for victims of domestic violence and other abuses and has been already receiving dozens of calls daily.

Distinguished participants,

The UN in Iraq, notably humanitarian partners are strengthening their assistance across all areas of interventions.

For example, UNHCR continues to support DCVAW mobile teams and fixed units to provide life-saving interventions to survivors of SGBV across the Kurdistan Region, including for Syria refugee women and girls. UNDP has provided technical support and trained DCVAW staff, police and NGO partners, provides support to legal centers including legal aid teams in IDP camps across three governorates of the Kurdistan Region. UNFPA through the 130 women centers, provide services, including case management and psychosocial support, to gender-based violence survivors.

Finally, 3 weeks ago UNITAD - the UN Special Investigative Mechanism to deal with the crimes of ISIL has started its work in Iraq, including the Kurdistan region. Among the victims the case of Yazidis, targeted by ISIL genocidal policies will be high on the agenda.

Here I'd like to congratulate the 2 winners of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege for their campaign to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon in armed conflict.

Distinguished participants,

I am pleased to see that 34 women have been elected to the Kurdistan regional parliament. I encourage the political entities to ensure equal, meaningful, full participation of women in the Kurdistan Region's political processes. The previous Kurdistan Regional Parliament led by example – it amended its Rules to provide that one of the Deputy Speaker's be a woman. Kurdistan Regional Government's cabinet will also be formed soon, and we hope that many able and competent women will be appointed to ministerial positions and other high positions in the administration of the Region.

Distinguished participants,

The UN family in Iraq based on the UNAMI mandate remains committed to assisting Iraqi women in promoting and protecting their rights, equality and aspirations, including their economic empowerment, notably for women-led households, in advancing the 1325 INAP and overall SGBV and WPS agenda. It will mobilize support of the broader international community, potential donors, including through a newly-established International Gender Group from among embassies in Baghdad.

Thank you for your attention.

Ending violence against women and girls in Iraq

Baghdad, 25 November 2018 – In Iraq, women and girls from different backgrounds remain at risk of violence, in their homes, at school and in public spaces.

A recent joint survey by the Government of Iraq and UNICEF shows that 37 per cent of adults in Iraq think that violence towards women is acceptable, while a new study by UNFPA shows that 63 per cent of GBV incidents in the country are perpetrated by a family member.

Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, UNICEF and UNFPA reaffirm their commitment to end all forms of violence against women.

“Violence towards women and girls is a violation of human rights and has a devastating impact on their health, well-being, and their futures. It can

never be justified,” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

“Women and girls make up half of the population and they have a right to live free from fear and violence and allowed to live to their fullest potential,” he added.

Dr. Oluremi Sognuro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, added: “Ending violence against women and girls is not a short-term endeavor, it is a long-term commitment and requires coordinated and sustained efforts from all of us. Women and girls are counting on us to prevent all forms of violence against them and expect us to stand by them in their fight for a dignified life.”

In areas of displacement and return, threats and risks of violence against women and girls persist, particularly sexual violence, sexual exploitation, harassment and child marriage.

UNFPA and UNICEF are providing specialized services, including psychosocial support, for survivors of sexual violence in Iraq and working to prevent child marriages through their respective partners and centres that they support. UNFPA has also supported the launch of a specialized emergency helpline for survivors of violence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Together, UNFPA and UNICEF call for the provision of holistic age-appropriate services to GBV survivors, for the trainings of judicial and security personnel to assist women and child survivors in a compassionate and sensitive manner that prioritizes the rights and needs of survivors. UNFPA and UNICEF also call for a stronger enforcement of legislations against early marriage in order to better protect children.

How Australia can help strengthen the response to GBV in Iraq

Erbil, 26 November 2018 – First Secretary in the Australian Embassy in Iraq, Ms. Joanna O’Shea, visited today the Gender-Based Violence survivors’ helpline (119)’s office in Erbil, supported by UNFPA, to discuss the challenges and needs of the survivors and how can Australia help strengthen the response to GBV in Iraq.



Take Five: “We should all aim to eliminate violence against women and girls”



Erbil, 27 November 2018 - Ms. Kurdo Omar is the head of the General Directorate of Combating Violence against Women (DCVAW) at the Ministry of the Interior in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. DCVAW is currently working with UN Women under the regional programme “Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey”—implemented by UN Women and the European Union under the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (the EU MADAD Fund). On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Ms. Kurdo spoke to UN Women about her work.

What is the current situation with regards to violence against women and girls in the Kurdistan region?

We have made some progress in working to combat violence against women (VAW) and girls in Kurdistan. The numbers we have are from 2008; prior to that date, there were no statistics available on the incidence of violence against women. Now, we document all cases of women asking for help. Most of these women come directly to our office to report abuses and this is a positive development compared to a few years ago. Yet, the rate is still high in Kurdistan. In 2017 we had a total of 8,970

claim cases (2,393 cases more than in 2016), 143 cases of sexual violence, 202 of accidental burning, and 122 of suicidal burning. Most of the times the cases of death are related to so-called “honor killings”, and the age of death is between 21 and 25 years old.

How has the conflict affected women in Kurdistan?

In the Kurdistan region about 2,000 men have been killed by ISIS during the liberation operations. Women are now the heads of the household, so they need to sustain their families, while recovering from the diverse impact of conflict on their lives and well-being. An important issue to be addressed is also disabled women who are heads of families. These women count for high numbers and need to be economically empowered too, so they can be integrated in the society to contribute to sustainable peace and development. Yazidi women also have suffered human trafficking, slavery and sexual violence under ISIS.

Why do you think it’s important to involve women in peacebuilding?

The Women, Peace and Security agenda is very important because women are deeply affected by war and conflict. They experience conflict in a different way to men, so their different experiences have to be included in the peaceful reconstruction of the country. Women’s participation in peacebuilding and decision-making is a necessity and it is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Women’s participation in peacebuilding processes in other countries has proven to lead to a more sustainable peace and to make the reconciliation process smoother. This should be the same for Iraq.

What are the main challenges to end VAW in the Kurdistan region?

The main challenge to end VAW in the region is to ensure effective implementation of the law related to VAW. We are working closely with the new parliament to amend the new law to combat VAW, so it can be implemented more efficiently, and we continue to campaign with different UN Agencies to raise awareness on these issues. Also, in some cases the law is not fully implemented; accused perpetrators are frequently found not guilty, or are not arrested. The second challenge to end VAW is to raise awareness about it among the community, as we are operating in a region where cultural practices are difficult to modify. Finally, we face financial challenges. Without the support of UN agencies, such as UN Women, we would have to close as we are a new institution. We should all aim not to reduce violence against women, but to eliminate it, and to advance women’s rights in general.

What are the main activities under the MADAD programme and how do you plan to implement them?

We are partnering with UN Women under the MADAD programme to fill the gaps we have identified in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention. The programme seeks to ensure that women (displaced, refugee and host country nationals) have increased access to comprehensive essential services, particularly in women-only centers, to prevent and respond to GBV. To reach this goal, we will work on building the capacity of DCVAW staff to become trainers on women’s self-defense and GBV awareness-raising. This will consist of six months’ trainings through a local implementing partner. As part of our GBV prevention activities, we will also provide different self-defense trainings to women and girls beneficiaries in universities and schools.

Consultative workshop calling for legislative reform aimed at curbing violence against women in Iraq facilitated by UNAMI HRO

Baghdad, 30 November 2018 - The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO) facilitated two consultative workshops on 26 and 27 November bringing together 65 interlocutors (14 of whom were men), including members of parliament, media personnel, lawyers, academics, women's rights activists, officials from the Ministry of Interior as well as the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) to discuss efforts towards the enactment of the Anti-Domestic Violence Bill and the revision, amendment or repeal of Iraqi Penal Code Articles 398, which essentially allows a perpetrator to avoid charges by marrying his victim and 409, which is commonly relied upon for the killing of women and girls in the alleged pro-

tection of family "honour." Underscoring Iraq's Constitutional obligations as well as its obligations under international human rights law, specifically within the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW), to respect, protect and fulfil women's rights to non-discrimination, participants provided recommendations to the draft Anti-Discrimination Bill, so that it is in line with international human rights standards and calling for the amendment or repeal of all the Penal Code articles that perpetuate discrimination against women, especially the perpetuation of violence against women and girls. Among other issues, participants agreed to submit a petition to the Legal Committee of the Council of Represent-

atives (COR) to place on the Agenda of the COR discussions for the enactment of an Anti-Domestic Violence Bill and amendment or repeal of Articles 398 and 409 of the Penal Code. Participants also called for amendment and repeal of other articles of the Penal Code as well as other legislation, including the Constitution, and thereby enable Iraq to be in line with its international obligations on elimination of discrimination against women.

UNAMI HRO continues to support efforts towards elimination of discrimination against women, which the Government of Iraq may realize through legislative reform to hold accountable perpetrators of violence against women.



IOM Iraq's capacity building course completed in Dohuk

Dohuk, 03 December 2018 - Fifteen local NGOs in Dohuk celebrated their graduation from IOM Iraq's capacity building course at a ceremony and presentation themed #16DaysOfActivism against GBV attended by the Italian Consul in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

Funded by Cooperazione Italiana allo Sviluppo, the one-year project, enabled IOM to empower conflict-affected vulnerable women, including with livelihood support and psychosocial support services.

IOM - UN Migration's psychosocial teams through this project involved more than 1,000 women, including from ethno-religious minorities; especially Yazidis, who are considered one of the most vulnerable communities of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq.

Trainings covered a broad range of topics like psychosocial support and social cohesion, enhancing NGOs management and networking skills, providing

beneficiaries with entrepreneurial livelihood support by creating self-help groups to improve interactions and confidence among them.



Government of Iraq and United Nations launch National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women in Iraq

Baghdad, 09 December 2018 – The Government of Iraq and the United Nations in Iraq launched today a national strategy to combat violence against women, a significant step towards achieving women's rights. This strategy provides an overall framework on which policy and decision makers will draw to take concrete actions aimed at preventing violence against women and girls and protecting survivors of violence. Endorsement by all stakeholders of this updated national strategy formalises the commitment of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations to take concrete action.

The launch event in Baghdad was attended by the First Lady of Iraq, Ms. Surbagh Salih, the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, Dr. Mahdi al-Allaq, the Director-General of the Women Empowerment Department, Dr. Ibtisam Aziz, ministers and members of parliament, members of the High Judicial Council, civil society and international NGOs, diplomats as well as representatives of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The launch was supported by the embassies of the Kingdoms of Norway and Sweden.

"It is a propitious day to be thinking and talking about the rights of women to live lives free of violence," the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, said in remarks delivered at the event. "The national strategy to combat violence against women will be a significant tool for the Iraqi government to fulfil its international gender commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the Beijing Platform."

UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr. Oluremi Sogunro, stated: "This strategy is yet another win for women and girls in Iraq as it adds to the progresses observed in the past few years. UNFPA is proud to have worked with the Government of Iraq to develop this strategy through the provision of the technical capacities and expertise."

Despite achievements in the field of women's protection and empowerment, significant challenges remain, such as the lack of parliamentary endorsement of a Law to Protect Families from Domestic Violence. The delay in the ap-



proval of this law hinders the journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment as well as overall national sustainable development and peace-building.

The United Nations reiterates its commitment to support and engage with the new Iraqi government, including the senior political leadership and the Council of Representatives, to advocate for the prioritisation of relevant legislation in the new parliament.

Following is the text of the statement by Ms. Alice Walpole, Deputy Special Representative for Iraq at this event:

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Colleagues in the United Nations family,

I am delighted to be here at the launch of the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women. This launch complements the sixteen Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence currently running under the theme

"Hear Me Too". And I note that today is the eve of International Human Rights Day. So, a propitious day to be thinking and talking about the rights of women to live lives free of violence.

It is vital that we collectively address the issue of violence against women in Iraq. The recent horrendous Da'esh-perpetrated violence which has affected so many women in this country has compounded pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination. Although public awareness (and rejection) of violence against women is increasing through media attention, social media activism, creation of hotlines for reporting violence and the establishment of family protection units, violence against Iraqi women has not abated. Domestic violence remains a particularly grave concern and media reports are increasingly highlighting abuse and sexual harassment in public spaces. In this context, I note the recent disturbing attack on the office of the Directorate for Combatting Violence against Women in Sulaymaniya – a building which should represent a safe haven for women seeking refuge from violence



Government of Iraq and United Nations launch National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women in Iraq *(continued)*



and abuse.

The United Nations' Agencies, Funds and Programmes continue to support the Government of Iraq in meeting its legal (and moral) obligations to promote and protect the rights of women. In the forefront of this commitment, UNFPA has provided technical support in developing the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women which is launched today. This Strategy provides a valuable overall framework for policy-developers, planners, decision-makers, to take action on prevention and response with regard to violence against women. Furthermore, the Strategy will be a significant tool for the Iraqi government to fulfil its international gender commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the Beijing Platform.

The United Nations commits to supporting implementation of the Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women and other national frameworks. UNAMI and the wider United Nations system is already engaging with the new Iraqi government, including the senior political leadership and the Council of Representatives, to advocate for the prioritisation of relevant legislation in the new Parliament. For example, the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. We welcome the efforts of the government to establish a committee to examine allegations of sexual harassment; and we stand ready to provide advice and support as appropriate to ensure women's greater safety and security. For example, the United Nations Development Programme has already trained more than 300 officials in han-

dling cases of gender-based violence; conducted awareness-raising sessions on gender-based violence among displaced, refugee and host communities across Iraq's northern governorates; trained 50 police officers in protection of women; established 7 legal aid teams within IDP camps; and offered gender-based violence training to lawyers and social workers among our partner civil society organisations.

We welcome the work of the High Judicial Council as it reviews the Iraqi Penal Code, including the amendment or repeal of Articles of Law which might facilitate, condone or perpetuate violence against women. You may be aware that the High Judicial Council has taken the welcome step of establishing a league for women judges. In our view, more female engagement is needed in the field of the rule of law and in judicial institutions if Iraq is successfully to prosecute cases of violence against women. Assured access to justice for female survivors of violence is vital to ensure impunity is addressed and justice seen to be done.

And we should not forget that addressing violence against women also requires an expansion of economic opportunities for women, widening their political space and visibility. One impact of the conflict with Da'esh has been an increase in female headed-households, with many of these families, especially those displaced from their homes, pushed into poverty and vulnerability. Targeted programmes for women to access livelihood activities, as well as education, will be key to their long-term protection from violence (in particular, sexual violence) and their rehabilitation.

In short, a multi-sectoral, multi-faceted approach is a prerequisite for success-

fully countering violence against women in Iraq. The implementation of this Strategy will require engagement by and commitment from a wide range of stakeholders in the health, social, legal, educational and security fields, many of whom I am pleased to see represented here today. For our part, the United Nations in Iraq remains committed to assisting the Iraqi government and other actors, in particular civil society, in protecting women's rights, promoting their dignity and equality, and meeting their aspirations for an existence free of violence.

Thank you.

Following are the remarks by Dr. Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq at the same event:

Your Excellency, Dr. Mahdi Al-Alak, Secretary-General for the Council of Ministers,

Your Excellency, Ms. Surbagh Salih, First Lady of Iraq,

Your Excellencies, Council of Ministers, Honourable Dr. Ibtisam Aziz, Director-General of Women Empowerment Department,

Honourable Members of Parliament and Heads of Blocs,

Honourable Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Civil Society Representatives,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues in the United Nations family,

I am honoured to be here today to witness and take part in the launch of the national strategy to combat violence against women on the eve of the International Human Rights Day and during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. I also want to congratulate women and girls across the country for this immense achievement.

The endorsement of the updated national strategy to combat violence against women translates the commitment of Government of Iraq and the United Nations to take action on the prevention and response in relation to violence against women and girls. This strategy provides an overall framework that policy and decision makers can rely on to take concrete actions aiming at the protection of the survivor and the prevention of violence against women and girls.

UNFPA is proud to have worked with the Government of Iraq to develop the national strategy to combat violence against women through the provision of

Government of Iraq and United Nations launch National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women in Iraq *(continued)*

the technical capacities and expertise. This strategy is yet another win for women and girls in Iraq as it adds to the progresses observed in the past few years.

On the international level, Yazidi human rights activist, Nadia Murad, was awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.

On the national level, we witnessed the adoption of a national action plan for the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, through the signing of Joint Communique on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence and the decline in the percentage of female genital mutilation across the country, not to mention the inauguration of the first shelter in Baghdad for gender-based

violence survivors and the endorsement and roll out of the Standard Operating Procedures for Preventing and Responding to Gender-based Violence across Iraq.

However, significant challenges such as the pending endorsement of the Law to Protect Families from Domestic Violence remain. The delay in the approval of this law hinders our journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment as well as overall national sustainable development and peace-building.

Last year, Iraq entered the new development and reconstruction phase but let me tell you that there will not be sustainable peace-building, reconstruction and development as long as one woman or girl is suffering from gender-based violence and their human rights

are violated.

UNFPA stands ready to provide the Government of Iraq all the support required to fulfil its international human rights obligations and achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you and Congratulations to all of us.



Challenges faced by gender-based violence survivors discussed by UNFPA Representative and Spanish Ambassador

Baghdad, 11 December 2018 - Following a Spanish Government's contribution of 400.000€ to UNFPA's GBV programme in Iraq, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr. Oluremi Sogunro, met today with the Spanish Ambassador in Iraq, Mr. Juan Jose Escobar, to discuss the challenges faced by gender-based violence survivors and access to services as well as psychosocial support.



IOM organized a public seminar at Kirkuk Technical Institute

Kirkuk, 12 December 2018 - As part of a global campaign to end violence against women and girls, IOM Iraq's

Social Cohesion unit organized a public seminar at the Technical Institute of Kirkuk.

A group of students, university professors, civil activists and government representatives participated in the discussion and emphasized the importance of preventing and eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls.

The participants shared their life experiences and highlighted specific gender-related concerns.

Commemorating the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, the event aimed at raising awareness about gender-based violence and supporting the creation of a safe space for women and girls.

This activity was supported by the Government of the Netherlands.



DSRSG Walpole: “Ms. Murad’s Nobel recognition has given hope to thousands of women and girls persecuted by Da’esh that their suffering has not been forgotten, or ignored, or discounted”

Baghdad, 10 December 2018 - Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, in remarks at a reception hosted in Baghdad by the Swedish and Norwegian ambassadors and attended by the First Lady of Iraq, Iraqi government officials, and members of the diplomatic community to honor Nadia Murad on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, stated that Ms. Murad’s Nobel recognition has given hope to thousands of women and girls persecuted by Da’esh that their suffering has not been forgotten, or ignored, or discounted. She added that for those of Iraq’s communities whose women and girls are still missing, Ms. Murad’s prize is an important acknowledgement that their loved ones are not forgotten. Ms. Walpole underlined that the United Nations will continue to prioritize its

support to the Government of Iraq in implementing the Joint Communiqué

on Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nadia Murad joins FAO’s efforts to end hunger

Oslo/Rome, 10 December 2018 – The Iraqi Yazidi human rights activist and 2018 Nobel Peace Laureate Nadia Murad today joined FAO’s efforts to tackle the twin problems of hunger and violence by becoming a new member of FAO’s Nobel Peace Laureates Alliance for Food Security and Peace.

FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva presented Murad with a membership diploma on the sidelines of the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, taking place in Oslo.

Murad, who became the voice and face of women who survived sexual violence by the Islamic State and doctor Denis Mukwege, a gynecological surgeon who founded a hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have been awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for their campaigns against the use of rape as a weapon of war and armed conflict.

Launched in 2016, the Alliance cooperates with FAO to strengthen the link between peace and food security and is part of the agency’s ongoing work to promote sustainable development and resilience across the world.

Its includes former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias Sánchez, women’s rights promoter Tawakkol Karman, advocate against inter-religious violence Betty Williams, micro-credit creator Muhammad Yunus, former Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos, former president of South Africa, Fred-

erik Willem de Klerk, and Argentinian activist Adolfo Pérez Esquivel.

No peace without food security

“We do not lack any evidence: if conflict increases, hunger increases. The relationship is direct,” FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said welcoming Murad to the Alliance. “I thank Nadia for her engagement and put FAO at her disposal to support her work and her advocacy efforts for world peace.”

Graziano da Silva stressed the role of wars and conflict as drivers of the rise

of hunger in the world, and lamented that global military spending continues to increase while countries allocate scarce resources to fight against hunger.

He stressed that rural areas and their populations, particularly women, continue to be the most affected in conflicts, as attacks on farming communities undermine rural livelihoods and displace people from their homes. Assisting farmers and empowering rural women is critical to prevent widespread displacement and harassment.



Human Rights Day commemorated in Baghdad

Baghdad, 10 December 2018 - Today marks the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was marked in Baghdad in an event hosted by the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and attended by government officials, dignitaries, human rights and civil society activists. In a statement delivered on the occasion, Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office and Representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq, Ms. Danielle Bell, said that today we also celebrated collective efforts and also looked to the future. “Stand Up and Take Action,” is this year’s Human Rights Day theme, Ms. Bell said. “The UNAMI Human Rights

Office will continue its work in support of efforts to ensure accountability for crimes and egregious human rights

violations committed during the conflict, as well as women’s rights and the administration of justice.”



The situation of women and women’s human rights in Iraq discussed in Baghdad

Baghdad, 10 December 2018 - The French and German embassies jointly organized a debate with civil society, human rights activists and defenders at the French Institute in Baghdad to discuss the situation of women and women’s human rights in Iraq, on the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

UNAMI Senior Gender Advisor, Ms. Mmabatlaro Nono Dihemo participated, in a panel comprising Dr. Cyril Jean Nunn, Ambassador of Germany to Iraq, Bruno Aubert, Ambassador of France to Iraq, Dr. Ibteham Aziz Ali, Director of Iraqi Women Empowerment Directorate, Judge Hadi Aziz Ali, and Ms. Amal Gbashi, representative of the Iraqi Women Network. The debate included questions posed to each panelist



by Dr. Nahla Nadawi, an academic on women’s rights who moderated the

session, and were followed by questions from the audience.

UNAMI marks Human Rights Day at Ishik University in Erbil

Erbil, 10 December 2018 - Students and human rights activists fanned out in Erbil's old bazaar distributing flyers and informing cafegoers, shoppers and shop owners about Human Rights Day and the importance of standing up for their rights and the rights of others in a splendid public display of activism to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

About 50 students from Ishik University in Erbil and staff from the UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) wearing t-shirts commemorating the occasion descended on the bazaar at the foot of the historic Erbil Citadel. On the square and at the iconic Machko tea-shop, students enthusiastically encouraged passers-by to learn more about human rights, alternating between



Kurdish, English, Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish languages underlining the diversity of the population.

Staff from the UNAMI Human Rights Office in Erbil and students from the Ishik University Department of International Relations and Diplomacy gathered at a ceremony on campus to discuss and learn about human rights at the international level as well as in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Speakers included Dr. Idris Hadi Salih, Presi-

dent of Ishik University, Mr. Diya Butros, head of the Kurdistan Region Independent Board of Human Rights, Mr. Shwan Sabir, head of the Justice for Prisoners Network, and students as well as UNAMI HRO staff members. The speakers encouraged students to carry on the tradition of human rights activism in the Kurdistan Region and to defend the human rights of others to ensure a brighter future after the defeat of ISIL.

Marking Human Rights Day in Kirkuk: human rights go hand in hand with stability and prosperity

Kirkuk, 11 December 2018 – Human rights go hand in hand with stability and prosperity, the head of UNAMI's Office in Kirkuk said at a celebration in Kirkuk to mark the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The event was hosted by the Kirkuk Office of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights. Civil society representatives, members of the Provincial Council, and legal academics from Kirkuk University were among the attendees. The Head of UNAMI's Office in Kirkuk, Safir Syed, singled out public freedoms in the Declaration. He stated that freedoms of

expression, association, peaceful assembly and the right to participate in public life are ultimately what drives development and prosperity and contributes to improved security and political stability.

Mr. Syed highlighted, "It is through sharing ideas, forming new ones, and joining together with others that we make informed decisions about our economic and social development. It is through these rights that we can take

part in civic activity and build democratic societies". In emphasising the human rights-based approach to democratic governance, he said, "Whether it is around our dinner table or in political committees or assemblies, decision-makers must involve everyone who is affected, without discrimination; give them space at the decision-making table; give attention to the most vulnerable people; and be held accountable for their decisions".



UNAMI Human Rights Office conducted a training session with the staff of the Iraqi High Commissioner for Human Rights office

Kirkuk, 07 November 2018 - The Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) held a training session for the Iraqi High Commissioner for human rights. The training was aimed at strengthening the capacity of participants to write draft human rights reports after the investigation and monitoring of human rights issues. This is the third session of the series of capacity-building exercises.

The training under the heading "Writing human rights reports: practical guidance and proposals" focused on the types of human rights reports and how they were used to provide results

for fact-finding activities, advocate for positive changes and propose recommendations. Fifteen staff members

from the Office of the high commissioner for human rights, nine men and six women, participated in the training.



DSRSG for Iraq Ms. Alice Walpole's video message on the International Day for Tolerance

Baghdad, 16 November 2018 - "In 1996, the UN General Assembly agreed to observe an International Day for Tolerance on 16 November each year.

I understand tolerance to mean a respect, acceptance and appreciation of diversity. We should celebrate the wonderful natural diversity of the people living on this planet. Only tolerance and acceptance of the differences between us can ensure the survival of mixed communities in every region of the globe. Tolerance recognizes universal human rights and the fundamental freedoms of other people.

The United Nations is committed to strengthening tolerance by fostering

mutual understanding among cultures and peoples. This imperative sits at the heart of the United Nations Charter, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is more important than ever in this era of growing intolerance, nationalism, violent extremism and deepening conflicts.

Tolerance is key to peace and stability, which are themselves key to creativity, development and prosperity. No place better exemplifies this than Iraq, with its rich mosaic of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and religious diversity. Let this diversity be the strength of the country as it forges ahead after years of conflict and terrorism."



UNAMI HRO holds training workshop for youth

Baghdad, 29 November 2018 - UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) held on 28 and 29 November 2018 a training workshop for youths in Baghdad. The participants were from Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala and Diyala Governorates. A total of 31 participants (13 males and 18 females) from various backgrounds

and organizations such as the Bar Association, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minority groups, academics, university students and human rights activists attended the workshop.

The main aim of the training was to raise youths' awareness about human

rights and their role in the promotion and protection of human rights in Iraq. Some of the sessions were: UNAMI HRO Mandate and different human rights thematic areas, including national and international human rights protection mechanisms, rights of women, persons with disabilities, rights of ethnic and religious minorities, the Role of the Youth in Accessing the UN Human Rights systems, transitional justice and national reconciliation, rule of law and administration of justice, protection of civilians in armed conflict and Iraq's state reporting obligations under the various human rights treaties that Iraq is party to and non-treaty based mechanisms.

Participants were also made to explore ways of strengthening further engagements and collaboration between them, UNAMI HRO and other partners and stakeholders.





Geneva, 5 December 2018 - The new Chief of the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Iraq, Ms. Danielle Bell, met today with H.E. Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Ambassador Mouayed Saleh, at the Iraqi Permanent Mission.

They stressed the importance of joint action to promote and protect human rights in Iraq. Ms. Bell expressed enthusiasm at working in Iraq and was optimistic in achieving tangible results in light of the high level of cooperation shown by the Iraqi authorities and the political will to promote human rights on the ground. Mr. Mouayed welcomed continued cooperation and said his country aspires for more partnership with the UN. Photos courtesy of the PM of Iraq to UNO in Geneva.

Mosul, 5 December 2018 - The Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) held a one-day roundtable with lawyers and civil society activists from Ninewa on 5 December 2018 to discuss the criminal justice system in Ninewa since the fall of ISIL/Da'esh. Participants shared their experiences on the administration of justice, the treatment of victims of sexual violence and marginalized groups. The roundtable is the first of many forums that will take place in the coming months on justice-related issues in the Governorate.



UNAMI HRO will continue its support to human rights defenders and civil society organizations on human rights initiatives

Baghdad, 8 December 2018 - The Chief of the UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) and Representative in Iraq of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Ms. Danielle Bell, met today with 25 human rights defenders from 10 governorates at an event organized by the Al-Namaa Center for Human Rights in Baghdad.

The event brought together human rights defenders and civil society organizations from across the country to exchange views on: key human rights issues; challenges for Iraqi human rights defenders; and UNAMI HRO cooperation with civil society and human rights defenders in the future.

Participants included representatives of organizations and individuals working in their governorates or at the national level on the promotion and protection of human rights including: women's rights, victim advocacy, civil

and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and the rights of children.

Highlighting the critical role of human rights defenders and civil society organizations in the protection and promo-

tion of human rights in Iraq, Ms. Bell expressed the readiness of the UN Human Rights Office in Iraq to continue its support to human rights defenders and civil society organizations on human rights initiatives.



UNAMI Human Rights Office holds first roundtable on criminal justice

UNAMI HRO also announced the establishment of the Ninewa Human Rights and Justice Network. This network of lawyers, civil society activists, social workers and representatives of the Mosul Bar Association will examine human rights issues related to the administration of justice, including due process concerns in Ninewa Governorate.

Earlier in the week, Chief Human Rights Office Ms. Danielle Bell and her team visited the Governorate of Ninewa, where she met in Mosul

with Judge Salem Mohamed Nouri, the chief of Federal Cassation Court in Ninewa where they discussed issues related to human rights and administration of justice and the challenges that post -ISIL phase have on the judiciary.

Ms. Danielle stated that a priority for the judiciary was their own safety so that they can effectively carry out their duties.

Ms. Bell also stressed the role of UNAMI in supporting accountability for those who were responsible for crimes against humanity, maintaining transparency and fairness to those who are detained and tried before the courts in Iraq. Meaningful accountability is fundamental to addressing the crimes of the past, enabling societies to recover from the legacy of terror.

ISIL's legacy of terror: at least 200 mass graves in Iraq, says UN report

Baghdad/Geneva, 06 November 2018 – More than 200 mass graves containing the remains of thousands of victims have been discovered in areas formerly controlled by ISIL in Iraq, according to a UN report released Tuesday. The report highlights the legacy of ISIL's relentless campaign of terror and violence and victims' calls for truth and justice.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN Human Rights Office have documented the existence of 202 mass grave sites in the governorates of Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Anbar in the northern and western parts of the country – but there may be many more. While it is difficult to determine the total number of people in these graves, the smallest site, in west Mosul, contained eight bodies while the biggest is believed to be the Khasfa sinkhole south of Mosul which may contain thousands.

The report stresses that these sites could potentially contain critical forensic material to assist in the identification of victims and to build an understanding of the scale of crimes that occurred.

“Evidence gathered from these sites will be central to ensuring credible investigations, prosecutions and convictions in accordance with international due process standards,” the report states. “Meaningful truth and justice requires the appropriate preservation, excavation and exhumation of mass grave sites and the identification of the remains of the many victims and their return to the families.”

Between June 2014 and December 2017, ISIL seized large areas of Iraq and led “a campaign of widespread violence and systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law – acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possible genocide,” the report states.

“The mass grave sites documented in our report are a testament to harrowing human loss, profound suffering and shocking cruelty,” said Special Representative for Iraq of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ján Kubiš. “Determining the circumstances surrounding the significant loss of life will be an important step in the mourning process for families and their journey to secure their rights to truth and justice.”

The report also documents how families of the missing face significant challenges in establishing the fate of their loved ones. At present, they must report to



more than five separate State entities, a process that is both time-consuming and frustrating for families who remain traumatised by their loss, the report states, calling for the establishment of a public, centralised registry of missing persons as well as a federal Office of Missing Persons.

“ISIL's horrific crimes in Iraq have left the headlines but the trauma of the victims' families endures, with thousands of women, men and children still unaccounted for,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said.

“These graves contain the remains of those mercilessly killed for not conforming to ISIL's twisted ideology and rule, including ethnic and religious minorities. Their families have the right to know what happened to their loved ones. Truth, justice and reparations are critical to ensuring a full reckoning for the atrocities committed by ISIL.”

Kubiš said the report was aimed at supporting the Government of Iraq in

protecting and excavating these mass graves, through the work of Iraq's Mass Graves Directorate and its international partners. Bachelet and Kubiš reiterated their support to the Government of Iraq in carrying out this significant task.

Among its recommendations, the report calls for a multidisciplinary approach to the recovery operations with the participation of experienced specialists, such as weapons contamination and explosives experts and crime scene investigators. It calls for a victim-centred approach and a transitional justice process that is established in consultation with, and accepted by, Iraqis, particularly those from affected communities. The report also calls on the international community to provide resources and technical support to efforts related to the exhumation, collection, transportation, storage and return of human remains to families, as well as their identification, particularly by helping strengthen the Mass Graves Directorate.



Prime Minister Mahdi received Special Adviser Khan

Baghdad, 29 November 2018 - The Chairman of the Iraqi Council of Ministers, Mr. Adil Abdul Mahdi, received today the Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team for Accountability of Da'esh, Karim Khan.

During the discussions, the Special Adviser recalled the evacuation of the victims of ISIS and commended the efforts of the government and all Iraqis to expel ISIS. The Special Adviser stressed the commitment of the Investigative team to ensure that ISIS members were held accountable for their crimes by collecting and analyzing evidence in accordance with international standards and expressed gratitude for the cooperation and support of the Iraqi government.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Abdul Mahdi, welcomed the work of the Investigative team and emphasized the important role played by the Special Adviser in



ensuring the accountability of ISIS. The Prime Minister and the Special Adviser have identified a number of additional areas that will benefit from

increased cooperation between the Investigative team and Iraqi authorities. Photo courtesy of the Prime Minister's office.

Trust and support of Iraqis essential for success of UN's Da'esh terror investigation



New York, 04 December 2018 - Delivering a summary of his first report to the Security Council, Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team for Accountability of Da'esh – the Arabic name for the extremist group ISIL which recently held sway over large parts of Iraq and Syria - said that the team can only be effective if it gains the trust of Iraqi society.

The team, said Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, must “operate as an independent, impartial and credible accountability mechanism, capable of conducting its work to the highest possible standards.”

Second, he said, was “the need to en-

sure that our work is carried out collaboratively and cooperatively with the Government of Iraq, with full respect for its national sovereignty and in a manner that harnesses the talents, and engenders the support, of all elements of Iraqi society.”

The team was set up following a September 2017 Security Council resolution in a bid to help domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable for their actions: Da'esh's time in control of large areas of Iraq, between June 2014 and December 2017, has been described by the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) as a “relentless campaign of terror and violence.”

During his September visit to the country, Mr. Khan heard first-hand from survivors of Da'esh violence, in testimony described as heart-wrenching, and stressed the need to ensure that they are protected, and that perpetrators of atrocities are brought to justice: “the loss suffered by these communities is profound. I realize that the wounds of sorrow remain open and that, even when there is healing, the scars will run deep.”

In his December statement to the Security Council, Mr. Khan paid tribute to the survivors who have suffered at the hands of Da'esh, and recognized the “tremendous courage and sacrifice already demonstrated by the people of Iraq in their efforts to defeat ISIL and bring justice for its victims,” adding that, since Da'esh has been driven from its strongholds, including its former stronghold of Raqqa in northern Syria, “the scope and magnitude of its crimes has been exposed. Witness testimony has revealed a plethora of unimaginable abuses. Thousands, including women and children, have become victims and witnesses of its crimes.”

Working alongside the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the UN human rights office, has documented the existence of 200 mass graves in the northern and western parts of the country, which may contain thousands of bodies, and it is believed that many more still remain to be discovered.

By UN News Center

Prime Minister Barzani received Special Adviser Khan

Erbil, 20 December 2018 – Kurdistan Region Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani, met with the Special Adviser and Head of the International Investigative Team on crimes committed by the Islamic State organisation in Iraq, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, and his accompanying delegation.

Mr. Ahmad Khan described the work and activities of his team working with the assistance of the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

He pointed to the road map which has been developed to carry out tasks within the framework of decisions and recommendations of the UN Security Council to collect and document ISIS' crimes, as well as achieving justice and convicting ISIS terrorists.

Prime Minister Barzani expressed ap-



preciation for the start of the Investigative team's activities. He stressed that the Kurdistan Regional Government

will provide all necessary assistance and facilities to the Investigative team. Photo courtesy of KRG.

Humanitarian

Love in displacement

Mosul, 04 November 2018 - Marwah always dreamed of a big wedding party in a fancy venue, a luxurious white wedding dress, and hundreds of family and friends attending. But this dream was shattered when ISIL took over the city of Mosul in June 2014, where she was living at the time.

Marwah and her family chose to stay in the ISIL-controlled city. She felt trapped and hopeless, and her big wedding plans became an impossible dream: traditional wedding ceremonies that included music, dancing, and mingling between men and women were strictly forbidden by ISIL.

In mid 2016, when military operations to retake Mosul started, Marwah's family fled to Hammam Al Alil, southeast of the city—an area under the control of the Iraqi forces. The family subsequently moved to Haj Ali camp, farther south, where they were reunited with other family and friends, including Mohammed. They fell in love. A year later, they got engaged, and two years into their engagement, they decided to get married in the camp, despite the difficulties and in stark contrast to the wedding that Marwah had dreamed of. "I don't care if we are in a tent. We love each other and that's all that matters. We agreed to stay together forever and I told him that I would be with him in any situation," said Marwah.

Mohammed added: "When you live in a camp, it is only logical that marriage is the last thing on your mind, because of the many difficulties of daily life here, such as the lack of job opportunities,



the lack of space, the harsh weather conditions... And not being able to make your dream wedding come true," he said, "but life must go on."

"Marwah told me that whatever happens, we will still be together, and this means the world to me. It is hard to get married in a camp but she wanted to go ahead, I really appreciate and respect this."

Marwah and Mohammed got married on September 27, 2018, along with four other couples living in the camp, in a group wedding ceremony in Haj Ali camp, organized by IOM with support from Germany.

Also, beneficiaries who had participated in a variety of trainings through IOM psychosocial support contributed to the couples' big day. Beneficiaries of hairdressing and makeup training courses did the brides' hairstyle and makeup. Beneficiaries of carpentry

courses made chests of drawers, and those who followed the baking courses baked wedding cakes. IOM's PSS courses were funded by the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). Mohammed was in his last year of high school when ISIL took over Mosul in June 2014. Because he is the oldest of seven siblings, he dropped out to support his family. He hopes to go back to Mosul soon to start a new life with his bride, and finish school to become an English teacher.

"We are preparing ourselves to go back home. We need to go back. It's true that there are not many work opportunities in Mosul and this is a major challenge, but with my wife by my side, I am ready to start a new life and contribute to rebuilding our city."

Written by Raber Y. Aziz, contribution from Sarah Ali, IOM Iraq

IOM rehabilitates unfinished and damaged buildings inhabited by internally displaced persons from Mosul and other cities

Najaf, 6 November 2018 - "We were living in very bad conditions. The building where we settled was unfinished and overcrowded," said Younis Ibrahim, an IDP from Telafar district, Ninewa, who displaced in Najaf Governorate. "The roof was too old to with-



stand rain or heat, there was no privacy between the rooms because the doors and windows were broken. This also make it easy for animals and insects to enter the house, which sometimes caused skin diseases "

Many of these issues have been addressed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). For instance, new roofs have been installed, doors have been put up in bathrooms and rooms, water networks repaired, and sanitation facilities rehabilitated.

"My family is very happy with all these changes. We now feel much better living here," Younis said.

With funds from Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has rehabilitated many unfinished buildings inhabited by internally displaced persons from Mosul and other cities that were previously occupied by ISIL.

Most of these buildings lack essential components such as roofs and sanitation facilities. IOM has been supporting the rehabilitation of these buildings through casting the floors and roofs, installing windows and rehabilitating the sanitation facilities. IOM has also rewired the electrical networks and provided water tanks.

"It is a good feeling, when you can sleep with your family under a roof, protected from the elements," said Ibrahim Khalil, an IDP from Telafar who settled in an unfinished building in Najaf Governorate, after IOM rehabilitated the building.

The unfinished building, which was in bad shape, was rehabilitated gradually. Rooms now have new partitions to ensure more privacy and a new kitchen; new doors for the sanitation facilities have been installed, and water tanks have been provided.

Finding a new purpose - how a Syrian refugee family is rebuilding a life in northern Iraq

Erbil, 7 November 2018 - In the evening, Anwar, 49, and his family watch TV in their home in Darashkran refugee camp in northern Iraq, to check what is going on in Syria, their home. They eagerly look for a glimmer of hope pointing to an end to the prolonged conflict that has displaced millions within Syria and to neighboring countries, since 2011.

But to Anwar, nothing seems to indicate the end is near. "We do not know where the situation in Syria is headed. We have grown tired of it," said Anwar, whose family of six is among the more than 200,000 Syrian refugees living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Anwar and his family, who fled from Qamishli, are trying to find a new dream to follow, as they rebuild their lives.

Many Syrian refugees integrated into

communities in northern Iraq and found jobs or established their own businesses, aided by the fact that many speak Kurdish, like their host community, and share similar culture, customs and traditions.

"We consider ourselves to be among family and friends here, especially because my family and friends are close to us in this camp or nearby. Many people think of migrating to Europe because they are in a critical financial situation; if they received support to start a business, or found a job, they would stay here," Anwar concluded.

Anwar runs a bakery at Darashakran camp with the help of his two daughters, Robeen and Shireen. IOM assisted Anwar in establishing the bakery in June 2018 with funding provided by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). IOM's partner,

the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), provided equipment and business development training. Anwar has obtained a hygiene certificate from the Kurdistan Regional Government's Directorate of Health (DoH), as well as a business license; he is already baking and selling his products.

"I want to establish my own bakery brand, such as the famous Abu Afif sweets in Erbil and Baghdad. I sell my products for 3,000 Iraqi Dinars per kilogram, which is almost half the price of what is found in the market in Erbil, because I want to be competitive to sell more and have people recognize and appreciate my products."

Anwar's family used to have a sweets business in Syria, with branches in Aleppo and Qamishli. They sold local types of sweets and cookies in the two cities and surrounding towns. When the conflict intensified, they left everything behind.

The father and daughters work from 9 to 5 in the bakery. When they are done, Anwar takes the products and distributes them to local vendors in the camp and nearby. "I do this for my children, so they can have a better life."

Shireen and Robeen both receive a salary from their Dad for working in the factory. "It is not a lot, but it is good to work here, I love helping my father," said Robeen.

Written by Raber Aziz, IOM Iraq



IOM Iraq releases the new “Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-17” report

Baghdad, 08 November 2018 - The new “Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-17” report contextualizes the population movements that occurred as a result of the ISIL crisis as a whole. The ISIL crisis is considered the worst displacement crisis in the recent history of Iraq, with 15% of the country’s population fleeing their homes. The study provides an overview of the full crisis throughout its phases – starting in December 2013 with the battle

for Fallujah in Anbar, to Prime Minister Al Abadi declaring victory over ISIL in December 2017 – as well as detailed information on localized emergencies. It also analyzes the evolution in number of hosted internally displaced persons (IDPs), the changes in their sectorial needs and shelter arrangements and the areas of displacement. For the first time, the relative burden of displacement in the areas hosting IDPs is analyzed divided in three regions: KRI,

North Central and South.

The “Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-2017” report is available:

http://www.iomiraq.net/reports/iom-iraq-releases-new-%E2%80%9Ciraq-displacement-crisis-2014-17%E2%80%9D-report?fbclid=IwAR376MoebFepXO9swXxqjBc7ocBJ1zi1raB9mIuywK_ckKywbzCn-p5tGRQ

Winter kits distributed to vulnerable Iraqis across the country

Iraq, 10 November 2018 - With the support of the European Commission - Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), which provided more than 5,100 winter non-food item kits, IOM distributed aid to over 30,700 displaced people in camps in Anbar, Baghdad and Ninawa to help these families prepare for winter.

Thanks to the generous support from Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, more than 400 displaced families (over 2,500 individuals) are receiving winter non-food item kits as they begin to prepare for the harsh winter season. USAID - US Agency for International Development / U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration representatives attended this distribution in Chamchamal, Sulaymaniyah governorate. In total

20,800 OFDA-funded winter kits will be distributed to vulnerable Iraqis across the country.

“We were displaced from Al-Doz nine months ago, due to armed conflict. I live with my in-laws; we are nine individuals. Our economic situation is difficult. I have a child and we try our best

to provide him with what he needs and to live with the little resources available to us. We came to Chamchamal with nothing on us. No blankets, no mattresses. The neighbors helped us and gave us some blankets, we could not buy mattress this winter because my husband’s salary is barely enough to pay the rent and cover other costs,” said Ban in Chamchamal.

Ban and 400 other families received from IOM winter non-food items that include blankets, jerrycans, kerosene heaters.

With the aim to reach over 110,000 vulnerable children in Iraq, UNICEF has started the distribution of warm winter clothes to the children at Kawergosk Camp for Syrian refugees in Erbil, in Debaga camp in Erbil and Bajid Kandala Camp in Dohok.



IOM Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme in action

Baghdad, 15 November 2018 - “When we decided to leave Baghdad and emigrate to Germany in 2015, we sold everything and emigrated illegally in a dangerous journey through sea and off-road mountain paths.

We stayed in Germany with my wife and two children for four years, but our asylum request was rejected and we had to go back Iraq.

When we returned, I had nothing: no job and no savings, as we had spent it

all on our failed emigration attempt.

We registered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme, and two months later I enrolled in the job placement service funded by GIZ through IOM. We discussed my qualifications and I was eventually found a good job in a private transportation company.

When I was promoted to work as an administrative coordinator at the transportation company, my life changed. I could finally pay rent and my children’s tuition fees,” said Ali Abdullah, a 41-year-old returnee from Germany.

IOM supported Ali and his family with travel arrangements as well as Job placement service, with funding from the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) through GIZ and GMAC-Iraq.



IOM study identifies reasons for continued displacement of Iraqi IDPs

Erbil, 20 November 2018 - In April 2016, Iraq experienced its peak of displacement with approximately 3.42 million individuals forced to flee their homes. Two and half years later, in November 2018, this number has nearly halved to 1.87 million individuals, and most of these remaining internally displaced persons (IDPs) report planning to stay where they are over the next 12 months.

Protracted displacement is generally described as a condition in which internally displaced persons are unable to reduce the vulnerability, impoverishment and marginalization that may be caused by displacement.

Protracted displacement in Iraq is described in the study released today (20/11), *Reasons to Remain: Categorizing Protracted Displacement in Iraq*, conducted jointly by IOM Iraq; the Returns Working Group, an operational and multi-stakeholder platform on re-

turns; and Social Inquiry, an Iraq-based research institute; and with input and support from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) within the Federal Government of Iraq. "Being stuck in protracted displacement, a situation that is characterized by long periods of exile and longing for home while a state of emergency no longer exists, is very challenging for the displaced and their families," said Gerard Waite, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission.

"Finding durable solutions to displacement is a long-term process requiring close cooperation between the government and a range of humanitarian actors. Such support includes helping IDPs improve their coping capacities and self-reliance as well as facilitating environments to absorb displaced and returning populations in host communities," Waite added.

In Iraq, there are many reasons why

IDPs remain displaced. The study seeks to classify these reasons into five categories: obstacles relating to housing; livelihoods and basic services; social cohesion; security; and mental health issues and psycho-social distress.

The study found that destruction of houses in areas of origin is the most prevalent self-reported reason for prolonged displacement in addition to a lack of livelihood opportunities and perceptions of insecurity.

This report is the first step in a process to provide a comprehensive, geography-based analysis of remaining IDPs and obstacles to return.

The report can be accessed at: <http://iomiraq.net/article/0/iom-study-identifies-reasons-continued-displacement-iraqi-idps?fbclid=IwAR0ggi83ctFAUuVN6bcHtHrveTs9SNyJPmaXIA5GgmBtqsRCy2QJ--QQLLg>

Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees visits Iraq, pledges UNHCR's support through a time of transition

Baghdad, 22 November 2018 - The Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Kelly T. Clements, completed a three-day visit to Iraq where she met with senior Iraqi and Kurdish ministers in Baghdad and Erbil, members of the international community, and visited recovering neighbourhoods in Mosul, and camps for displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees.

To support Iraq through its transition out of crisis, UNHCR - the UN Refugee Agency - is gradually shifting its focus from emergency response to longer-term planning for refugees and displaced Iraqis. The Agency is actively seeking ways to support them through

national systems whether they are returning home or remaining in camps and host communities. Cash assistance is a crucial part of UNHCR's programmes, providing a lifeline for vulnerable families as they transition out of dependence on humanitarian assistance and secure access to national welfare systems. So far this year, over 200,000 returning families received cash assistance from UNHCR to support them as they resumed normal life. During her visit, Ms. Clements travelled to West Mosul where families welcomed her into the homes they are rebuilding with cash grants from UNHCR. This project will reach over 800

vulnerable families who use the cash to buy the materials needed to repair their heavily-damaged houses.

"Yesterday in the Old City of Mosul, we saw the extent of the devastation. There wasn't a building untouched by the conflict," said Ms. Clements. "The task ahead for the Iraqi people is immense, but the will to move forward is clear. The families we met in Mosul and in camps for displaced people and refugees are looking to the future, and the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities want to support them. UNHCR and the many partners supporting the humanitarian response here are committed to standing with the Iraqi people through this time of transition and towards a brighter future."

She also visited the office of the Directorate of Civil Affairs where UNHCR supports the Government to issue civil identity documents. Government officials told Ms. Clements that they had issued 1 million National Unified Cards since re-opening the office in Mosul, the new identity card that enables Iraqis to access basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement. Without these documents, displaced and returning families face obstacles to rebuilding their lives and their communities.

For the quarter of a million Syrian refugees seeking protection in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, UNHCR is working



Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees visits Iraq, pledges UNHCR's support through a time of transition *(continued)*

with government authorities to take a progressive approach to find real and meaningful solutions to displacement. In close collaboration with the Kurdish authorities and partner agencies, UNHCR is implementing a strategy to ensure Syrian refugees achieve self-sufficiency and access their legal, social and economic rights. The strategy invests in host communities and public services, promotes access to education

and health, and encourages economic activity to help refugees realize their potential.

"We sensed real hope for the future of Iraq and those who have sought protection here," continued Ms. Clements. "The energy for change is tangible. There is a collective will to find sustainable solutions for people affected by recent conflicts. UNHCR is proud to be a dynamic part of this transformation."



Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq: Relief assistance underway for victims of flooding, pledges continued support for Government of Iraq emergency response effort

Baghdad, 24 November 2018 - The United Nations and international and local humanitarian partners have joined the Government of Iraq's specialized agencies in providing support for the tens of thousands of victims of the severe flooding which swept many areas of Salah Eddin and Ninewa Governorates.

The floods caused by heavy rainfall have resulted in multiple deaths and injuries and displaced tens of thousands of people. Ninewa and Salah Eddin are the most heavily affected governorates, with multiple reports of bridges, roads and villages being inundated; damage was also recorded in the southern part of the country. An estimated 10,000 people in Salah Eddin and 15,000 people in Ninewa are in need of assistance, including thousands of families living in IDP camps.

"The UN is here, as always, to provide support to the government and authorities of the country in the discharge of

their responsibilities to provide assistance to their citizens," said Ms. Marta Ruedas, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

Ms. Ruedas commended the Government of Iraq, which is leading the disaster response effort, for its immediate mobilization in response to the floods, including the deployment of civil defence personnel. The Humanitarian Coordinator noted that Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi convened a meeting of the governmental Crisis Management Cell on 23 November to coordinate the emergency response activities of relevant ministries and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society.

Ms. Ruedas pledged continued UN support during this emergency situation. "We are assessing the situation to see where we could further assist the Government of Iraq in its response to this severe flooding."

Losses are still being assessed, but initial accounts from flooded areas include

the destruction of homes, livestock, and household items. Initial reports from partners indicate that the Shirqat district in Salah Eddin, and Qayyarah and Jeddah IDP camps in Ninewa, are among the worst affected.

Several needs assessments are already underway, led by the Rapid Response Mechanism and Logistics clusters.

In Salah Eddin, the Governor's office began distributing food baskets to 1,000 displaced families in Shirqat, while UNFPA is planning to distribute 400 hygiene kits in coordination with their local partners in the area. International humanitarian partners are planning health assistance through mobile medical clinics in coordination with the Directorate of Health. Two thousand food rations will be distributed together with blankets, mattresses and household items in coordination with an international NGO.

In Ninewa, IOM distributed non-food items (NFI) kits to 2,350 families from the Qayyarah and Jeddah IDP camps who lost all their belongings. The Rapid Response Mechanism will send 2,000 kits to displaced families, with essential items including drinking water, emergency ready to eat food, and hygiene kits. WFP reported that its partners had successfully delivered 4,000 Immediate Response Ration parcels to affected areas, in coordination with Mercy Hands and camp management.

The Humanitarian Coordinator stated that additional needs assessments by health, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and protection partners are already planned for Sunday 25 November. She noted that the Iraq Humanitarian Fund could grant a reserve allocation for flood response, once there was a clearer sense of where the most urgent gaps remained.



Briefing on the humanitarian situation in Iraq held in Geneva

Geneva, 25 November 2018 - The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in cooperation with the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations in Geneva, orga-

nized a briefing to UN Member States and other international organizations accredited to the United Nations Office in Geneva on "Humanitarian Situation and Priority Needs in Iraq".

The briefing was chaired by Mr.

Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva, Iraqi Deputy Permanent Representative, Dr. Abbas Kadhim Obaid, and Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General.

The Deputy Permanent Representative Dr. Obaid referred to the brutal crimes and violations perpetrated by the terrorist gangs of Da'esh during the time they took control of three key Iraqi cities, and to the destruction of infrastructure, as well as the destruction of countless priceless artifacts and ancient historical sites

At the end of the briefing, the Deputy Permanent Representative on behalf of the Government of Iraq thanked the United Nations, the specialized humanitarian agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and donors for their continued support to the Government and the people of Iraq.



WHO and health partners step up efforts to provide urgent support for victims of the flooding

Baghdad, 26 November 2018 --- The World Health Organization (WHO) has conducted an urgent needs-assessment mission to Qayyarah's Jadaa internally displaced person (IDP) camps in Ninewa governorate to assess the health situation of the population affected by the heavy rain which caused flash flooding in a number of IDP camps in the governorate. Tens of thousands of families have lost all their belongings and are reported to be in dire need of food, drinking water, medicine, and hygiene kits.

A slight increase in the number of upper respiratory tract infection cases were reported in the visited camps and health partners there were notified to monitor the situation and immediately report any change in communicable disease trends through the WHO Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN).

"WHO is working closely with partners and local health authorities to manage the emergency and meet the urgent health and sanitation needs of thousands of families hit by the flash floods in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates," said Dr Adham Rashad, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq. "The situation requires a collective humanitarian effort and a quick reaction to minimize risks and contain the dam-

age," he added.

A shipment of blankets has been delivered to IDP camps in the district of Qayyarah and medical supplies, kits, and ambulances are on the way for deployment to badly affected areas in the affected governorates.

As of 23 November, heavy rain has hit the country causing flash floods that have led to the damage of property, livestock, and infrastructure in Ninewa, Salah Eldin and the southern governorates of Missan, Wasit and Basrah. A number of bridges, roads, and

villages were inundated and more than 10 000 people in Salah Eldin and 15 000 people in Ninewa governorates are in urgent need of assistance, including thousands of families living in IDP camps.

WHO remains ready to support the Ministry of Health and local health authorities to address the impact of the floods and reduce the suffering of the vulnerable populations in the IDP camps and other under-recovery areas in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates.



Photo: WHO Iraq

IOM responds to flooding in Iraq



Ninawa, 27 November 2018 – Large-scale flooding beginning on the morning of Friday (23/11) has wreaked havoc across Iraq, killing several people and causing widespread damage to homes, infrastructure and agriculture, and worsening the living conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In Ninewa governorate, Qayarrah Airstrip and Jeddah IDP camps were particularly affected by the flooding. Among the approximately 7,500 families residing in Qayarrah Airstrip Camp, 2,392 tents were completely flooded forcing hundreds of households to take refuge in the IOM health clinic and other communal areas. The health clinic in Qayarrah Airstrip Camp hosted nearly 300 individuals, providing IDPs with dry blankets, heaters and emergency health care services. The

IOM ambulance transported ten individuals in need of medical assistance but unable to reach the clinic.

“We haven’t been able to sleep at all because we don’t have a dry spot to sit. The water level was knee-deep inside our tent. Now all of our belongings, everything we desperately need this winter, have been ruined by the mud left after the flood.

“We had to put our children on the roof of the communal kitchen to get them out of the mud. Even the food and grains we had stored are drenched. We are in desperate need of dry clothes, mattresses, blankets, fuel and food,” said Kamel Hussein, a resident of Qayarrah Airstrip Camp.

Within hours of the flooding, IOM immediately deployed its Rapid Assessment and Response Team and assessed the damage and needs in the camps. The Organization employed over 600 camp residents to clear the drainage channels, ensuring the flow of water out of the camp, and to repair the damaged road to restore access to camps, thereby allowing humanitarian assistance to reach the most vulnerable displaced persons.

IOM, in coordination with camp management entities, Representative for Ninewa Voluntary Displaced Organization (RNVDO) and Danish Refugee

Council (DRC), immediately began distributing hundreds of kits to the most affected families.

Since Friday, more than 3,150 basic non-food item kits have been delivered to households in Qayarrah Airstrip and Jeddah consisting of mattresses, bed-sheets, plastic sheeting, a solar lamp, rechargeable light, gas cooker, jerry can and kitchen set. Support for the kits was provided by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Government of Germany.

“The rain and subsequent flooding experienced throughout Iraq over the past weekend has worsened the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations, including displaced households residing in camps. The flooding has highlighted the importance of humanitarian actors maintaining operational capacity in Iraq to scale up emergency assistance in the event of disaster,” said Gerard Waite, Chief of Mission of IOM Iraq.

With more rain expected over the coming days, IOM remains ready to respond to the arising needs and will continue to work closely with the Government of Iraq’s Ministry of Migration and Displacement and other humanitarian partners to ensure a timely and effective response to those most affected.

Lifesaving medicine and medical supplies reach Shirqat to respond to needs of floods victims

Baghdad, 28 November 2018 – The World Health Organization (WHO) dispatched a consignment of lifesaving medicines and medical kits and supplies to Shirqat General Hospital in Shirqat District north of Salah Eldin Governorate.

The consignment contained more than 13 tons of medications including 4 Trauma A and 4 Trauma B Kits, one surgical kit, and 80 Inter-agency Health Emergency Kits (IHEK) of both

basic and supplementary units. The consignment is sufficient to treat a population of 10,000 for a duration of 3 months.

The medication was handed over to Shirqat General Hospital to support the local health authorities meet the scale up in demand for first line and emergency health care services following the flash floods that severely affected Shirqat district in the governorate.

“WHO is committed to supporting the Ministry of Health and local health authorities in providing urgent health care services to the in-need population all over Iraq,” said Dr. Adham Ismail WHO Acting Representative in Iraq.

“WHO and its health partners are still required to deliver more and intervene further to ensure availability and easy access to health services including the referral and ambulatory services in IDP camps as well as remote and hard to reach areas,” added Dr. Ismail.

The wave of heavy rains and flash floods, which recently hit a number of governorates in Iraq, has severely af-

ected under recovery areas and caused significant damage to properties in addition to disruption in transportation, water, and power supply.

In Salah Eldin governorate, over 1000 houses were swept away leading to the evacuation of more than 5000 residents of Shirqat district, considered among the worst affected.

Although health authorities in the governorate reported the death of 8, injury of 20, and missing of yet an unidentified number of citizens, the health situation in the governorate is in control. One WHO mobile medical clinic and five MOH ambulances were deployed at the beginning of the event to provide on-spot primary, referral, and ambulatory health services to flash floods victims.

No abnormal trends of diseases were reported but WHO urged local health authorities and partners to remain vigilant and monitor communicable disease cases trend through WHO Early Warning Alert and Response Network system (EWARN).



DSRSG/HC/RR Ruedas emphasized the importance of upholding international principles of safe voluntary returns with dignity

Baghdad, 29 November 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative, Ms. Marta Ruedas, participated today in a meeting held at the offices of the Council of Ministers in Baghdad with representatives of governorates in liberated areas. She was accompanied by representatives of UN-HCR, OCHA, and UNICEF to discuss solutions for Iraq's remaining 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their communities. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Mehdi al-Alaq, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. Governors explained

that the main factors preventing IDPs from returning were destroyed houses, lack of basic services and employment, slow compensation claim processing, and threats to their safety related to the recent conflict with ISIL/Daesh.

Ms. Ruedas emphasized the importance of upholding international principles of safe voluntary returns with dignity, and several speakers addressed camp consolidation to improve services, responding to recent flooding in camps, and ensuring that Governorate Returns Committees meet regularly to find solutions for IDPs.

Photo courtesy of the CoM.



Iraq: Humanitarian Coordinator seeks government support as displaced families make their way back home

Kirkuk, 3 December 2018 - Military operations by Iraqi security forces to retake Mosul city in Ninewa governorate from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) ended last July, but the human suffering and enormous physical destruction are still heavily felt across the country. Close to one million people were forced to flee violence in search of safety. Hospitals, bridges, schools, water treatment and power plants were contaminated with unprecedented quantities of explosive hazards and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that were left by ISIL.

Of particular concern is the return of internally displaced people to their homes. The Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, visited Kirkuk yesterday, to see firsthand the humanitarian situation, and hear from displaced people what their need the most.

Ms. Ruedas met the acting Kirkuk Governor, Mr. Rakan al-Jabouri, to discuss the conditions for the return of IDPs to their places of origin and the proposed consolidation of IDP camps. She requested additional government support to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance where it is most needed,

in particular to returnee families, including through more stabilization projects.

The HC also met with humanitarian partners working in Kirkuk and discussed the persistent challenges of providing aid in the region, including continued insecurity caused by ISIL elements, the contamination of return areas with mines and unexploded ordnances, and bureaucratic restrictions. She pledged continued advocacy with Government for support to humanitari-

an response in Kirkuk.

DSRSG Ruedas also visited Leylan 2 IDP camp where she met and held discussions with camp management authorities and IDP women leaders on humanitarian conditions in the camp. During this interaction, Ms. Ruedas reiterated the UN's commitment to continue providing essential humanitarian assistance to IDPs while supporting the government's efforts to find durable and lasting solutions to the situation of IDPs.



One hundred shops built at Jad'ah 5 camp

Jad'ah, Iraq, 3 December 2018 - One hundred shops have just been built at Jad'ah 5 camp, with support from the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund. These shops will be allocated to over 100 camp residents and are intended to enable the market in Jad'ah to serve the camp population in a more secure

and cleaner environment. The shops were not built by contractors but by camp residents under a cash-for-work scheme. As a direct result of the skills and experience gained through their participation in the construction of the markets, some of these residents have since obtained full-time employment.



Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and Multilateral Relations meets the DSRSG for Iraq

Baghdad, 05 December 2018 - Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and Multilateral Relations, Ambassador Hazem Al-Yousefi, met with Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Iraq, and discussed the relations and cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations Mission in Iraq and prospects of cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance and providing technical and logistical services to Iraq in relation to IDPs.

Ms. Marta Ruedas stated that the United Nations mission in Iraq this year has allocated 600 million dollars for humanitarian aid and 500 million dollars for development in Iraq, with the aim to facilitate the implementation of



Erbil, 11 December 2018 - Ambassador of Canada to Iraq, Paul Gibbard, visited the UNFPA -supported women centre and delivery room in Debag 1 & 2 camps for internally displaced people in Kurdistan, Iraq, where he was briefed on the challenges faced by survivors of gender-based violence and the maternal health services.



Dohuk, 19 December 2018 - Mr. Fardhad Atrushi, the Governor of Duhok, joined UNHCR's With Refugees Cities Initiative, to showcase the solidarity that his governorate has demonstrated towards refugees.

Since the begging of the refugee influx to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the administration of Duhok Governorate has played a vital role in accommodating refugees and shouldering enormous responsibility to provide them access to housing, health care, education, skills training, and employment opportuni-



Erbil, 20 December 2018 - Canada Ambassador to Iraq, Paul Gibbard, visited today few informal settlement sites where displaced Iraqis are concentrated in Erbil. Canada has been an important contributor to IOM's assistance to displaced Iraqis across the country.

"The resilience of the people that we visited, some of whom have been displaced since 2014, is impressive. Canada is proud, along with IOM Iraq, to be making a difference in people's lives," said Mr. Gibbard.

the agenda on issues of grants and humanitarian assistance and development programs in the area of prevention of armed conflicts in the liberated areas.

On his part, Undersecretary expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by the UN Mission in Iraq and all its programs and committees working specifi-

cally in the fields of development and humanitarian assistance and services in the rehabilitation of communities that have been subjected to various types of destruction, violence and terrorism, especially in areas liberated from the grip of terrorist.

Photo courtesy of Iraq MoFA.



ties for newcomers and long-term residents alike.

With Refugees Cities Initiative is UNHCR's campaign to amplify the efforts of cities and local authorities all over

the world that are creating inclusive communities where everyone can live in safety, become self-reliant, and contribute to and participate in their local community.



Currently, Canada supports IOM's health, psychosocial, social cohesion, and livelihoods activities in addition to

rehabilitation of basic infrastructure in Niewa, Erbil, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Kerbala.

German Federal Foreign Minister visited IDP camp in Ninewa

Ninewa, 20 December 2018 - With more than 1.8 million Iraqis still displaced and in need of assistance, Iraq's humanitarian crisis is not yet over.

German Federal Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, visited IOM - UN Migration's Community Center at Hassan Sham camp in Ninewa to get a first-hand account of challenges for IDPs as we enter the new year.

During his visit to Hassan Sham camp, Germany's top diplomat met beneficiaries of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Programme, funded by the German Government. The Minister spoke to IDPs, including war widows, about camp life and barriers for returning to home communities.

"The people of Iraq can count on Germany's assistance, now and also in future. IOM is delivering essential humanitarian assistance to remaining IDPs in Iraq. That's why we have further increased our humanitarian fund-

ing for IOM to 3.5 million euros in 2018 & 2019," said Heiko Maas after visiting Hassan Sham camp.

Though 4.1 million Iraqis have returned to their areas of origin, comprehensive stabilization programming is critical to prevent recurrence of conflict

and another wave of displacement in Iraq. IOM is therefore working with the German Government and other partners to build more cohesive and resilient communities and strengthen mechanisms which enable local conflict resolution.



Republic of Korea reaffirmed its commitment to stand by displaced populations

Erbil, 23 December 2018 - The First Secretary of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Baghdad, Mr. Seungmin Yoo, visited Hasansham Camp for internally displaced persons in Erbil.

During his visit, Mr. Yoo met with displaced Iraqi families, who shared their experiences and challenges in the camp. Mr. Yoo also visited the child friendly space and women's centre in the camp, where he learned more about the programs and assistance offered to residents.

In September, the Republic of Korea reaffirmed its commitment to stand by displaced populations with a new contribution of US \$1.2 million to UNHCR Iraq, helping to make tangible improvements to the lives of persons of concern.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency thanks the Republic of Korea for its

continued support to its humanitarian activities in Iraq.



UNHCR: Additional grant reaffirms Germany's commitment to continue supporting vulnerable, displaced people in Iraq who urgently require humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs

Baghdad, 29 December 2018 - UNHCR Iraq thanks the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for its supplementary contribution of EUR 4 million to support UNHCR's programmes in Iraq in 2018. This additional grant reaffirms Germany's commitment to continue supporting vulnerable, displaced people in Iraq who urgently require humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs.

With this generous support, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in Iraq will be able to boost its response to the mounting humanitarian needs in the country. "We are most grateful to the Federal Republic of Germany for this extraordinarily generous contribution to our operation in Iraq at this critical juncture in the country's post-conflict transition," said Mr. Bruno Geddo, UNHCR Representative in Iraq.



UNDP implements Cash-for-Work projects across Kurdistan

Erbil, 23 October 2018 - 15 years-old Shahad lives in the Sirwan District of Halabja. She has seen first-hand the impact that periods of heavy rain can have on her community, with the dirt roads making travel difficult for many, "they had to put those plastic bags and boots which was especially difficult for the kids to go to school."

The un-paved roads running through her community are now being transformed by one of 28 active Cash for Work projects across Kurdistan.

Thanks to generous support from the Federal Republic of Germany and cooperation with the Governorate of Hala-

bja, 255 immediate income opportunities will be provided to individuals restoring and constructing essential basic

services such as roads and sewerage. "We can have an easy access and go to school easily."



UNDP integrated reconciliation project in Iraq has supported the local peace committee in Al Anbar

Baghdad, 24 October 2018 - The UNDP integrated Reconciliation project in Iraq has supported the local peace committee in Al Anbar presided by Sheikh Mohamed Hamed, an important first ever consultation with the youth of Saqlawiya to collect recommendation to consolidate peace and future prosperity in this liberated area from ISIS. Follow-ups meeting will take place to specify needs and roles.



Workshop to construct a peace studies baseline assessment held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 4 November 2018 - Last week, Iraqi Alamal Association and UNDP Iraq hosted a 3-day exchange with the Federal Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific research, Iraqi University Consortium of Peace Education members and Universität Innsbruck to construct a peace studies baseline assessment.

Wolfgang Dietrich, head of Peace Studies at Universität Innsbruck and UNESCO Chair for peace Studies believes all people are capable of addressing conflict in their communities...we just have to create the frame where they can do it!

Representatives from Karbala, Baghdad, Mosul, Anbar, Kufa, Tikrit and

Duhok Universities participated in the dynamic discussion on how they might adapt and build the future of Peace Studies in Iraq, with the valuable insights of experienced teaching staff from Innsbruck University.

This exchange was made possible with generous funding from The Government of Japan.

The High Steering Committee of the National Programme for Rehabilitation and Regularization of Informal Settlements/IDPs areas in Iraq held a meeting to discuss the mechanisms and implementation of the 2019 National Assessment of Informal Settlements

Baghdad, 5 November 2018 - The High Steering Committee of the National Programme for Rehabilitation and Regularization of Informal Settlements/IDPs areas in Iraq held a meeting to discuss the mechanisms and implementation of the 2019 National Assessment of Informal Settlements. The

members of the High Steering Committee include the Minister of Planning, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, senior representatives of the line ministries and government offices, and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). The assessment, designed by the Cen-

tral Statistics Office in the Ministry of Planning with the support of UN-Habitat, aims at identifying vulnerable IDPs and vulnerable people residing in informal settlements to enable them to have increased access to affordable housing with security of tenure and basic services.

The reconstruction of Mosul will take at least a generation



Baghdad, 7 November 2018 - The reconstruction of Mosul will take at least a generation, given the magnitude of the destruction caused by the military battles to liberate the city from the terrorist.

This is according to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, who spoke to the United Nations News about the United Nations efforts in cooperation with the Iraqi Government. Ms. Ruedas, also the Resident Coordinator for humanitarian affairs in Iraq, noted that the situation in East Mosul was different from that across the river, in West Mosul. "The East Mosul is much less affected than the West Mosul. And that's gonna take a long time," according to her.

The Humanitarian Coordinator men-

tioned a number of projects that the United Nations is already working on there, including the renovation of a number of public infrastructure facilities: water treatment plants, sewage systems and electricity, and the re-establishment of a range of health centers.

In addition, she pointed out that these activities help to provide money to workers, mainly from Mosul, for the benefit of society as a whole.

The Deputy Special Representative said that the defeat of ISIS, accompanied by United Nations-supported stabilization programmes such as projects in Mosul, had contributed to the return of millions of internally displaced persons to their homes not only in Mosul.

She added: "We believe that the stabilization programmes that have re-established this infrastructure are primarily responsible for creating favorable conditions for the return of displaced persons. Because, in fact, if there is no electricity, water, basic infrastructure, schools, health centers, etc. it is unlikely that the displaced will return."

Nevertheless, there remains a lot of efforts to be made, according to Ms. Ruedas, which indicated that returnees still receive some assistance. She added: "The truth is that when they return

to their places of origin, they need help to return to their normal lives. Those who are still outside their places of origin have no regular life to return to, and that requires further assistance."

However, Marta Ruedas cautioned against the continued provision of humanitarian assistance to individuals who had returned to their normal lives, noting that it would be better for such persons to benefit from development assistance programmes.

Overall, the Humanitarian Coordinator said that the humanitarian response programme in Iraq was estimated to be about \$ 600 million this year, but this amount has increased slightly because of some emergency matters, such as "there was a major health crisis in Basra, because water quality was somewhat poor due to low water levels, high salinity and water pollution. Thousands of people suffered problems with the digestive system, and we needed to deal with it."

She commended the support provided by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) in assisting the response efforts in Basra. She pointed out, however, that there were many structural issues that had led to the problem, and those issues had to be addressed.

By UN News Center.

Hope emerges in West Mosul

Mosul, 7 November 2018 - As Iraqis slowly return to their homes in West Mosul, the World Food Programme-led Emergency Telecommunications Cluster provides support to Community Resource Centres helping people rebuild their lives.

Lightning cracks the sky and rain hammers down as we cross the Fourth Bridge over the Tigris into West Mosul. This place bore the brunt of the battle



to liberate the city from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS): 15 districts were razed to the ground; thousands of people were killed and around three million displaced.

There is graphic evidence of what this ancient city has gone through: rubble is piled up knee-deep on every street, furniture spills out of destroyed buildings and some structures have been bombed so badly that only their frames remain. The Old City is a dust-brown wasteland of ruins.

But signs of life are starting to show: carts laden with pomegranates and deep green watermelons, barber shops, cafeterias with roasted chickens turning on rotisseries, and small shops selling tools and oil.

On an unassuming street in Al Jadeda neighbourhood is one of the Community Resource Centres (CRC) the International Organization for Migration has set up in areas where displaced people are returning. These centres serve as hubs of centralized information and service referral for affected people—whether they are returnees, people

displaced by conflict from other parts of the country or locals. Agencies and organizations convene awareness sessions on topics ranging from mine risk education and legal assistance to English classes and writing CVs.

This is one of three centres that the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)—a global network of organizations led by the World Food Programme (WFP), working to provide shared communications services in humanitarian emergencies—is supporting along with another in East Mosul and one in Fallujah, with more to follow. The ETC is preparing to install a TV screen on which awareness messages and daily session schedules can be broadcast, a generator to use as a back-up power solution, Internet connectivity and a ticketing system. This is part of the ETC's Services for Communities project to ensure that people have access to life changing and sometimes life-saving communication and information. Since its opening last summer, some 1,800 people have visited the centre.

Hope emerges in West Mosul *(continued)*

One man, Fares, is here to get advice from a legal specialist on how he and his family can leave Iraq permanently; as a fighter with the coalition, his name is on the ISIS blacklist and he lives in terror of being found.

Mother-of-four Asla waits patiently with her 5-year-old daughter who is blind. She is seeking some form of disability allowance to help her and her

family survive. At the height of the fighting, Asla and her family fled their home in suburban Mosul to find safety in the Hammam Al Alil camp for internally displaced people. With their home now destroyed, the family has had to move on to the city to try and start a new life.

“Insha’allah” (God willing) is all Asla can say when asked if she has hope for

the future of her children. As she moves to stroke her daughter’s hair, the sleeve of her abaya reveals a faded tattoo on the inside of her left arm: ‘alhaya athab’ (life is agony), it reads. “Isn’t it true?” she says with a faint smile. Her sleeve falls back; the message disappears.

By Suzanne Fenton, WFP

War-torn cities in Iraq keen to boost reconstruction efforts by recycling debris

Ramadi, 12 November 2018 – Aiming for more sustainable options for dealing with the huge amounts of rubble borne out of the ISIL conflict, municipalities of around half a dozen devastated cities in western Iraq explored opportunities to establish debris recycling centres to help advance recovery efforts at a two-day workshop held in Ramadi’s Anbar University on 7-8 November 2018.

Hosted by Anbar Governorate and organized in collaboration with the Iraq Ministry of Health and Environment with technical advisory support from UN Environment, the gathering brought together – for the first time – key stakeholders from local authorities, technical government departments, university academics, demining experts, as well as UN agencies to discuss more sustainable options for dealing with the huge amounts of rubble created by the ISIL conflict.

“Over two years since retaking most of Anbar’s shattered cities from the grips of ISIL terrorists in 2016, rubble continues to be a major obstacle for tens of thousands of displaced persons to regain their homes, and restart their lives and businesses,” said Mr. Mustapha Arsan, deputy governor of Anbar Governorate.

Municipal representatives from the most damaged cities of Ramadi, Haditha, Hit, Qaim and Kubaisa, in Iraq’s upper Euphrates region, underscored the major problems they continue to face in removing colossal volumes of rubble. Lack of debris removal equipment and inadequate operational budgets were highlighted as major constraints. While most of the rubble in the streets has been removed, much of the remaining debris will be generated from building demolition.

The Qaim Maqam (head of district) of Ramadi, Mr. Ibrahim Al-Awsaj, stated that around 80 percent of Ramadi – capital of Anbar governorate with a population of over 570,000 people before the conflict – lay in ruins. Preliminary estimates by Ramadi municipality

indicate that around three of the seven million tonnes of debris have so far been removed with extensive support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization.

Furthermore, debris removal is significantly complicated by exceptionally high levels of contamination with unexploded ordnance and booby traps. “Over 20,000 explosive devices have so far been from Ramadi city alone,” said Mr. Al-Awsaj. Training and establishing clear procedures for dealing with explosives in the debris is a critical prerequisite for clearing-up the rubble.

“Debris continues to be scooped and dumped in an uncontrolled manner creating serious health and environmental risks and burdensome economic liabilities for the future,” decried Mr. Qais Abd, head of the Anbar Environment Directorate. Mr. Abd added that “future campaigns to remove debris haphazardly dumped all over the place may be needed,” engendering additional costs for the financially strapped local authorities.

Emphasizing that many other post-conflict cities faced similar challenges, UN Environment expert Martin Bjerregaard affirmed that considerable experience exists from elsewhere that can help inform Anbar’s debris management efforts. “We are not starting from scratch here,” said Mr. Bjerregaard, who went on to share lessons from neighbouring Mosul as well as Syria, Lebanon, Philippines, and going to back the Balkans conflict in the late 1990s.

The workshop also highlighted ongoing work by UNDP’s Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization and the International Organization Migration to establish debris recycling centres in Mosul with technical advice from UN Environment. This initiative will help create much needed jobs through cash-for-work programmes.

Original research by Anbar University engineer Mr. Salah Thameel found that

crushed debris from Ramadi were of high quality and complied with Iraqi engineering standards for use in civil works, including as underlying subbase for roads. “The cost of crushing the debris is about one third of buying fresh quarry materials and, if transportation costs are added, it would account for only 10 percent,” explained Mr. Thameel. Furthermore, “by reusing the crushed debris, we would significantly reduce negative environmental impacts of quarrying and polluting emissions from trucking gravel from quarry sites,” he asserted.

Crushing debris would not only significantly facilitate rubble removal operations by reducing the volumes handled, but would also result in important cost savings. “We are eager to start with recycling and welcome support from the friends of Iraq to help us in rebuilding our damaged cities,” stated Ms. Asmaa Osama, President of the Committee of Health and Environment and member of Anbar Provincial Council.

Workshop participants further recommended that an Anbar-wide debris management action plan led by the Governorate is developed to help coordinate debris recycling efforts across its damaged cities. Key actions including identification of potential sites for setting-up debris recycling centres were also discussed with a specific focus on Ramadi city as a demonstration pilot.



UN Iraq assessment visit to Kirkuk's historical Qishla and Citadel sites to explore ways to assist in restoration

Kirkuk, 12 November 2018 - The Qishla and Citadel of Kirkuk, two cultural heritage sites symbolising the area's rich multicultural history but buffeted by time and conflicts, are in desperate need of restoration to preserve them for future generations. In line with UN support for the country's diversity and preservation of its historical sites as symbols that boost reconciliation and coexistence, the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the UN Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, led a team from the UN family in Iraq comprising UNESCO, UNAMI and UN Development Coordination Office on visits to the sites on 05 November 2018 to assess the structures and explore

ways to assist in the restoration work. Built in 1863 as the winter headquarters for the Ottoman Army garrison, the Qishla is in a state of near collapse today, leading to serious concerns that if not stabilized the remaining structure could soon fall down. The Citadel is the oldest part of Kirkuk, built in 884 BC as a defensive wall 18 metres high. Later, towers were added and the Citadel evolved as the heart of the city, with a 1,000-year old minaret and the Red Church.

Dr. Iyad Tariq, Director of the Department for Antiquities and Heritage in Kirkuk, grew up on the Citadel. Dr. Tariq remembers how when he was a young boy the Citadel was the center of

town. It was home to 850 families, a school, two mosques, minarets, a church, monuments, restaurants, cafes, recreational areas and a bustling market. With support from UNESCO and the international community, the Citadel can be restored to its former glory, Dr. Tariq said.

The Head of the UN Development Coordination Office in Kirkuk, Mr. Martijn Dalhuijsen, says that the Citadel exemplifies the multi-cultural society of Kirkuk. The citadel contains Arabic, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Kurdish, Seljuk, Turkish and Turkmen moments. Just like the Forum in Rome, it would be a valuable symbol of reconciliation and recovery to restore in the heart of the diverse City of Kirkuk. Restoration would also create many new job opportunities for artisans and craftsmen, construction workers, while boosting tourism, religious pilgrimage, and instill a sense of pride for Kirkukis after the liberation of parts of the Governorate from Da'esh terrorists.

Prior to visiting the sites, meetings were held between Giovanni Fontana, an architect from UNESCO who specializes in historic preservation, and Sami Al-Khoja, a Cultural Programme Officer who worked on the restoration of the Citadel in Erbil. Supporting the assessment visit were H.E. Mr. Rakan Al-Jabouri, Acting Governor of Kirkuk, Dr. Tariq of the Department of Culture, and Colonel Wisam Abdullah of the Kirkuk Antiquities Police.



Senior officials of the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency visit the Iraqi capital

Baghdad, 13 November 2018 - Mr. Göran Holmqvist, Director of the Department for Middle East and Humanitarian Assistance at the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency, and Ms.

Eva Smedberg, the Head of the MENA Department of the Agency, visited Baghdad last week. The main purpose was to meet and discuss with some of Sweden's development and humanitari-

an partners ranging from UN organizations to local NGOs.

One of the highlights of the trip, was Eva and Göran's visit to UNFPA supported youth groups in suburban Baghdad. The youth groups, called Y-PEERS and Youth Peace Leaders, reach out to around 33,000 juveniles across the country and have created a national movement on point of being crystallized into an independent organization. The activities are mainly facilitated by the youngsters themselves and focus on life skills, gender related violence, as well as peace building and the combat against violent extremism.

"Many of the bright, creative young people we met, emphasized that the activities in the youth groups had served as an important mental and intellectual ventilator for them", Eva told.



UN-Habitat and UNESCO presented the Initial Planning Framework for reconstruction of Mosul

Mosul, 15 November 2018 - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presented the Initial Planning Framework for the Reconstruction of Mosul, offering perspectives on how to 'Build Back Better' the city for the people of Mosul. Over 100 participants from the local government, private sector, civil society organizations and the United Nations agencies gathered at the Ninewa Governor's office to discuss the priorities and recommendations for the reconstruction of Mosul, with special attention to the Old City. The event highlighted the complex challenges ensuring a fast reconstruction, while protecting the heritage and historical characteristics of the Old City. It also touched upon the problems that wider Mosul is currently facing in the housing sector and the urgent need to support vulnerable returnees whose houses were completely destroyed, which continues to be a major obstacle for the return of internally displaced persons in camps to Mosul.

H.E. Mr. Nawfal Al Sultan, Governor of Ninewa, noted the prominent role of the United Nations agencies in the

reconstruction of Mosul, and reiterated the importance of collaboration between the government offices, the United Nations agencies and the people of Mosul. He also expressed his hope that Ninewa will be built back better, asking for continuous support from the international community.

Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, explained that the Framework provides a holistic and integrated approach for the reconstruction of Mosul, noting that the top priority is to protect heritage sites in the Old City from further damage as

analysed and recommended in the Framework.

Both H.E. Mr. Nawfal Al Sultan and Ms. Marta Ruedas called for setting up a specialised committee to follow up on and ensure that the actions recommended in the Framework are endorsed by the relevant authorities and implemented in a timely manner.

After gathering comments and feedback, the Framework will be finalized and distributed to key stakeholders, including national and local government counterparts, representatives of civil society, the private sector and the community, United Nations agencies and donors.



USG and the UN Secretary-General's Advisor on Policy Menéndez visited Anbar Governorate

Ramadi, 17 November 2018 – Witnessing firsthand how the protection, development and stabilization work of the United Nations in Iraq in areas liberated from Da'esh can contribute to the prevention of crisis, Under-Secretary-General and the UN Secretary-General's Advisor on Policy, Ms. Ana Maria Menéndez, visited Anbar Governorate in western Iraq on 17 November 2018.

She met with local Iraqi officials, including the Governor and the head of

the Provincial Council, to hear about the challenges the population are facing and how the UN can help to overcome them.

In the City of Ramadi, Ms. Menéndez was briefed on the work around clearing unexploded ordnance as part of the effort to create a safe and secure environment for those who were displaced and those who intend to return. This effort is part of a broader joint engagement between Iraqi authorities and the UN towards building the resilience of

local people in liberated areas through programs aimed at protecting the vulnerable, engaging them in stabilization activities and ensuring their full inclusion and participation in sustaining peace and development for their country.

Ms. Menéndez visited in this regard a vocational training centre which focuses its activities on developing the skills of the local population, in particular youth and foremost young women. She also visited a youth centre where she discussed peacebuilding and stabilization through the involvement of youth in peacebuilding activities. Such programs and engagements demonstrated the strong resolve to invest in youth as the best dividend towards sustaining peace and development. Ms. Menéndez visited also a centre that focuses on empowering women and addressing gender-based violence. With the women, she discussed the importance of their inclusion and participation in all segments of Iraqi society as part of their contribution to the stability and prosperity of the country.



National stakeholders' consultation to finalize the 6th National Biodiversity Report

Erbil, 26 November 2018 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a two-day consultation session to review the data and information collected during the last five months to draft the 6th national biodiversity report for Iraq.

National stakeholders and representatives from the Ministry of Health and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Higher Education, Institutes, local authorities, Academics, NGOs, and UN agencies jointly reviewed the collected data, and assessed the progress of the achievement of each national biodiversity Target and national Strategy on Biodiversity (2015-2020), in addition to identifying the gaps of information to finalize the 6NR draft to be submitted to the convention of Biodiversity secretariat by the end of this year.

The General Director of the Technical Department in the Ministry of Health and Environment, Ms. Shatha Kadhum said in her opening speech during the session: "It is imperative for us today to achieve national participation with all Stakeholders to describe and evaluate the national effort in preparing this report, as it is considered one of the most important tools that can be used to assess achievement of the national goals for protection of Biodiversity contained in the national biodiversity



strategy. This report is considered as an environmental message to decision-makers in order to provide the protection and support required to protect biodiversity", she said.

On behalf of UNDP/ Environment, Energy and Climate Change Program Manager, Mr. James Duku said: "This report provides an important basis for consideration of the post-2020 global biodiversity strategy, The information developed from this report can be used not only to understand current biodiversity status and trends, but also to understand how well a country's actions are contributing to national and global conservation targets". Adding

that: "It is clear that within the last three years after the adoption of the National Biodiversity Strategy on 2015, Iraq suffered from the critical security and economic conditions that restricted the survey and assessing the status of Iraqi ecosystems and habitats, threatened and endangered species, this was reflected as a challenges in the report, this will give a chance of supporting Iraq by the Global community".

The session concluded with valuable inputs which will help to draft the 6th national report that meets all international requirements and reflects the status of biological diversity by end of this year.

At the Stabilization Taskforce meeting DSRSG Ruedas updated the Government of Iraq and members of the diplomatic community on the current stabilization activities being undertaken by UNDP in liberated areas

Baghdad, 28 November 2018 - The Deputy Special Representative of the

UN Secretary-General, Ms. Marta Ruedas, today attended and co-chaired



the Stabilization Taskforce meeting that was hosted by the Government of Iraq under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Dr. Mahdi al-Alaq.

During the meeting, DSRSG Ruedas updated the Government of Iraq and members of the diplomatic community on the current stabilization activities being undertaken by UNDP in liberated areas. In her briefing DSRSG Ruedas further emphasized the need for continued financial support from both the international donors and the government of Iraq to allow UNDP reach more areas that are critically in need of stabilization support.

Photos courtesy of the Iraq Council of Ministers.

France contributes US\$568,690 to support sustainable livelihood development in Ninewa

Baghdad, 29 November 2018 – The Government of France has contributed US\$568,690 (€500,000) to UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) to promote recovery and resilience-building in areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The funding will help improve access to income-generating opportunities for 200 vulnerable returnees in Sinjar and Hamdaniya – where returnee numbers are high – through small business grants and saving schemes, as well as professional training programmes.

In an effort to ensure sustainability, the contribution also bolsters ICRRP's work with national chambers of commerce to build their capacities to respond to future crises.

During a signature ceremony to launch the new project, the French Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Bruno Aubert welcomed Ambassador Eric Chevallier, Director of CDCS (Centre de crise et de soutien) in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who highlighted that, "this project is well aligned with both French and Iraqi priorities for stabilization. Targeting the improvement of the conditions for the safe return of IDPs in areas strongly affected by ISIL occupation, the provision of immediate livelihood and employment opportunities – in particular for youth and women – is a key step toward more resiliency and sustainability for these communities."

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Marta Ruedas, added, "UNDP will support the financial empowerment of individuals to help alleviate the pressure on public finance, whilst at the same time creating a diverse business environment that will enable long-term economic growth."

Many areas of Ninewa have experienced extensive damage to public and private infrastructure and with the



effects of long-term displacement are now experiencing a lack of diverse livelihood opportunities, often exacerbated by prevailing security threats.

ICRRP is part of the Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP) that was launched at the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq earlier this year. In this context, the Government of France support will contribute to the RRP results area of expanding livelihoods opportunities in Iraq.

UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) promotes the recovery and resilience of communi-

ties vulnerable to multi-dimensional shocks associated with large-scale returns and protracted displacement of Iraqis and Syrian refugees. This is achieved through medium-term programming, integrating crisis management capacity building, rehabilitating basic service infrastructure, livelihood recovery and social cohesion.

French Member of Parliament, Marielle de Sarnez, recently visited Mosul University in East Mosul, which was severely damaged during ISIL occupation. The Government of France is helping fund UNDP's rehabilitation of critical infrastructure in Iraq.



UNDP is committed to support the economic and regulatory reforms in Iraq

Baghdad, 30 November 2018 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly with the Iraqi Ministry of Planning (MoP) organized a consultation session for Director Generals from the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Planning MoP, to discuss and develop a road map to institutionalize the Regulatory Impact Assessment as an evidence-based approach, and tool for policy making.

The session was intended to introduce a globally adopted tool to systematically and critically review the new and existing regulations, and analyze the projected social, economic and environmental impact, it was also a kickoff process through interactive consultation with key stakeholders, to enrich the discussion on the implementation of the Regulatory Impact Assessment, and reinforce the national ownership for

smooth implementation.

The Deputy Minister of Planning, Mr. Qasim Enaya was among the session attendees along with other senior officials. "The Ministry of Planning is committed to actualize the Regulatory Impact Assessment Approach, and is mandated by its law to review the legislations related to inclusive development, we are also committed to assume our role to ensure the most feasible and

UNDP is committed to support the economic and regulatory reforms in Iraq (continued)

effective policies, and regulations available, to produce the greatest economic and social net benefit to society, while simultaneously meeting the needs of government,” said Mr. Enaya.

UNDP Country Director Mr. Gerardo Noto said during the session: “UNDP is fully committed to support the Government of Iraq and the coordinating role of the Ministry of Planning in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs, and Agenda 2030. the development agenda which is adopted by Iraq is an integrated, interconnected and comprehensive approach, to inclusive development that should be translated into coherent public policies and regulations, aligned with economic, social and environmental sustainability. This consultation is affirmation of a key principle of Agenda 2030 underlined by SDG 16 (16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels)”.
Inspired by the government commit-



ment, UNDP asserted its intention to continue the support provided to various government entities that seek economic and regulatory reforms, for inclusive and sustainable development. This support is provided by UNDP

through the Funding Facility for Economic Reform-Federal Project launched in early 2016, to provide technical assistance through the deployment of high caliber international experts to support national reforms agenda.

Norway renews commitment to stabilization in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 December 2018 – The Government of Norway is supporting the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with an additional NOK 25 million (approximately USD 3 million) for stabilization in Iraq, bringing Norway’s total contribution since 2015 to USD 36 million, the seventh largest donor to FFS.

The fund will be directed towards UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) which finances fast-track initiatives to stabilize areas liberated after the fall of Islamic State of Iraq

and the Levant (ISIL)

Acting UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Mr Gerardo Noto, said: “Although much progress has been made, we still have a long way to go in stabilizing parts of Iraq devastated by ISIL. At this stage, more than 4 million people have returned to their homes. This is good news, but a lot more needs to be done, particularly in areas like western Mosul and the Ninewah Plains. Norway’s contribution will help us to accelerate our work in these areas, and we are very grateful for this

support.”

“As Iraq is entering a new phase, Norway remains committed to support the efforts to ensure long-term stability and growth for all Iraqi citizens,” said the Norwegian Ambassador to Iraq and Jordan, H.E. Mrs. Tone Allers. “Since the initiation of UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization, we have seen that the projects are yielding results on the ground, rehabilitating important infrastructure and restoring basic services in Iraqi towns and cities affected by ISIL’s takeover. With this additional contribution to FFS, we hope to contribute to improving conditions for the safe return of the more than 300,000 families still displaced from their homes.”
About FFS

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence. The Facility currently has more than 3,000 projects underway in 31 liberated cities and districts, helping local authorities to quickly rehabilitate essential infrastructure. More than 95 percent of all stabilization projects are done by the local private sector employing local labour.



Samoun in the city

Anah, Iraq, 05 December 2018 - It was his beloved bakery that brought Abdul Karim back to his hometown in western Iraq, almost four years after escaping ISIL.

Abdul Karim's bakery is no bigger than a few square metres. Packed on the shelves are a multitude of Iraqi breads and sweets, lined up neatly in rows.

His wide and welcoming grin makes clear his passion for baking. Before we even introduce ourselves, Abdul Karim offers us some sweet, sticky bread straight out of the oven. He refuses to take no for an answer.

"Please, take something. Consider this your house," he says.

Situated in a city called Anah, west of Iraq, his bakery was the first shop to open in the Municipality Market 25 years ago.

It was here—in West Anbar province—where ISIL infiltrated Iraq, largely due to its close proximity to the Syrian border and the tensions that ensued after 2011. Anah was one of the first areas to be taken over by the militants

in June 2014, and one of the last to be liberated.

In his escape to safety, Abdul Karim was forced to close his shop, like all the other vendors in the market. He fled to Baghdad and stopped work for more than three years. Despite having a degree in Agricultural Studies and 25 years' experience as a baker, he was unable to find a job.

When the city was finally liberated in December 2017, he was delighted to return home. "Words can't describe how I felt when I came back to my bakery. I was just so happy — this place brings me so much joy."

Today, 80% of displaced people have returned to Anah and with basic infrastructure and services being restored every day, as well as an improved security situation, more people are expected to come home.

For Abdul Karim, business is a little different now. It was his *baclava* that once brought in droves of people—but these days, a simpler *samoun* (traditional Iraqi bread) is his best-



seller.

"People have lower incomes than before, so they're not spending money on buying delicacies like they used to," he says. "But hopefully this will change. I can't complain though, I'm just happy to be back. I love my job and I want to work here until I get old."

Anah Municipality Market was rehabilitated with the support of UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), as part of the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq.

UN-Habitat continues rehabilitation of severely damaged houses in West Mosul under its community-based urban recovery programme

Mosul, 6 December 2018 - Today, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) officially handed over a total of 307 housing units in Zanjilli neighborhood of West Mosul, Nineveh Governorate, rehabilitated under the project titled "Promoting Urban Recovery and Resilience in Newly Liberated Areas in Iraq" generously funded by the Government of Japan.

UN-Habitat's urban recovery programme has a unique approach of engaging community members, employing them for rehabilitation activities and thereby supporting them to rebuild livelihoods and a sense of ownership. All activities are implemented under the regular and strong field presence of UN-Habitat's qualified engineers to ensure quality assurance of rehabilitation

works.

On behalf of His Excellency Dr. Mahdi Al-Alaq, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Mohammad Fadhil, Major General and Secretary of Civil Crisis Management, stated that this programme helped to restore hope of people of Mosul and facilitate their dignified returns.

His Excellency Mr. Nawfal Hamadi Al Sultan, Governor of Nineveh, commended UN-Habitat for ensuring strong cooperation with the government counterparts. He noted that more people in Nineveh are in need, and asked the international community to continue and expand its support.

Mr. Zuhair Muhsen Al-Aragi, Qaimaqam of Mosul, noted that UN-Habitat was the first agency to support Zanjilli

after the liberation of Mosul, hoping that the strong coordination between UN-Habitat and the government of Nineveh will continue for the ongoing projects, including establishment of low-cost housing units in West Mosul to accommodate returnees whose houses were totally destroyed.

His Excellency Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, expressed sincere appreciation to UN-Habitat and those who engaged with this programme for the successful completion which paves the way for the displaced people to return to their communities as well as to create their job opportunity through the programme. Ambassador Hashimoto emphasized the importance of Japan's assistance to Iraq in its humanitarian and stabilization efforts to relieve their sufferings for their better future.

Ms. Zena Ali Ahmad, Director of Regional Office for Arab States, UN-Habitat, thanked the Government of Japan for their generous contribution to UN-Habitat's Urban Recovery Programme, which rehabilitated more than 1,600 units of houses that were severely damaged during the conflict. Ms. Ahmad reiterated UN-Habitat's commitment to continue working with community members, the Government counterparts as well as other international actors to promote recovery, resilience and reconstruction in Mosul as well as in Iraq.



A group of women showcased their handmade products in the Livelihood Bazaar at the University of Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 4 December 2018 - Aiming to support women's initiatives for social cohesion and economic growth in Kirkuk, IOM Iraq's Social Cohesion team trained a group of female participants from different backgrounds, including IDPs and host community members, in a two-month livelihood training course on knitting and handmade decoration art.

"I feel so happy when I see people buying the products that we have made from almost useless things," said Rawan, a 16-year-old participant.

This activity was funded by the Government of the Netherlands.



Induction sessions on legislative and oversight role for newly elected parliamentarians

Sulaymaniyah, 9 December 2018 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continues to support institutional reform and good governance in Iraq in line with government priorities and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on building Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. In this context, UNDP organized a series of induction sessions in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, during November 2018 for new parliamentarians. The first phase of the induction programme included intensive three-day workshop for 50 MPs divided into two groups in cooperation with the office of the First Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives and the Parliamentary Directorate.

Throughout the training sessions, Members of Parliament received practical guidance on parliamentary work and attend presentations and seminars on legislative and oversight processes, human rights, gender equality, SDGs and media relations. The MPs have an opportunity to meet members of Parliament Staff who have participated in the



design of the programme and deliver part of the sessions. The results of the workshop was quite positive as the participated MPs responded with highly encouraging feedback. Also it was shown in their active participation and comments. At the conclusion, there was a strong request to be engaged in following workshops to strengthen their capacities to perform their functions more proactively.

The First Deputy Speaker of the Council

of Representatives in his opening speech thanked UNDP on the implementation of the induction programme and emphasized that Iraqi Council of Representatives is seeking to establish the Iraqi Parliamentary Institute that will be the main entity for development inside the parliament.

At his opening remarks, Mr. Gerardo Noto – UNDP Country Director -, emphasized the commitment of UNDP to support the Iraqi Parliament and strengthen the institutional capacities of the Council of Representatives. He underlined the key role of Parliamentarians to strengthen citizen participation, transparency and building a peaceful society after years of violent conflict. He made clear remarks on the role of Parliament to advance and monitor the Development Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

This workshop for MPs is part of a four-phase induction programme which informs Members of Parliament about their legislative, and oversight role and their constitutional responsibilities. The rest of three phases are planned to be conducted on December of this year and January 2019.



Germany substantially increases support to stabilization in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 December 2018 – The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has contributed an additional EUR 22 million to the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which finances fast-track initiatives in areas of Iraq liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This brings the Ministry's contribution to EUR 80.2 million and the total support from the Government of Germany to EUR 209.9 million.

Acting UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Mr. Gerardo Noto, said: "Enormous progress continues to be made across the liberated areas of Iraq, with seventy percent of those who were displaced during the conflict now returned home. UNDP deeply appreciates the timely funding provided by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and while there remains a great deal of work to do, this generous contribution will help re-establish public services and rebuild social cohesion in the most vulnerable areas."

The German Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Dr. Cyrill Nunn, said: "Germany continues to support Iraq's stabilization efforts to shore up the progress made to date. As we look to the new Government to step forward to take increasing ownership of stabilisation and more

long term development efforts, we will remain a committed partner for the people of Iraq and a strong supporter of the efforts of the United Nations."

In addition to its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany also contributes to FFS through its Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development implemented by KfW, the German development bank.

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the FFS in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism. The Facility has a portfolio of over 3,000 projects –

half of which are already completed – in the provinces of Ninewah, Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk.

The FFS repairs essential public infrastructure such as electricity, water and sewage system grids. It rebuilds schools, health centres and homes, and provides people with short-term employment through public works schemes in areas directly impacted by ISIL. This investment in critical services sets the stage for recovery and resilience work, as well as longer-term reconstruction and development activities. Over 95 percent of all stabilization projects are carried out by local private sector companies, providing a key source of employment for local people.

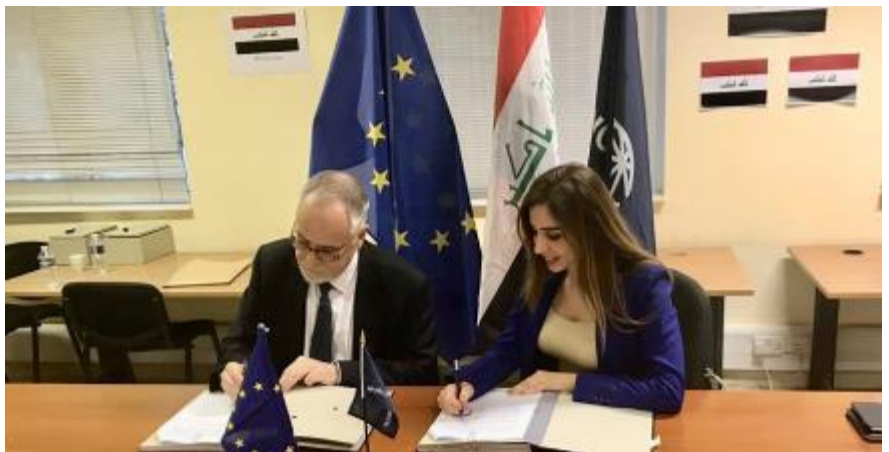


European Union and World Bank support Iraq's energy sector reforms

Baghdad, 10 December 2018 – In the framework of the financing agreement signed yesterday by the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the European Union (EU) committing €14 million (US\$15.8 equivalent) to support the government's efforts to ensure increased and more reliable energy access for the Iraqi population, the EU and the World Bank Group (WBG) have signed today a €12.85 million (US\$14.5 equivalent) implementation agreement to provide the needed technical assistance.

The initiative complements the ongoing and upcoming World Bank interventions in support of the GoI's energy sector reforms, including those embedded in the budget support operations series (Development Policy Financing programs – DPFs), the Reimbursable Advisory Services (RAS) for structuring the Gas Value Chain and Gas Marketing in Iraq, and the support to subsidy reforms funded by the ESMAP's Energy Subsidy Reform Technical Assistance Facility (ESRAF).

Supporting Iraq's private sector enabling energy sector reforms is a priority development objective in the country



both for the EU and the WBG. In a country where the energy sector accounts for more than 90% of central government revenues, addressing energy sector challenges is an essential and complementary action to any public finances related reforms, an area in which the European Union and the World Bank are also partnering in Iraq[1]. The country is also the world's 3rd largest exporter of oil and its untapped natural gas reserves are the 12th

largest in the world, yet it is forced to import fuel to meet its domestic energy demand, which imposes significant economic and fiscal strain on public finances. Equally important, Iraqi citizens are regularly faced with power shortages and have to resort to more expensive and pollutant sources of energy.

Efficiency in the management of public resources and delivery of services are critical to the achievement of public policy objectives, especially for a re-

EU and World Bank support Iraq's energy sector reforms *(continued)*

source-rich upper-middle income country like Iraq, as well as fundamental to restore the trust and social contract between Iraqi citizen's and the country's institutions, especially in a post-conflict era of stabilisation and reconstruction.

"As pledged in the Kuwait Conference, the European Union is committed to help Iraq's reconstruction efforts and economic and political reforms to secure a better future for its citizens," said Pierre Amilhat, European Commission's Director for Asia, Central Asia, Middle East/Gulf and Pacific. "Our partnership with the World Bank in Iraq has been very productive in support of government reforms to improve public finances and public service delivery. The focus of

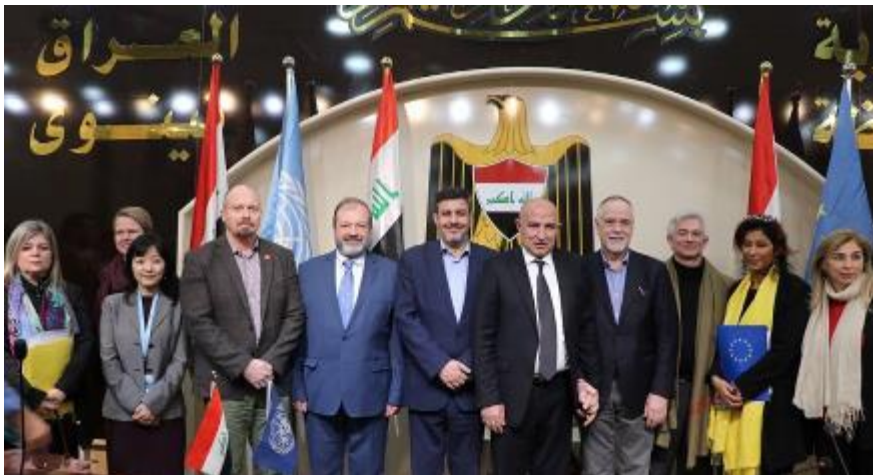
the project we are signing today will be on increasing efficiency and fiscal sustainability of the electricity sector, reducing gas flaring, and improving the sector specific environment for private sector participation and investment".

"The World Bank is working closely with the government of Iraq and development partners on recovery and reconstruction to help provide a stable, sustainable future for Iraqi people, and the energy sector is a critical component of these efforts.," said Saroj Kumar Jha, World Bank Mashreq Regional Director. "Addressing energy sector challenges is at the heart of efforts to improve the management of precious public funds, and to deliver reliable energy services,

which will benefit families as well as businesses and industries across Iraq."

This action addresses some of the key challenges facing Iraq's energy sector, namely reduced electricity sector efficiency and fiscal sustainability, excessive gas flaring, reduced domestic gas allocations for power generation and use of expensive imported fuels and, most importantly, virtual absence of private sector participation and investments in the sector, by supporting GoI's efforts to enhance availability and affordability of energy in a sustainable and environmentally respectful manner through diagnostic studies, assessments and advisory services.

European Union signs contracts of 57.5 Million Euros with UN to support Mosul recovery, promises additional 20 Million Euros next month



Baghdad, 12 December 2018 – A delegation from the United Nations in Iraq and the European Union Mission to Iraq yesterday toured a number of EU-funded and UN implemented projects in Mosul, seeing first-hand the clearance, stabilization, rehabilitation and development work undertaken in the northern Iraqi city more than a year after its liberation from Da'esh. Illustrating the joint efforts in post-Da'esh Iraq, the EU signed a contract with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) worth 47.5 million euros, another with UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) totaling 10 million euros, and announced 20 million euros in additional support for UNESCO as well as a further 15 million support for FAO, to be signed in January 2019.

The conflict with Da'esh has destroyed many areas of Mosul and Ninewa Governorate, and displaced a large number of the population. Since the military defeat of Da'esh a year ago, many people have returned, encouraged by the efforts to ensure a secure and safe environment. Some areas still lack basic services, and

the UN, in support of the Iraqi authorities, are working to ensure a decent living for the people to facilitate the dignified return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

The delegation called on the Governor of Ninewa, Nawfal Al-Agoub, after which a signing ceremony was held.

EU Director for Development Cooperation for Asia, Central Asia, Middle East/Gulf and the Pacific Region, Pierre Amilhat, said: "The Iraqi people have suffered enough, and the country is on the cusp of entering into a renewed phase of state-building. Today exemplifies the strong commitment the EU along with its UN partners have in shouldering Iraq in this critical phase. With the territorial defeat of Da'esh, all of us together have a window of opportunity to build an inclusive and accountable country and restore the trust between the people and their Government. This multi-pronged initiative will join the dots between the various reconstruction components, and significantly contribute to the betterment of the Iraqi

people".

UNDP Resident Representative a.i. for Iraq, Gerardo Noto, said: "We are grateful to EU for our excellent partnership. We jointly help people of Iraq so that no one is left behind as all UN Members Countries committed in the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is yet another practical example of support to the authorities and citizens of Iraq in regaining the trust of the local communities and rebuilding the state institutions towards a new social contract to sustaining peace and sustainable development".

Earlier, the EU-UN delegation visited the Old City, site of some of the worst fighting – and destruction. They inspected the reconstruction work at the Al-Nuri Mosque, a symbol of Mosul's history and culture that Da'esh deliberately destroyed its landmark leaning minaret before their retreat from the city. The work is part of ongoing projects to repair heritage sites by UNESCO throughout Mosul Old City's funded by the EU.

UNESCO has launched "Revive the Spirit of Mosul", an initiative that has the support of the Government of Iraq and in line with the Initial Planning Framework for Reconstruction of Mosul, which was jointly developed by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and UNESCO in collaboration with the Governorate of Ninewa, to rehabilitate Mosul's rich and diverse cultural heritage. Restoring the identities within the communities of Mosul and other liberated areas of Iraq contributes to reconciliation and promotes more just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

"UNESCO is very grateful to the EU for its contribution to the reconstruction and restoration of the Old City of Mosul,

EU signs contracts of 57.5 Million Euros with UN ... (continued)

in the context of the UNESCO 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul Initiative'. This support contributes to the physical reconstruction of one of Iraq's most emblematic historical cities, which has been severely damaged and destroyed. It also benefits directly the local community - by providing skills and jobs to thousands of young people" stated Louise Haxthausen, Head of UNESCO in Iraq. "We are particularly pleased that part of this contribution is dedicated to the urban rehabilitation of the old city of Basra, another highly significant historical city of Iraq," added Louise Haxthausen.

UN-Habitat and UNDP are also working together in Mosul to rehabilitate damaged houses, repair secondary infrastructure, retrofit public facilities such as schools to promote the environmental responsiveness of buildings, and involve youth in redesign of public open spaces. Yuko Otsuki, Head of UN-Habitat in Iraq, expressed gratitude for the EU support "to continue improving the living conditions of Iraqi population through urban recovery investments and

job and income generating opportunities in conflict-affected areas."

The delegation toured Mosul University, once a major centre of learning in Iraq that Da'esh turned into a command post and weapons cache. Mosul University, Iraq's second largest university, has suffered major damage, and it is estimated that rehabilitation work would require 350-500 million dollars. The university was cleared of explosive hazards, included Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

The work of UNMAS lies at the core of the stabilization and rehabilitation work. Mindful that no stabilization work and return of IDPs can be sustainable without ensuring a safe environment, the EU signed a contract granting UNMAS 10 million euros to continue the clearance of contaminated hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, religious sites and neighborhoods.

"We are very grateful for the support provided by the international community and more specifically by the EU. With this contribution, UNMAS Iraq will be

expanding the clearance capacity in Mosul and also deploy capacity in Sinjar," said Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager.

The group also visited the Ninewa Directorate of Agriculture where they were briefed about a project supported by the EU and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to support recovery of agricultural livelihoods by revitalizing of food production, value chains and income generation in Ninewa. "I am so pleased to see the EU has agreed to help us rehabilitate key facilities and equipment of the Directorate as well as rebuilding livelihoods for so many small-holder farmers. Creating jobs in this heart land of agriculture is really key to community stabilization," said Dr Fadel El-Zubi, FAO Country Representative in Iraq.

The EU has contributed a total of 184.4 million euros since 2016 to support stabilization and humanitarian efforts undertaken by the UN in support of the Government of Iraq.

Iraq after ISIL: repairing homes, rebuilding communities

Mosul, 12 December 2018 - During the battle to liberate Iraq from ISIL, millions of people fled their homes. When they returned, many found their homes damaged or destroyed. UNDP is working to repair thousands of homes across Iraq and breathe life back into the neighbourhoods that need it most.

Youssef Shwbail, 59, says outside his damaged home in the Myasa neighbourhood of Mosul's Old City: "We had lost hope. With UNDP arriving, hope has started to return"

Youssef knew the Iraqi security forces were close. On the other side of the Tigris, East Mosul had already been liberated from ISIL control. Meanwhile, ISIL had forbidden residents of West Mosul to leave their homes, leaving Youssef and his family trapped as the battle for the city raged all around them.

After hearing that the Iraqi security forces had finally retaken his neighbourhood of the Old City, Youssef decided to make a run for it. With nothing but the clothes on his back, he took his wife and four young children and moved quietly through the streets in search of safety.

Luck was not on their side. They were soon spotted by ISIL members, who fired a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) straight at them as they attempted to flee to safety. Youssef's wife was killed instantly and he and his children were left severely injured. As further punishment, ISIL went to their home, firing RPGs into their home and setting it alight.



Unable to work, grieving and now homeless, Youssef and his children stayed with relatives and travelled to the nearby city of Erbil to get medical treatment for their injuries. His son lost his leg in the attack and Youssef was injured badly by shrapnel. When he heard that UNDP was beginning a project to repair homes in his neighborhood he didn't quite believe it.

"What I want more than anything is for my children to grow up and get an education"

Just down the street from Youssef, Entesar is a thirty-two-year-old mother of three, whose family has endured their own difficulties. She, too, stayed put while the fighting continued, until her home was directly hit by a mortar strike, causing the basement to collapse. At this point she moved her family to the home of her relatives, where they have been living in one room together since. Her husband has major health issues and is unable to work and provide for the family, forcing them to rely on

their extended families for support. Their eighty-year-old house is being repaired by UNDP, allowing them to return home to the Myasa neighbourhood of the Old City.

UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) is working to repair homes in neighbourhoods across Iraq that were under ISIL control. Across Anbar and Ninewa, UNDP has already completed the rehabilitation of almost 15,000 homes. Meanwhile, in Mosul, a project has begun that will ultimately rehabilitate 10,000 homes in the western side of the city.

The primary aim of UNDP housing repair is to encourage families to return home by improving housing quality, safety, and dignity of returnee families. UNDP focuses on areas where the most vulnerable people live, where damage levels are highest, and where few other partners are working. Houses with up to a moderate level of damage are chosen for rehabilitation; houses that are fully destroyed come under the responsibility of the Government.

Working on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood basis, UNDP aims to include the community in all aspects of project decision-making. In Mosul, neighbourhoods are selected in collaboration with the Mayor's office. Home owners and community leaders — known as mukhtars— are also involved in the process. Together, they are working together to breathe life back into the neighbourhoods that need it most.

DSRSG/HC/RC Marta Ruedas and the Global Coalition Team assess stabilization projects in Mosul

Mosul, 13 December 2018 - UN Deputy Special Representative/Humanitarian Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, together with Major General Christopher Ghika, Deputy Commander for Safety and Support of the Global Coalition Forces, recently made an assessment visit to cash-for-work sites, housing projects and a water treatment plant in Mosul.



Representatives from the Austrian Development Agency recently joined UNDP Iraq to visit University of Duhok and University of Mosul



Mosul, 16 December 2018 - Representatives from the Austrian Development Agency recently joined UNDP Iraq to visit University of Duhok - UoD and University of Mosul. In 2017/18 these universities participated in the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) Peace Education project, designed to strengthen social networks, civic engagement and social cohesion in Duhok and Nineveh governorates.

Academics received training in conflict assessment, mediation and reconciliation with New York University, before passing their new skills onto students – who then developed community initiatives including community libraries and peace gardens in their home villages.

Iraq faces a large-scale humanitarian crisis. Alarming development gaps and security risks affect more than 10 million people, of which more than 3.3 million have fled their homes in the

central and northern regions, in addition to 250,000 Syrians seeking refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Furthermore, in anticipation of more cities being liberated, including Mosul, it is expected that massive new displacement of people will occur in the imminent future.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) leads the early recovery and resilience agenda in Iraq by supporting employment and income generation through local NGO partners. In addition, UNDP supports central and local authorities in leading the crisis response and in the rehabilitation of basic social infrastructure, particularly in those areas where the return of displaced people is possible. Finally, UNDP seeks to pre-empt gross human rights violations, reduce risks of gender based violence, and foster social cohesion amongst diverse communities in developing tools to mediate and resolve conflicts.

The Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) for 2014-2018 is a critical contribution to this and focuses on areas that are not (or so far not sufficiently) covered by other humanitarian clusters or agencies. UNDP thereby strongly complements the primarily life-saving and shorter term activities carried out by other humanitarian partners through this multi-sectoral, integrated programme strategy that has sustainability and resilience-building at its core. Activities are implemented in close collaboration with local counterparts, as a critical basis for ownership and to contribute to longer term resilience of communities. The ICRRP covers the following key thematic areas: 1) Coordination; 2) Basic services and accountability; 3) Livelihoods recovery; 4) Protection; and, 5) Social cohesion. Using a gender mainstreaming approach, the programme aims to address the practical and strategic needs of the affected women.



Launching training workshop on modern waste disposal systems

Baghdad, 18 December 2018 –With support from the people and the Government of Japan, the United Nations Office for Projects Services (UNOPS) successfully launched the first day of training workshop on modern waste disposal systems, which is one of the components of the “Improving Living Conditions in the Newly Liberated Areas through Renewable Energy and Emergency Waste Disposal” project funded by Japan.

The training workshop aimed at sharing knowledge, skills, and best practices regarding the use of modern waste disposal systems. In addition, the workshop focused on developing the capacity of the Waste Management Officers who deal with disposal and utilization of debris, waste sorting and recycling, and production of electric power from solid municipal waste in line with new trend towards renewable energy and modern waste disposal systems in the developed countries. The participants included members of the High Committee of Waste Management in Iraq, and from the governorates of Anbar, Ninewa, and Diyala.

Mr. Akira Endo, Deputy Chief of Mission, the Embassy of Japan in Iraq said, “I would like to express my sin-

cere appreciation to UNOPS for organizing the workshop as part of the project funded by Japan. I am expecting that the participants would acquire knowledge, skills and best practices on modern disposal systems to be applied in the liberated area.” Mr. Endo also emphasized the importance of Japan’s assistance to Iraq in its humanitarian and stabilization efforts to relieve their sufferings for their better future.

UNOPS Programme Advisor, Ms. Huda Al-Ani highlighted, “The concept of

solid waste disposal has several critical dimensions particularly those related to the health and environmental impacts on local communities. Finding solutions to these issues have important global implications and directly contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals.”

In partnership with the Government of Japan, UNOPS has been supporting humanitarian response to the Iraq crisis since 2015, with projects in the Kurdistan Region and liberated areas.



UNDP signs Memorandum of Understanding with the Iraqi Council of Representatives

Baghdad, 20 December 2018 – The United Nations Development Programme UNDP has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Iraqi Council of Representatives to provide a framework of cooperation and strengthen the Parliament capacities to perform its legislative, overseeing and representational functions and become more responsive to the citizens. The MOU includes collaboration to establish the Iraqi Parliamentary Institute and provide technical support to capacity development, promote transparency, citizen and women participation and monitoring SDGs.

The First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives Mr. Hassan Al Ka’abi said at the signing ceremony: “The establishment of the Iraqi Parliamentary Institute is considered as a first stage for future collaboration that may include working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, empowering Iraqi women, and supporting youth, signing of this MOU will open a common ground for cooperation between the Iraqi Parliament and UNDP in various levels”.

UNDP Resident Representative a.i Mr.



Gerardo Noto emphasized that “This MOU will reinforce the partnership between the CoR and UNDP to strengthen MPs capacities for a more effective and participatory Parliament to legislate and monitor policies to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. It also joints efforts for the establishment of the Iraqi Parliamentary Institute, an important strategic step

for the Iraqi Council of Representatives to enhance its performance. It is important to underline the commitment of the current CoR leadership to strengthen the Parliament as well as the renewed confidence on the partnership with UNDP, the largest global implementer of parliamentary assistance – providing support to one third of parliaments worldwide”.

Enhancing the capacities of newly elected parliamentarians

Sulaymaniyah, 24 December 2018 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) In cooperation with the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) organized three-days induction sessions on the principles of Parliamentary work.

The sessions came as part of the continues support to the institutional reform and enhanced governance in Iraq. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 35 newly elected Parliamentarians attended the three-day sessions where they went through a practical guidance about the parliamentary administration work, legislative and oversight role, constitutional and legal framework for the work of the Council of Representatives, human rights, Gender equality, SDGs and media relations. In addition to presenting international experiences in parliamentarian

development.

As part of a four-phase induction programme to inform Members of Parliament (MPs) about their legislative, and oversight role and their constitutional responsibilities, this session followed the previous workshop held in last November for 50 parliament members, in cooperation with the office of the First Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives and the Parliamentary Directorate.

The First Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Hasan Alka'bi said: "Our cooperation with UNDP is very important at this stage to enhance the capacities of the newly elected MPs, the CoR is very interested to conduct more similar sessions, especially with the current critical situation of Iraq. We have lots of laws and legislations but implementing them is our

main issue. Therefore we count on the expertise that the UNDP is offering in terms of institutional reform and parliamentarians legislative and oversight role".

Inclusive Governance Project Manager Mr. Zeyad Al Obaidi said: "This training has been tailored made by UNDP with assistance from the parliament staff from the general secretary, it is an opportunity for the Iraqi MPs to meet and interact with the parliamentary staff and international experts and discuss their constitutional role".

Gender session led by UNDP Gender advisor Ms. Sundus Abbas was an opportunity to open a discussion on the decision of merging the Women Parliamentary Committee with the Human Rights Committee, and how this will reflect a negative message to the international community. The First Deputy Speaker Mr. Alka'bi expressed that this decision requires further consultation with the relevant MPs.

The workshop concluded with positive feedback from the participant MPs. It was recommended to conduct additional intensive sessions to strengthen the MPs capacities and perform their functions more proactively.

Launched in late 2017, The Inclusive Governance Project focuses on democratic governance that plays a key-role in the development of Iraq's inclusive politics. It aims to foster Inclusive Politics through strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of Iraq's parliamentary institutions in promoting participation in political processes, state-building and the Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs.



Training for students on conflict transformation and prevention of violent extremism hosted by UNDP and Iraqi Alamal Association

Baghdad, 23 December 2018 - Many like 22 years old Ahmed, believe that young people from across Iraq - just like themselves - have the ability to build and support peaceful communities.

UNDP Iraq's ICRRP and partner Iraqi Alamal Association are currently hosting training sessions for students from Kirkuk, Najaf, Baghdad, Anbar, Tikrit, Nineveh, Basra, Karbala, Nasriya and Diwanya provinces, on conflict transformation and prevention of violent extremism. With our support, we hope that building these skills will enable them to host their own community initiatives.

"We have a big job, but we are very young and we can change things – we can learn and we can make peace!"



IOM Iraq organized a five-day training of trainers in Baghdad

Baghdad, 04 November 2018 - In the framework of the project "Strengthening Community Policing" funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, IOM Iraq organized a five-day training of trainers in Baghdad.

"This course was very useful and we learned practical skills that as judges and investigators, we need in the field. This training aimed at building capacities through information and experience exchanges between civil society organizations, community police officers, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior. During the sessions, simulations on how to improve communication between the parties concerned and the Ministry of the Interior and the rest of the Ministries on the topics of human trafficking were carried out," said Judge Mowaffaq Sami Abbas, one of the participants in the counter trafficking workshop.

"We needed such workshop to build the capacity of our members and to learn what skills and tools we could apply in the field. We were provided with much



information, and I had the opportunity to meet other participants and exchange ideas about how to counter trafficking in human beings, and discuss the laws and investigation techniques. We hope to hold more workshops like this one," said Brigadier Ali Abdul Razzaq, director of human trafficking De-

partment.

This TOT aimed at creating a common understanding among law enforcement officers and communities on the issue of trafficking in persons in Iraq in order to strengthen their capacities to prevent and combat this crime in the framework of community policing.

UNDP and Germany support the reform process on the conduct of criminal investigations in Iraq

Baghdad, 7 November 2018 - On 7 November 2018 the German Ambassador to Iraq, Dr Cyrill Nunn received in the German Embassy UNDP-Iraq Country Office representatives and Iraqi representatives of the Higher Judicial Council, the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of the National Security Advisor to discuss the state of reform of criminal investigations in Iraq. The Iraqi representatives had returned from a study trip to Berlin to observe on site and discuss with German practitioners how criminal investigations are conducted in Germany.

The Iraqi officials are members of the Criminal Justice Working Group who have been working for over a year on reviewing how criminal investigations are conducted by the police in Iraq. To streamline the conduct of criminal investigations and to make them more effective and reliable, the Iraqi working group produced a draft on Standard Operating Procedures for Criminal Investigations.

In Berlin the Iraqi delegation held discussions with German criminal justice experts of the Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, police agents of the Federal Investigation Agency, prosecutors of the Berlin Prosecutor General's Office, the station commander of

a Berlin district police station, senior Berlin state police detectives and administrators of the detention on remand facility in Berlin-Moabit.

Ambassador Dr Cyrill Nunn expressed his hope that the visit to Berlin to review German investigation procedures have provided the Iraqi criminal justice working group "with ideas and the right stimulus to identify appropriate mechanisms to advance the criminal investigative process in Iraq."

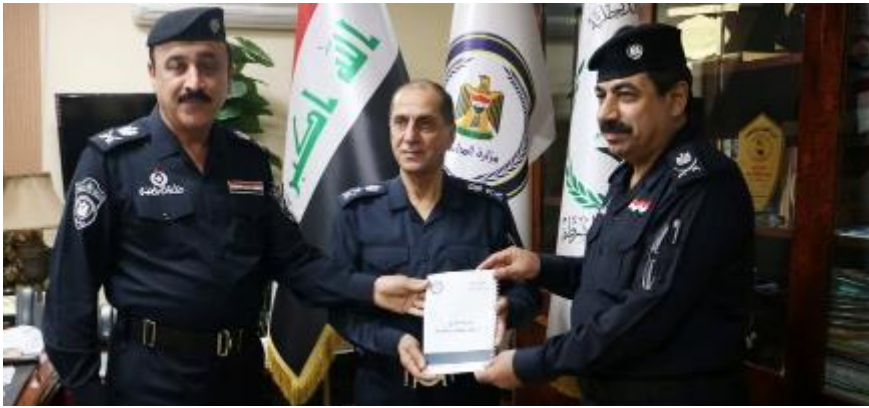
Acting UNDP-Iraq Country Director Gerardo Noto added that "UNDP will continue facilitating the working group

meetings for the finalization of the procedural guidelines so that they could be adopted by the Government of Iraq, as well as supporting their implementation to strengthen the criminal justice system in Iraq."

The development and implementation of unified Standard Operating Procedures for Criminal Investigations is an identified key priority within the Government of Iraq's ongoing Security Sector Reform Programme under the system priority Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement that is supported by UNDP and International Partners.



Ministry of Interior officially inaugurates the Local Police Service Road Map



Baghdad, 12 November 2018 – Today, Lt. Gen. Moafaq Abdulhadi Tawfik, Deputy Minister for Police Affairs Agency officially inaugurated the Local Police Service Road Map of Iraq at the Ministry of Interior, in a ceremony held in the Agency headquarters in Baghdad.

The overall objectives of the Road Map are firstly to put in place transition security arrangements from Iraqi Security Forces to Local Police in post - ISIL Iraq and, to develop a framework with specific emphasis on maintaining trust between Iraqi Local Police Service and the public, as well as to foster collaborative partnerships between the police and other agencies of the Criminal Justice System.

The Local Police Service Road Map therefore, provides a strategy to transi-

tion the country from a military oriented focus on security to one of civil security authority in local security matters and, it prioritizes the following Police Core -Functions: 1) Security and Protection Management, 2) Crime Management, 3) Traffic Enforcement Management, 4) Improving Effectiveness of Local Police Service (IELP), and 5) Community Policing. Furthermore, the Road Map also highlights six crosscutting supporting functions: a) Finance, b) Human Resources (HR), c) Training, d) Equipment, e) Infrastructure and f) Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Ministry of Interior appointed Committee of senior officials with strategic advice and assistance from UNDP Iraq developed the Road Map.

Lt. Gen. Moafaq Abdulhadi Tawfik,

Deputy Minister for Police Affairs Agency said "I extend my sincere gratitude and thanks to the Road Map Committee for their exceptional work in developing this important document that will guide the Local Police Service in Post- ISIL Iraq. The Road Map is timely and it complements directly to the New Government Programme's vision to transition of internal security to Local Police. On behalf of the Police Affairs Agency and the Ministry of Interior I also extend my sincere thanks to UNDP for its advice and assistance in this important work."

UNDP Acting Country Director Gerardo Noto added "improving Local Police Service is an identified key priority within the Government of Iraq's ongoing Security Sector Reform Programme under the system priority Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement that is supported by UNDP and International Partners. Therefore the successful implementation of the Local Police Service Road Map will be a critical milestone in restoring public security services, rule of law and sustainable peace in Iraq. UNDP will continue to facilitate advice and assistance to the Police Affairs Agency and Ministry of Interior in this critical work in the coming months." UNDP is grateful to Germany for its generous funding to carry out this important work in Iraq.

UNDP and Denmark support mid-level Police Management training in Iraq for citizen service-oriented policing

Baghdad, 13 November 2018 - On 11 November 2018 UNDP and Danish National Police started the first of a series of Mid-Level Police Management Training Courses for the Local Police in Iraq. The courses are developed and delivered in close collaboration with the Ministry of Interior's Training and Qualification Directorate. Each course duration is three weeks and, a total of 300 police officers from liberated and, other provinces in Iraq are expected to benefit from the training. The key objectives of the course are to:

advance the implementation of the Local Police Road Map and, its reform priorities through leadership development at both national and provincial levels.

motivate police mid-level leadership to lead Iraqi police transformation from a fighting force to a public security service in post - ISIL Iraq with modern managerial techniques and, skills in line with national and international standards.

The Danish Ambassador Gert Meinecke expressed, that he hopes "the training courses will contribute to successful transformation of the Local Police Service Road Map into tangible action on the ground".

Wishing all participants a successful course the Danish National Police Commissioner, Jens Henrik Hoejbjerg said "Danish police have a lot to offer internationally. Therefore, I am pleased that Danish police officers will be responsible for the training of mid-level police managers for the Iraqi police. I have no doubt that we can contribute to the fact that both the Iraqi police and the Iraqi communities continue to move forward and develop".

UNDP Acting Country Director Gerardo Noto added "improving Local Police Service is an identified key priority within the Government of Iraq's ongoing Security Sector Reform Programme under the system priority Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement that is supporting by UNDP and International

Partners. Therefore, leadership development is a key precursor in the overall implementation of the Government's Security Sector Programme as a fundamental pillar for rule of law and building sustainable peaceful societies".

UNDP is grateful to Denmark for its generous funding and, for the highly experienced police trainers to conduct the Mid - Level Management Courses to Iraqi Police.



Germany enhances support for Community Policing in Iraq

Baghdad, 11 December 2018 - This week the German Federal Foreign Office bolstered IOM's Community Policing (CP) programme in Iraq by providing an additional 1.7 million Euros, raising Germany's total contributions to this important effort to 5.7 million Euros.

IOM's CP programme aims to contribute to enhanced security and stability in Iraq, by facilitating dialogue between communities and law enforcement actors, through Community Policing Forums (CPF) in communities affected by conflict and displacement.

In the last three years 101 Community Policing Forums (CPF) have been established across Iraq with the support of IOM. CPFs aim to resolve a variety of security concerns at the community level, including those related to housing, land and property (HLP) disputes, access to water and electricity, civil unrest, documentation for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, child protection, human trafficking, sexual harassment and domestic violence.

The German Ambassador to Iraq, Dr. Cyrill Nunn, said, "Community Policing is an important strategy to bring together socially fragmented communities in Iraq to peacefully resolve security related problems. Germany supports Community Policing to build and

strengthen mutual trust between citizens and law enforcement agencies, contributing to safe and stable communities - the building blocks of a stable Iraq."

CPFs are facilitated by a CP officer from the local police department and by elected community members. IOM guides CPFs in the development of community safety plans which identify the most critical security and safety issues that can be addressed and tackled by the community and the police.

Gerard Waite, IOM Chief of Mission in Iraq commented, "Issues are resolved mainly through identifying the correct entity to refer to, either law enforcement, public institutions, civil society organizations, or the community themselves."

"The success of these forums can be

seen through a variety of indicators, such as a decrease in crime, an increase in the level of cooperation from the community in solving security problems, and less use of force by police towards members of the community," Waite adds.

Brigadier Khalid Falah Kadhim, head of Iraq CP Directorate within the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Interior, testifies to the positive impact the CP model has had on local police structures at the community level: "The logistical and technical support provided by IOM to rebuild infrastructure and strengthen the capacity of community policing has played a fundamental role in peace building in communities, and we are thankful to the Government of Germany for providing this support."



Mine Action

UNMAS and JCMC held a training course on basic humanitarian demining management for local government stakeholders in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 7 November 2018 - To fulfil its mandate of capacity enhancement for the Iraqi government, UNMAS recently collaborated with the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Center (JCMC) to hold a two-day training

course on basic humanitarian demining management for local government stakeholders in Kirkuk, Iraq.

There are 29 participants (including 5 women) representing 11 key departments, ministries, and municipalities.

The course provided attendees with basic knowledge on explosive hazard management (EHM) integration and interdepartmental coordination to capitalize on a cohesive strategy, thereby mitigating risk of explosive hazards. Session topics included basic EHM management, risk education, demining, gender in EHM, among others.

Hasan Nwree, a participant at the training, said: "I found the sessions both productive and educational. The UNMAS instructors were highly experienced, and did a splendid job in simplifying the technical aspects of explosive hazards. Basic EHM knowledge is necessary for many of us who work in the government, as we are still working to rebuild areas damaged by the ISIL legacy."

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany for its contribution to capacity enhancement initiatives and the organization of this training.



Danish delegation briefed on clearance operations in West Mosul

Mosul, 20 November 2018 - UNMAS together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recently organized a field visit to West Mosul for Mr. Jan Pirouz Poulsen, Senior Stabilization Advisor for Iraq, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Pirouz Poulsen received an extensive briefing on ongoing clearance operations at various sites, including the Gharbiya School and the Al Maedan district and was briefed on residential area clearance that will be soon conducted by UNMAS search and clearance teams. He also participated in a risk education session delivered at Al Sidiq School by UNMAS Iraq implementing partner, the Danish Demining Group (DDG).

UNMAS would like to take the opportunity to thank the Government of Denmark for its continuous support

contributing to a safe environment and protection of the affected communities in Iraq.



Denmark increases its support for explosive threat mitigation in liberated areas of Iraq

Baghdad, 14 December 2018 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of DKK 19.5 million (approximately USD 3 million) from the Government of Denmark to mitigate the threat posed by explosive hazards and enable stabilization efforts in liberated areas of Iraq. The support was announced today by visiting Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Anders Samuelsen.

“We are painfully aware that the return of internally displaced persons to some kind of normal life is not possible as long as explosive hazards threaten their life and safety. That is why UNMAS’ work remains so critical”, the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs said. [He appreciated the close cooperation between the Directorate of Mine

Action (DMA) under the Ministry of Health and Environment and UNMAS]. The presence of explosive hazards, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in areas liberated from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), will continue to impede security and stability efforts if not appropriately addressed. UNMAS Iraq is working closely with the United Nations system and the Government of Iraq to enable humanitarian and stabilization efforts. This additional contribution from the Government of Denmark brings the total Danish support for UNMAS’ work in Iraq to USD 14 million. UNMAS’ explosive hazard management activities create conditions for sustainable return of displaced people. In addition, it contributes to improving coordination, engagement and capacity en-

hancement of relevant authorities, threat impact assessments as well as clearance and risk education initiatives. This reduces the risk of explosive hazards in direct support of humanitarian and stabilization planning and delivery, while at the same time increase national capacities to manage the overall threat of newly identified explosive hazards.

“1.8 million persons are still displaced and explosive hazards is one of the main reasons and concerns cited by internally displaced persons for not going home” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager. “Denmark is a crucial partner for supporting explosive hazard management activities and enabling the safe, orderly and dignified return of displaced communities.”

The Government of Norway enables humanitarian and stabilization efforts through explosive hazards management in urban liberated areas

Baghdad, 17 December 2018 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes a contribution of NOK 15M (approximately USD 1.7 M) from the Kingdom of Norway to support explosive hazards management activities in urban liberated areas in Iraq, enabling humanitarian and stabilization efforts.

Norway has been a leader in the international movement to ban landmines since before the adoption of the Anti-

Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Oslo in 1997. This year, at the Seventeenth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Norway reaffirmed its commitment to humanitarian mine action and was elected President of the Fourth Review Conference that will take place next November in Oslo. The Fourth Review Conference will develop the new Action Plan for the period of 2019-2024 to guide the efforts of States Parties to-

wards full implementation of the Convention and achieving the ambition of a mine-free world.

“Norway is pleased to support UNMAS’ important work in Iraq. We hope our contribution will enable humanitarian and stabilization interventions in areas liberated from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The safe return of internally displaced people (IDPs) to their areas of origin is crucial. We also hope that UNMAS’ activities will

The Government of Norway enables humanitarian and stabilization through explosive hazards management ... (continued)



strengthen coordination of efforts to clear landmines and other explosive hazards,” said Tone Allers, Norwegian Ambassador to Iraq.

The contribution from Norway will also allow UNMAS to conduct assessments and surveys, carry out explosive haz-

ards management activities and deliver risk education to IDPs, host communities as well as humanitarians working in urban locations, as needed and integrated with other response activities.

Recently, UNMAS in Iraq had the honour to host the Norwegian Chargé d'affaires a.i., Mr Roar Haugsdal, and First Secretary Ms. Ane Thea Galaasen at various UNMAS sites in Mosul. The delegation received an extensive briefing about ongoing clearance activities conducted at each site, namely Al Shuhudaa Park, Danedan 2 Water Treatment Plant, Al Maedan district and Rafa'i neighborhood in West Mosul. They also attended a risk education

session targeting children aged 7 – 10 years old at the Al Sidiq School.

“UNMAS in Iraq eliminates threats along roads, under bridges, from power and water plants, from schools, from recreational parks and more so that those displaced by conflict can return to their homes and return to work, to educate their children, to contribute to society, to live a normal life again and to regain hope,” said Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq. “This contribution from the Kingdom of Norway to Iraq Programme is thus essential to create a safe environment for people to live in,” added Mr. Lodhammar.

The European Union continues to support explosive hazard management and capacity enhancement activities in liberated areas of Iraq

Baghdad, 18 December 2018 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) thanks the European Union for its continuous support to explosive hazard management and capacity enhancement activities in liberated areas of Iraq, which contributes to the safe, orderly and dignified return of displaced communities and enables humanitarian and stabilization efforts.

Across liberated areas, explosive hazard contamination prevents access for humanitarian actors and delivery of assistance to people in need; hinders safe and sustainable returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs), often resulting in secondary displacement and occupation of others' properties; impedes resumption of livelihoods and access to agricultural and grazing lands and irrigation systems; and obstructs access to community infrastructure and basic services including schools, water facilities, hospitals, electrical stations, and roads.

According to an assessment carried out in 2018, on average across affected areas, 22% of IDPs in camps cite explosive hazards as a top reason for not intending to return to their areas of origin, however this is up to 52% in some governorates; on average 12% of out-of-camp IDPs cite the same.

Through its contribution to UNMAS, the European Union continues to fund explosive hazard management (EHM) activities including surveys, assessments and clearance in liberated areas. This support from the European Union will also continue to target capacity enhancement activities at national, regional and local level through Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)/ Impro-

vised Explosive Disposal (IEDD) training to the Iraqi police as well as through the coordination and strategic engagement of relevant mine action government entities and authorities.

In line with the European Union's interest in the rehabilitation of cultural heritage sites, the project also includes provisions for collaboration with other United Nations entities such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to enable the rehabilitation of cultural heritage sites through explosive hazard management.

European Union, Head of Unit, Middle East/Gulf, Central Asia and South Asia, Raffaella Iodice said: "This highlights once again our commitment to mine action. This is more so important in the current "post-Mosul" settings, as stabilization is ongoing and whereby clearance remains a pre-condition, as the presence of such hazards will continue to impede security and stability efforts if not properly addressed. As chair of the Coalition's Explosive Hazard Management Sub-Group, the EU is determined to tackle this scourge head-on and continues to support Iraq in strengthening the government's strategic coordination mechanisms. Implementing this project is fundamental for peace, stabilization and economic recovery, and it is also a gesture to future generations. It is our responsibility to preserve and strengthen. All these efforts will contribute to facilitating the safe returns of the Iraqi people, who have suffered long enough". "The Government of Iraq just celebrated the one-year anniversary of the defeat of ISIL but roads, bridges, power and

water plants, hospitals, schools, parks and residential areas are still contaminated by explosive hazards. This threat not only prevents displaced communities to safely return home but also, severely hampers stabilization and reconstruction efforts." stated Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager. "Through explosive hazard management and capacity enhancement activities, UNMAS Iraq supports those displaced by conflict so that they can return to their homes and return to work, to educate their children, to contribute to society, to live a normal life. This would not be possible without the contributions provided by our generous donor community and notably the European Union." added Pehr Lodhammar.

UNMAS Iraq, with support from the European Union as part of a broader programme response, continues to facilitate the safe, orderly and dignified return of families to Mosul and other liberated areas. To date, clearance teams removed approximately 48,000 explosive hazards, including 2,895 IEDs, from roads, bridges, schools, universities, hospitals, clinics, water treatment plants and municipal buildings in Mosul; and 870 suicide belts, many from human remains.



Italy extends support to explosive hazard management activities in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 December 2018 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of EUR 585,000 from the Government of Italy to mitigate the threat posed by explosive hazards and enable stabilization efforts in liberated areas of Iraq.

Extensive conflict involving Iraqi Security Forces and Peshmerga on one side and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on the other has had a profound impact on human security in Iraq. The large scale, scope, and complexity of explosive hazard contamination in liberated areas is substantial, and far exceeds existing national resources to clear them.

This contribution from the Government of Italy will significantly further UNMAS explosive hazard management activities in Iraq. UNMAS, in coordination with implementing partners, has strategized a comprehensive response to mitigate the risks posed by explosive hazards through three primary areas: explosive hazard management, capacity enhancement, and risk education. This range of activities allows for a dynamic

response covering clearance, enhancement of existing government resources, and engagement with communities to ensure a unified response to explosive hazards.

The continued threat of destabilization is significantly heightened through the presence of explosive hazards, particularly in residential and rural communities. This ensures that a continued “de facto battle” exists, resulting in lives lost with no enemy in sight. The legacy of ISIL will continue to live on as long as explosive hazards are scattered in houses, neighbourhoods, and across communities, posing a threat to citizens set on rebuilding their lives post-ISIL occupation.

“Among the activities testifying the commitment of the Government of Italy to stabilization, explosive hazard management and demining are deemed crucial for both the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians, as a precondition for a safe reconstruction,” said H.E. Bruno Pasquino, Ambassador of Italy to Iraq. “Italy is supporting these activities in a wide range of countries, for sheer de-



contamination and for capacity enhancement. In Iraq, our qualified support on demining will also be devoted to the protection of cultural heritage – a trademark of our development cooperation policy.”

“The presence of explosive hazards significantly impedes the safe, sustainable, voluntary, and dignified return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin in Iraq,” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager. “Italy is a critical cooperative partner for UNMAS humanitarian and stabilization efforts to ensure the return of livelihoods and a sense of normalcy to affected communities.”

The Iraqi Ministry of Interior together with UNMAS celebrate the graduation of male and female Iraqi police officers from their explosive hazards management training courses



Baghdad, 20 December 2018 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) thanks the Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MoI) for its support in providing Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)/Improvised Explosive Device Defeat (IEDD) and Explosive Hazards First Responder (EHFR) training courses. Co-facilitated by UNMAS, these trainings are part of its overarching strategy of providing capacity enhance-

ment initiatives for the Government of Iraq, to ensure long-term sustainability and self-reliance in the management and disposal of explosive hazards in the country. The joint collaboration with the MoI trainers at the MoI training facility is essential to the success of this initiative.

Supported by the governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and Czech Republic, the MoI hosted UN-

MAS trainers to deliver the first EHFR training course offered to Iraqi female police officers from the liberated areas in Iraq, with the intention of providing additional courses for female police in the near future. In addition to providing much-needed technical and nuanced knowledge in explosive hazards management, such courses offered to female police officers ensure wider outreach to Iraq’s communities, paving the way to more “equal opportunities” for men and women.

UNMAS Iraq recently received a contribution of CZK 5 million (approximately USD 215 thousand) from the Government of Czech Republic to continue the work that has been undertaken throughout 2018 and to further strengthen gender mainstreaming in explosive hazards management activities.

“Czech Republic via its Embassy closely monitor the situation on ground and welcomes achieved results – namely trained trainers and police man and women as first responders to IED detection. Decontamination of the liberated areas is the condition of the IDP’s to return back home,” said Jan Vycital,

The Iraqi Ministry of Interior together with UNMAS celebrate the graduation of male and female Iraqi police officers... *(continued)*

Ambassador of Czech Republic in Iraq. The Federal Republic of Germany contributed EUR 4 million (approximately USD 4.5 million) to support capacity enhancement activities in 2019 such as the EOD/IEDD training that was recently conducted at Salman Pak and which comprised novice-level cross-unit male police officers hailing from the Anbar, Kirkuk, and Nineveh governorates. This training enables the participants to revert to their units as highly competent personnel in explosive hazards disposal, applying their newly-acquired skills and advanced equipment to further streamline the process. This contribution will also allow additional EHFR trainings for male and female police officers to be conducted in 2019.

Commenting on the training, the German Ambassador to Iraq, Dr. Cyrill Nunn, said: "This training showcases how international support to stabilisation efforts, including EOD clearance, contributes to building Iraqi capacity and thereby enables the Iraqi government to take greater responsibility for reconstruction efforts. It is a fine example of transition from international support to Iraqi ownership."

"Capacity enhancement is of significant importance for UNMAS in Iraq, and it is one of the main reasons why we are here. Through our support we further enable the Government of Iraq to clear critical infrastructure and private houses from explosive hazards so that displaced Iraqis can safely return home," said Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior



Programme Manager in Iraq.

Two ceremonies were organized for the 21 male and 20 female police officers who successfully graduated from the training courses. UNMAS would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany and the Czech Republic for their contributions to capacity enhancement initiatives.



Swedish delegation visited Mosul



Mosul, 20 December 2018 - UNMAS welcomed Ms. Margareta Davidson-Abdelli and Ms. Helene Kastensson,

representatives of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), during a field visit to West-

ern Mosul.

During the visit, the delegates received an extensive overview of UNMAS clearance activities in Al Maedan district, comprising the Mosul Orthodox Church and the Armenian Church, as well as surrounding areas. Ms. Davidson-Abdelli and Ms. Kastensson also attended a risk education session delivered to children aged between 8 and 10 years old before visiting Al Nuri mosque where UNMAS and UNESCO will soon start clearance operations.

The visit comes in concert with a donation of SEK 75 million (approximately \$8.3 million) from the Government of Sweden to UNMAS, for the enablement of humanitarian and stabilization support in the liberated areas. UNMAS takes the opportunity to thank the Kingdom of Sweden for their contribution to explosive hazard management in Iraq.

Coordination intricacies in Iraq - An introduction to Mine Action and beyond in Iraq

Baghdad, 20 December 2018 - Out of the 36 million people who currently live in Iraq, 11 million live in conflict-affected areas. Of those, approximately two million are estimated to still be Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). January 2018 marked a particular turning point in Iraq's internal displacement crisis. For the first time since 2014, the number of people returning to their area of origin exceeded the number who remain displaced. However, these returns are not occurring uniformly across the country and the majority of IDPs in Iraq reside outside of formal camps, presenting logistical challenges to both the Government of Iraq and the humanitarian community who are trying to help.

However, these returns are not occurring uniformly across the country and the majority of IDPs in Iraq reside outside of formal camps, presenting logistical challenges to both the Government of Iraq and the humanitarian community who are trying to help.

It is crucial to understand the barriers posed to safe, sustainable, dignified and voluntary returns of all IDPs, so that appropriate support can be provided. The main reasons cited by IDPs for not going home include security concerns, lack of livelihoods or financial means, destroyed houses, and explosive hazards.

The World Bank estimates that approximately 130,000 homes have been damaged or destroyed across all liberated areas. Such houses could contain various forms of explosive hazards, such as Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) or Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

According to an assessment carried out in 2018, on average across affected areas 22% of IDPs in camps cite explosive hazards as a top reason for not intending to return to their areas of origin, however this is up to 52% in some governorates; on average 12% of out-of-camp IDPs cite the same. Those who do choose to return, do so in potentially unsafe environments contaminated by explosive hazards. There is a shortage of qualified operators to clear private houses, so the demand far exceeds the supply.

Across liberated areas, explosive hazard contamination prevents access of humanitarian actors and delivery of assistance to people in need; hinders safe and sustainable returns of IDPs, often resulting in secondary displacement and occupation of others' properties; impedes resumption of livelihoods and access to agricultural and grazing



lands and irrigation systems; and obstructs access to community infrastructure and basic services including schools, water facilities, hospitals, electrical stations, and roads.

Humanitarian mine action follows and abides by four key principles, namely neutrality, impartiality, humanity, and independence. It does not pursue political, economic, or any other specific interest-driven agenda but seeks to provide interventions to most vulnerable populations, providing much needed support to alleviate humanitarian suffering.

In complex environments such as Iraq, humanitarian actors, and the international community, acknowledge the 'nexus' between humanitarian response and other work such as stabilization, or development. There is an intricate entwining of the work that has been done by humanitarian partners during the conflict and the work done by the Government and UN to stabilize post-conflict which results in all actors seeking support from mine action organizations, sometimes to have the same school, or the same health facility cleared of explosive hazards. Whether a school is requested to be cleared of explosive hazards by humanitarian actors or by stabilization actors, the objective is the same, to allow children to return to school.

Globally, the UN system has established a coordination mechanism to help channel humanitarian support to the most vulnerable populace. This is often referred to as the "Cluster Approach" and in an affected country, the UN establishes a "Cluster" coordination structure that encompasses the Mine

Action Area of Responsibility (MA AoR).

UNMAS is the global lead of the MA AoR, supported by the UNMAS Geneva office, and the in-country lead of the Mine Action Sub-Cluster (MASC). The UNMAS Geneva office supports Iraq mine action activities by advocating for the provision of necessary funding and resources to mine action activities in Iraq, supporting media campaigns, and providing technical support to the staff in-country in charge of navigating the "Cluster Approach". The Geneva office also supports the MASC coordinator to attend global forums and conferences in Bangkok, Amman or Geneva to engage with other country-specific MASC and identify global issues and common concerns.

In Iraq, the MASC was established under the UN Cluster System in 2016, to support the UN Humanitarian response during the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Da'esh. As such, the MASC focuses on enabling support to the most vulnerable populations in areas prioritized for humanitarian response, specifically IDPs living in camps and outside camps scattered across Iraq.

The MASC, under the umbrella of the Protection Cluster, brings together Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), UN Agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and academic institutions to help mitigate humanitarian crises. In Iraq, the members comprise six national NGOs (Baghdad Organization, Iraqi Health and Social Care Organisation [IHSCO], Maysan Organisation, Mine and UXO Impact Relief [MIR], Orchard

Remarks by SRSJ Ján Kubiš at the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence [as prepared]

Association for Children Protection and Education [OACPE], Spirit of Soccer), eight international NGOs (Dan Church Aid [DCA], Danish Deming Group [DDG], Swiss Foundation for Mine Action [FSD], HALO Trust, Handicap International [HI], Information Management and Mine Action Programs [IMMAP], Mines Advisory Group [MAG], Norwegian People's Aid [NPA]), two UN agencies (UNICEF and UNMAS), and the ICRC.

Having 17 mine action organizations in Iraq working together to support the most vulnerable people in need under humanitarian objectives requires strong coordination, with partners and the Government of Iraq.

In addition to conducting ad hoc emergency meetings when necessary, the MASC holds a monthly meeting to discuss needs, issues and challenges, solutions and advocacy strategies, and resource mobilization in order to coordinate and streamline across organizations. The MASC, with the objective to achieve targets in two primary planning documents, the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRO), uses guidelines set forth by the aforementioned documents to ensure the response is supporting the most vulnerable.

The MASC coordinator also holds an important role to represent all members of the sub-cluster, advocate on their behalf and link them to other humanitarian organizations requesting support. In order to do this better, the UNMAS MASC coordinator in Iraq has visited partners around Iraq to gain a full understanding of operational challenges and successes. In October, the MASC coordinator visited FSD, NPA, UNMAS and IHSCO operations in the Ninewa Governorate. These four organizations highlighted the challenges they are facing on the ground as well as their achievements. This initiative will continue in the next coming months and the MASC coordinator has planned to visit all the NGOs operations. This will not only allow the MASC coordinator to stay up to date but also acquire a deeper understanding in order to better represent the concerns of both national and international organizations.

Given the amount of work and large geographic coverage, the UNMAS MASC coordinator is supported by a newly identified Arabic-speaking co-coordinator from NPA, who will be based in Baghdad and focus specifically on helping national NGOs access coordi-

ination mechanisms, when language is frequently a barrier.

UNMAS has provided a presentation on gender mainstreaming in Mine Action in Iraq to MASC members and circulated among them the UN gender guidelines for programmes in Mine Action in English and Arabic. This initiative was completed by sharing a training toolkit on gender and diversity in Mine Action, and technical assistance on the same topic delivered to all UNMAS implementing partners that are also MASC members.

Protection remains the overarching humanitarian priority for 2019. The importance of a safe, voluntary, and dignified return of displaced people cannot be understated if Iraq is to thrive post Da'esh.

Displaced people within in-camp and out-of-camp settings continue to depend on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. Given the high number of in-camp and out-of-camp IDPs, along with the risk of secondary displacement and potential on-going conflicts, there is a need for the provision of targeted and customized risk education (RE) to vulnerable populations, alongside the aid workers who support them. MASC organizations prioritize the provision of RE to in-camp and out of camp IDPs; in addition, UNMAS delivers awareness sessions to humanitarian actors working in areas contaminated by explosive hazards. In 2018, over 250 humanitarian actors across UN Agencies and NGOs have participated in the sessions.

Camp closure and consolidation is of particular concern to the MASC members, especially given the extent of explosive hazard contamination. Furthermore, out-of-camp IDPs are also vulnerable to being moved. In addition to the camps, these informal settlements are important, since they host a large number of IDPs. The MASC coordinator has been informed of incidents where IDPs returned and were injured by explosive hazards. Moving forward, the MASC and the Shelter Cluster will increase coordination in this regard and will work to identify the camps and informal settlements that need to receive urgent RE.

A need for collaboration with UN Habitat has also been identified. Among IDPs surveyed across Iraq, around 41% of out-of-camp IDPs and around 35% of in-camp IDPs cited housing, land and property (HLP) issues as a primary reason for not returning to their areas of origin. This includes damage and

destruction, secondary occupation, and lack of proof of ownership. Because damaged houses are likely to be contaminated by explosive hazards, the MASC led by UNMAS and the HLP sub-cluster led by UN Habitat have started to work closely together. This collaboration will be strengthened in the near future with the commencement of residential area clearance. On a global level, the MA AoR and HLP AoR under the lead of the Protection Cluster are currently working together on developing the HLP-MA guidelines pertaining to conflict damaged or destroyed houses and residential clearance.

Victim Assistance for survivors of explosive hazard accidents and their family members is one of the five pillars of Mine Action, and is also an underfunded sector in Iraq. In 2013, Iraq introduced the Law of the Care for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs, which replaces all existing disability legislation in Iraq. Although the document is robust, it contains no specific reference to survivors of explosive hazard accidents or those who have suffered a disability as result of the conflict.

The MASC alongside the Protection Cluster in Iraq work together to support the most vulnerable people in need as defined per their humanitarian objectives. Such complex support necessitates a strong coordination effort between the MASC members and their stakeholders. It is crucial to ensure that such efforts generate a response plan that accounts for all components to fulfill the predetermined objectives, including resource allocation and management, funding, and personnel support.

The MASC is dedicated to work alongside its partners to ensure that its mandate of ensuring the voluntary, safe, sustainable and dignified return of all IDPs is fulfilled in Iraq. The MASC is also committed to integrate gender aspects in Mine Action operations in Iraq.

In 2019, the MASC, in collaboration with other Protection cluster actors, will focus on supporting community-based protection responses, including: dissemination of information essential for IDPs to make informed decisions on returns and other durable solutions, including "Know Before You Go" and HLP messaging, as well as pre-departure explosive hazard RE and provision of RE in the areas of origin.

The Ministry intensifies response to gastroenteritis outbreak amidst water crisis in Basra

Baghdad, 25 October 2018 – On 12 August 2018, an outbreak of gastrointestinal illnesses was detected in Basra, which is believed to have resulted from widespread water supply problems. Various gastrointestinal symptoms, as abdominal pain, cramps, vomiting, and nausea, gas/bloating, diarrhea, and fever, were reported. The Ministry of Health (MOH), Directorate of Health (DOH) in Basra, and the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with other health authorities at the governorate and national level, swiftly responded by conducting investigations and implementing immediate public health control measures. To keep the public abreast of our efforts, the Ministry of Health and WHO informs the public that:

The Ministry of Health has tested more than 10,000 samples of stool specimens in its laboratories. While several microorganisms that are often associated with waterborne and foodborne diseases were

found, it is important to note that cholera has NOT been detected. Similarly, additional stool and water samples were tested at a WHO Collaborating Center, and cholera was not found. Thus the event in Basra was NOT caused by *Vibrio cholerae*. The number of cases increased over the first three weeks of the outbreak, peaking at the end of August 2018, and thereafter has declined significantly to slightly higher than normal levels by at mid-October 2018.

This decline is a result of immediate public health interventions put in place by Basra Directorate of Health with the support of MOH, WHO and other partners. These include:

- Provision of free treatment to patients who reported to the health facilities;
- Deployment of additional health workers from neighboring governorates to cope with the increased number of patients seeking treatment;

- Heightened community awareness and media campaigns on safe use and handling of water,

- Height water quality monitoring in liaison with the Basra water department;

- Provision of medical supplies to treat patients;

- Prepositioned cholera kits in Basra in preparation of any potential outbreak; and

- Trained health workers on case management and laboratory investigation.

As of 15 October 2018, the MOH reported over 104,599 cumulative cases of gastrointestinal illnesses. Of these, 10,842 offered stool for investigation.

Despite the efforts to contain this outbreak, there remains a concern that the health of the people in Basra will continue to be affected unless the water situation improves drastically and quickly.

FAO Representative in Iraq met with the Head of MOFA Department of International Organizations and Conferences

Baghdad, 08 November 2018 - Dr. Fadel El-Zubi, Representative to Iraq of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, met in Baghdad with Dr. Abdulrahman Hamid Al-Hussaini, Head of Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Organizations and Conferences Department. Discussions focused on efforts of the FAO, in collaboration with the Iraq Ministry of Health and Environment, to address the issue of fish mortality in the country and efforts to combat fur-

ther occurrence.

Photo courtesy of MOFA.



Acting WHO Representative in Iraq met with the Head of MOFA Department of International Organizations and Conferences

Baghdad, 15 November 2018 - The Head of MOFA Department of International Organizations and Conferences, Ambassador Dr. Abdulrahman Hamid Al-Husseini, met with Dr. Adham Rashad Ismail, acting World Health Organization Representative in Iraq. The two sides discussed ways of cooperation between the two organizations to provide all kinds of support to the World Health Organization. The challenges facing the health situation in Iraq were discussed after the liberation of the areas from the control of terrorist and the decline in this sector due to the security situation at the time. On his part, Acting Representative confirmed that the World Health Or-

ganization was one of the first organizations that followed up and coordinated and collected samples of dead fish and water and sent them to the international laboratory in Amman after coordination with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment as Iraq lacked such laboratories. The Acting Representative thanked the

Foreign Ministry for the support to the WHO mission in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of MOFA.



WHO and Ministry of Health investigate the massive death of fish in southern governorates of Iraq

Baghdad, 20 November 2018 --- Laboratory tests conducted on water samples in the reference lab in Amman, Jordan on the cause of death of freshwater fish in the Euphrates River in Iraq have revealed the contamination



of water with high content of coliforms, heavy metals, and high concentration of ammonia.

Health experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health and Environment in Iraq say that while these materials are toxic to fish, they pose no health threat to humans.

Testing on dead fish has revealed serious issues that warranted WHO to conduct a second investigation related to probable viral infection of fish causing the death of thousands in the river. Results of the second test are due next week.

The laboratory investigations came in

response to a request to WHO by the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment to assess the likely effects of the fish death on humans and the environment.

As early as 2 November this year, thousands of tonnes of fish have died in the Euphrates River causing significant loss to fish farms and production in the southern part of Iraq especially in Babel province, 85 kilometers south of Baghdad.

WHO continues to work with its MOH counterparts to develop appropriate preventive measures to effectively mitigate and respond to future incidents of this nature.

Keeping Hamdaniya healthy

Hamdaniya, Iraq, 27 November 2018 - Four years ago in Iraq, the biggest hospital in Hamdaniya was looted, set alight, and vandalized by ISIL. Today, it's a thriving health facility serving more than 350,000 people, including some of Iraq's ethnic minority groups.

Strolling through Hamdaniya hospital, you can't help but notice its pristine condition. Hospital equipment glistens. Murals are freshly plastered on walls. Not a speck of dust is to be seen. And nurses are aplenty—some chatting together in their break room, others hurrying through the halls to attend to their patients.

One of those nurses is 53-year-old Jindar. Originally from Qaraqosh, Jindar started working as a nurse in 1979 and has worked at Hamdaniya Hospital since the 80s. As a young girl, she dreamed of being a nurse. Her passion is helping women.

"I love working in the maternity ward, helping women bring new life into the world."

When she fled ISIL in August 2014,

Jindar didn't stop working. She helped others who had fled—undertaking checkups, administering injections, and of course, delivering babies—sometimes in makeshift delivery areas like the roadside, the backseats of cars—wherever mothers were going into labour.

"It was my duty to help them. They required the same level of medical care irrespective of the difficult circumstances they faced, and I did my best to give it to them," she says.

Ninewa is unique. It's home to Iraq's myriad minority communities such as Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Shabaks, who were persecuted, as well as the Yazidis who suffered genocide at the hands of ISIL.

Across the province, UNDP is rolling out more than 1,800 projects, with over 200 of these focused on restoring health services to local communities.

"In our consultations with the local government and communities, health was identified as a top priority in Ninewa. When ISIL ruled, communities across Hamdaniya were denied their

basic right to access reliable, quality healthcare for far too long," says Marta Ruedas, UNDP Resident Representative for Iraq.

"We're working closely with the Government of Iraq to ensure local hospitals and healthcare centres are up-and-running as soon as possible, encouraging those who have fled to return to their homes, and helping them feel confident in the services offered," she adds.

The operating theatre at Hamdaniya Hospital is never short of action. Along with the maternity ward, about 15 babies are born here every day.

"I will continue to work here until I retire. I'll never leave this hospital, I love it here and I love my job," Jindar adds.

The hospital's patients share a similar sentiment. Yazidi mother Duaa, 25, has been in and out of Hamdaniya Hospital over the past few weeks. Her newborn Fatima is 16-days old, and recently had an operation to remove an abscess in her chest. It's a daunting process for any new mother, but Duaa was confident her daughter was in good hands.

"We came here because it was recommended to us by friends for its excellent services," Duaa says.

"I feel very comfortable here, the staff are very helpful and reliable. I felt like I could call them at any time of the night and they were always friendly and happy to help. This made the entire process much easier for me," she adds.

Hamdaniya Hospital has been rehabilitated through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), with the support of USAID and the Government of France.



Walk the Talk: WHO joins the Ministry of Health and other partners in a marathon to mark National Day for Physical Activity

Baghdad, 29 November 2018 – Today, as part of celebrations to mark the National Day for Physical Activity in Iraq, WHO, the Ministry of Health and other partners held a marathon event in al-Zawra' Park in Baghdad. The marathon, which covered a distance of 2 kilometers, aimed to increase awareness of the importance of physical activity and its positive impact on health and well-being.

More than 350 people, including men and women from civil society organizations and government ministries, boys and girls of school-going age, and children with special needs and from care homes, participated in the event under the theme "Physical activity can have immediate and long-term health benefits; regular activity can improve life quality".

Health messages regarding the role that exercise can play in improving health and reducing the risk of developing diseases such as diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease were disseminated during the event.

The Iraqi National STEP survey of 2015 found that 50 per cent of adults over 18 years in Iraq do not exercise. According to a technical expert from the WHO Iraq country office, "An estimated 30% of adults in the country are obese, and about a third of the population is overweight. Obesity and overweight increase the risk of four major diseases, namely heart and arterial disease, hypertension, diabetes, and

respiratory diseases. This causes 55% of all deaths that occur annually among the Iraqi people, 22% of which occurs among people aged 30 to 70 years".

The Walk the Talk global initiative, being undertaken by WHO, partners, stakeholders and ministries of health in all countries, aligns with the recommendations made in the National Strategy for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in Iraq.



Cleaning up after ISIS: how Iraq's new chemicals team is trying to undo years of conflict pollution

Baghdad, 05 December 2018 - At the precise moment when ISIS fighters were prepping for their retreat from the Iraqi city of Ramadi in February 2016, Hassan Mohammed lay in bed struggling to breathe.

For nine months, through the jihadist occupation of his hometown, the young engineering student had huffed and wheezed from morning to night. And for nine months, Mohammed, an asthmatic, had just about sustained himself with inhalers and a self-imposed house arrest. "I couldn't go outside," he said. "Pollution had always been bad because of the factories, the farm sprays, the desert dust. The fighting made every-

thing much worse."

But now, as the occupiers set about concealing their withdrawal from circling jets, Mohammed was convinced he was going to die. First, ISIS fighters lined the streets with burning tires, and then they blew up strategic installations across the city, including a pesticides plant. As the acrid smoke and plumes of dust seeped through the window cracks into Mohammed's room, no manner of medication or precautions could keep the billowing filth at bay. "It's a terrifying feeling when your lungs don't work," he said. "I still feel it. It doesn't go away."

ISIS (also known as the Islamic State

or Da'esh) has more or less been defeated in Iraq, but throughout the areas it once occupied, the group's toxic legacy lives on. The ground is still laced with noxious chemicals, and the country's waterways are still sullied with everything from oil spills to mustard gas residue. In one of the more egregious environmental calamities, a makeshift ISIS refinery leaked an 11 km-long oil trail near Hawija. Battered already by a raft of serious pre-existing air and water quality issues, many Iraqis – farmers, respiratory disease sufferers, and all – feel their war hasn't yet ended.

If all goes according to plan, though, some help might finally be at hand. Beginning this year, the Iraqi government and UN Environment have partnered up to build a cross-ministry team capable of tackling these pollution woes head on. By enhancing the government's capabilities, this programme ought to help Iraq as it cleans up its tattered landscape. And by refining the state's control of chemicals, the team is dead set on preventing a repeat of ISIS's exploitation of pesticides and fertilizers to make bombs. "Without a wise use of chemicals, it will be difficult to move on," said Jassim Al-Falahi, Deputy Minister of Health and Envi-



Cleaning up after ISIS: how Iraq's new chemicals team is trying to undo years of conflict pollution (*continued*)

ronment. "Terrorist groups used simple chemicals to hurt my country and our people. We must do something about this." It's little exaggeration to say that Iraq's future might hinge in part on the success of this effort, officials suggest.

Iraq is among the first of seven countries selected to participate in UN Environment's Special Programme, an initiative designed to help states meet their chemicals and waste management obligations under the Basel, Rotterdam, Minamata and Stockholm conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. Chosen from more than 40 applicants, these countries will receive everything from technical know-how, to assistance with drafting hazardous waste management legislation. The hope is that once the institutional capacity is built, these partner nations will be able to stand on their own two feet. "Our idea is that this investment will kickstart the strengthening of the institutional structures, systems and its people, and then they will ensure its sustainability," said Nalini Sharma, head of Secretariat of the Special Programme. "It's seed funding and then they will take it over." This project is funded by the US, the European Union, and eight European countries (Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Finland, Austria, Denmark and Belgium).

In Iraq's case, much of the basic chemical pollution-fighting framework already exists. As a major oil producer with large chunks of farmland under cultivation, it's had more than its fair share of industrial, agricultural, and oil-field spills. The challenge now is to hone strategies and practices. The Ministry of Environment, which is taking the lead on this project, has units capable of assessing contaminated sites, but lacks the equipment and skills to fully document and cleanse them. "We've done environmental health assessments in the liberated areas, and we are starting to build a database of environment-related disasters," said Salma Abdel Fattah, head of the Ministry's Environmental Health Branch. "But the size of the area we must cover is just too big – and we're short of gear." By incorporating new methodologies on site assessment, they hope to make faster headway.

In other ministries, too, those charged with getting a grip on Iraq's chemical use say they're ill-equipped to cope with the magnitude of their responsibilities. The Ministry of Oil insists that it takes

spills seriously, but that the high volume of imported chemicals in the industry, war damage, and aging infrastructure have hobbled its efforts. "It can be difficult to keep up because the blowing up of these oil pipelines by terrorists causes huge pollution," said Mohammed Fariss, Deputy Chief Engineer of the Ministry of Oil's Department of Environmental Research. "There are also plans to increase oil production, so the challenges are enormous." From the Ministry of Electricity, which must now deal with lethal chemicals that have seeped into the ground from blown up sub-stations, to the Ministry of Industry, which is charged with rehabilitating damaged factories, at least a dozen branches of government will receive some kind of training.

None of these challenges are entirely new, of course. The Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s riddled swathes of land with chemicals that resulted from explosion of landmines, as have other conflicts and more run-of-the-mill daily leaks and accidents since then. Never before, though, had so much of the damage been inflicted by such easily-obtained, garden-variety chemicals, officials say. It's injected a new urgency into the discussion. The Ministry of Agriculture insists it has maximized efforts to control pesticide and fertilizer distribution, introducing non-toxic natural fertilizer in places and conducting aerial pesticide spraying in others. "We are making sure that when we sell pesticides to the farms, the amount is relative to the size of the land," said Ali Karim Mohammed, head of the Ministry of Agriculture's Environment Department. "We do this, so no chemicals go to waste and there's nothing extra." In the meantime, security forces are clamping down on the use of chemicals in some liberated areas, inadvertently hurting farmers in the process.

The military and police, for their part, say they've upped the monitoring of chemical imports from outside the country – and their transit within. Only six border crossings are allowed to handle chemicals, while the Prime Minister recently ordered that all chemical shipments require a license to go from one province to another. At the Bab Al-Sharqi market in downtown Baghdad, fertilizer vendors say they're now subject to many more inspections than they ever were in the past. "From our perspective, the assistance of national security, the awareness that this is a national security issue, has given us

real support and a bigger chance of success," said Luay al-Mokhtar, Director of the Ministry of Environment's Chemical Monitoring and Site Assessment Department.

Still, the obstacles to success are daunting. UN Environment provides only limited funds, and Iraq's government – dependent as it is on sometimes erratic oil prices – has had difficulty maintaining many of its long-term projects. "A few years ago, we put forward a national plan to counter oil pollution, which included trying to establish an alarm system in Kirkuk and Salahaddin governorate. The pipes are old, spills are frequent, and it could be in Baghdad so fast," said Mohammed Fariss. "But we had to stop because of financing. Everything just stopped in 2014 [when the oil price collapsed, and ISIS emerged]." Poor coordination between relevant ministries, many of whom don't necessarily consider the environment a top priority amid so many other problems, also remains an issue.

Gathered together around a Ministry of Environment boardroom on a dazzlingly hot day in early September, Deputy Minister Falahi and his team say they're well aware of the challenges they face. The Iraqi government has previously committed to environmental plans and never followed through. This time, though, the chemicals team are adamant things will pan out differently. The national security implications of under-regulated chemical use have struck a chord across Baghdad, as perhaps has the severity of the country's pollution. In Basra, in southern Iraq, thousands of residents protested horrific water quality throughout the summer.

Most importantly, perhaps, environmental officials say their young-ish institutions are finally coming of age. The Ministry of Environment was established after the US-led invasion of 2003, and Iraq became party to international chemical and waste management conventions after that. It's only now that they're really feeling their way through Baghdad's sometimes opaque and often byzantine decision-making networks. "One of the keys to success is taking into account other parties' difficulties and all the barriers they face," said Luay Al-Mokhtar. "We're learning. We're still on the road, and there are a lot of areas that we need to cover. But with good planning and support, I think we will be successful in the future."

Erbil reaps rewards by allowing Syrian refugees to flourish



Northern Iraqi city's choice to embrace refugees and keep job markets open has benefited both Syrians and locals alike, local governor says.

Erbil, 14 December 2018 - Driving through the undulating countryside outside Erbil in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq (KRI), on his way to see patients at a nearby Syrian refugee camp, Dr. Mohammed Issa is sanguine about the fact that any fees he receives will barely cover his fuel costs. "Money is the last objective," he said. "I want to help Syrians as much as I can. They can't afford to come and see me – they are poor. I do home visits because I can't allow a poor person to pay for a taxi ride to [the city]."

A general practitioner who now focuses on physical therapy, he makes house calls to mostly elderly Syrians after a morning of appointments at a private clinic in Erbil. He gently massages his patients' feet and legs before leading them through exercises that he encourages them to perform each day until his next visit.

What makes these particular doctor-patient relationships unusual is that Mohammed is also a refugee from the long-running conflict in Syria. Being able to practice medicine as a refugee, he says, is testament to the openness of the city he has called home since fleeing Al-Hasakah in northeast Syria with his family in 2014.

"The city welcomed us."

Unlike many host communities around the world that place tight restrictions on the jobs available to refugees, Syrians living in Erbil and elsewhere in KRI are free to work, provided they hold recognized qualifications if necessary.

"The city welcomed us," Mohammed explained. "They made it easy to issue residency permits... [and] allowed everyone to work."

The Kurdistan region is host to virtually all of the 250,000 Syrian refugees currently living in Iraq. Around half of these live in Erbil province, with many gravitating to its eponymous capital, the region's largest city and a bustling economic hub that radiates outwards from the ancient and imposing citadel perched at its centre.

Around 60 per cent of the world's 25.4 million refugees live not in camps but in cities and urban areas across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Mayors, local authorities, social enterprises and citizen groups are on the frontlines of the global refugee response, fostering social cohesion and protecting and assisting the forcibly displaced men, women and children in their midst.

Erbil is part of a growing global network of municipalities that are opting to embrace refugees and the opportunities they bring. From Sao Paulo to Vienna, these Cities of Light are giving hope to the world's most vulnerable by offering sanctuary and the chance to become part of the social fabric.

On 18 and 19 December, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi will host the eleventh High Commissioner's Dialogue event in Geneva, which this year focusses on the role of cities in protecting the urban displaced.

"They brought new cultures, new ideas, enriching the city in different ways."

The long-serving Governor of Erbil Province, Nawzad Hadi Mawlood, said the decision to welcome Syrian refugees was driven primarily by humanitarian concerns. But by allowing them to move and work freely, the city and its people had benefited in ways that would not have been the case had they been restricted only to camps.

"Those in the camps live off the assistance they receive, but those outside

rely on themselves," he said. "There are no restrictions or constraints on refugees' labour. They are just like any other citizen living in Erbil."

"These are skilled people who worked in various fields in Syria," he continued. "They were an added value to our talents, they brought new cultures, new ideas, enriching the city in different ways. I thought it was positive. True there was competition, but there was no resistance from the local population."

Dr. Mohammed Issa, 33, from Al-Hasakah in northern Syria, relaxes at home in Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, after a long day visiting patients.

The city's open approach was partly forged by its long experience of hosting large numbers of new arrivals. As well as welcoming more than 120,000 Syrian refugees, Erbil province is also home to more than 600,000 Iraqis displaced from other parts of the country during years of violence and insecurity.

An obvious beneficiary of this approach, Dr. Mohammed Issa says Erbil's open policies have been of far more benefit to him than any traditional humanitarian assistance. He has been able to support himself and his family, without the loss of identity and status that so many refugees around the world experience. "Aid does not need to be material," he said. "If you don't help me financially but allow me to move and work freely, I will be doing well. If I couldn't work, I wouldn't be able to live here, I would have to go back to Syria."

By Charlie Dunmore and Dalal Mawad, UNHCR in Erbil



Dutch Foreign Minister visited UNDP projects in Fallujah

Fallujah, 17 December 2018 - The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Stef Blok, visited today UNDP projects in the city. He met with officials and visited Fallujah Iron Bridge and the ongoing work at Fallujah Teaching Hospital that had been damaged in the fighting. The minister was glad to see Fallujah's hospital working again and providing much needed medical services.

Both projects are funded by the Government of the Netherlands. Fallujah is once again full of life, with over 90% of people now returned home.



New Italy contribution to support physical and mental health services in conflict affected Ninewa

Baghdad, 18 December 2018 - The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes a generous contribution of €1,000,000 million from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation to support the provision of physical and mental health rehabilitation services for the conflict-affected population from Ninewa Governorate.

The new contribution will be used to ensure access for mentally and physically disabled war victims to high-quality medical services. It will also assist in building the capacity of health staff working in the areas of physical rehabilitation interventions and case assessment and management.

"WHO appreciates the generous donation from the Italian Agency for Development Corporation; it will certainly contribute to building on the good results achieved by WHO and partners in providing mental and physical rehabilitation services in Mosul," said Dr. Adham R. Ismail, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq.

The military operation to retake Mosul, which took place from October 2016 to July 2017, resulted in a high number of

civilian casualties and related mental and physical disabilities. According to national health statistics, the total number of amputees living in Ninewa and registered in Mosul Rehabilitation Centre alone stands at 4,493 cases.

People suffering from mental illnesses and complications have also significantly increased due to stress and conflict-related losses. Almost 2% of the population affected by the conflict are facing serious mental health problems, espe-

cially an extremely vulnerable population of women, children, and the elderly.

"With support from donors such as the Italian Agency for Development Corporation, major gaps will be addressed with effective and sustainable solutions; it is a collective responsibility to drive all health response components of the recovery and reconstruction phase in retaken areas to success," said Dr. Ismail.



First time in Mosul: laparoscopic surgeries available to the needy, thanks to OFDA aid

Mosul, 26 December 2018 - Over four years of conflict and vast destruction in all aspects of life, Mousl City, the capital of Ninewa Governorate rises again into a phase of recovery, resilience, and reintroduction of vital life services.

The rehabilitation of the health system and the provision of an improved and specialized package of medical services in conflict-affected governorates like Ninewa, Anbar, Salah Aldin, and Kirkuk have been a top priority for WHO,

the local health authorities, donors and partners. The once remarkable intervention of significant trauma and emergency response activities has now been shadowed by the new types of expanded specialized medical services directed at the most vulnerable segments of the population including the disabled.

Al Athba Field Hospital, as was previously called, constructed by WHO on the battle frontlines in Mosul to respond to the trauma needs of the liber-

ation operation in 2016, is now Al Jumhuri Hospital for specialized medical services in West Mosul.

To cope with the newly emerging recovery needs in the area, the hospital has taken extra steps to expand the types of surgical services it delivers to include laparoscopic surgical operations in addition to a wider range of specialized outpatient consultations, which include ophthalmological, cardiovascular and fascia-maxillary services.

First time in Mosul: laparoscopic surgeries available to the needy, thanks to OFDA aid *(continued)*

“Having laparoscopic surgery techniques in our hospital is a big move towards improving the medical services in Mosul, credit is for the genuine support from WHO and OFDA,” said Dr. Nashat Ganim Al-Khaiat, Manager of Al-Jumhori Hospital.

Aged 48, Nadia Mohammed is the first patient treated with the use of the laparoscope in the mentioned hospital. She and her eight-member family recently

returned to Mosul after over three years of challenging life in an internally displaced population camp.

“I suffered from recurrent cholecystitis disease that affected my lifestyle and exhausted my family resources. It required a gallbladder removal which I couldn’t afford doing in private hospitals,” she said. “I was the first to undergo the operation in Al-Jumhori Hospital and is recovering quickly, I have

even returned to normal as you can see,” she explained.

The hospital, one of many others supported by WHO through funds from the United States Aid Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), is improving the quality of health services in Ninewa Governorate by adopting modern techniques and providing specialized surgical services.

However, more efforts and resources are still needed to cover the increasing demand for health care services for millions of returnees and displaced people in liberated- now under recovery areas.

WHO would like to express its gratitude to the United States Aid Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) for their generous financial support which is contributing significantly to building the resilience of the affected population and moving forward with the recovery and revitalization of essential and specialized health services.



Challenging memory loss and displacement, Sana’s new beginning in Iraq

Dohuk, 26 December 2018 - Sana’ was like any other teenager in Syria; she was a guitar aficionada and an A-student with a love for writing poems. Her favourite getaways were the weekends when her father took her and her siblings to the waterfall and park to play.

Eight years ago, she was involved in a hit-and-run accident which left her suffering from memory loss, as well as emotional and physical injuries.

“I was only 13; I was heading to the market with my friend in Zabadani, Syria when a car hit me. I sustained injuries and suffered from a complete loss of memory for two months; I was very disoriented and lost all sense of being”, she said.

The most terrifying part for her was her inability to remember her parents, her siblings, and her friends. The then-teenager suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and had vivid flashbacks of the incident, nightmares, and intense distress.

Her journey towards full recovery was hindered by the break-out of the war in Syria in 2011 and the intensification of the conflict afterwards. When the Battle of Zabadani began in January 2012, the family of four feared for their lives as clashes escalated. One month later, they fled to find refuge in Domiz 1 camp for refugees in Duhok, Kurdistan

Region of Iraq.

Domiz 1 camp is home to close to 5,000 Syrian refugees who fled the war seeking a haven where UNFPA supports a reproductive health unit within the Domiz hospital, a youth centre and a women’s social centre. These centres provide young people and women counselling, psychosocial support, awareness sessions, recreational activities, and life-skills courses.

The move from Zabadani to Kurdistan led to Sana’ losing the sense of stability she had started regaining after her accident and had to, yet again, start anew.

“My parents were very supportive, they kept pushing me to make friends with the neighbours and meet new people but I was afraid,” said now 17-year-old Sana’. “I made a friend, though: Meena”.

Meena had been attending the literacy courses offered at the UNFPA-supported women centre and encouraged Sana’ to join, explaining the services provided there such as psychosocial support to women and girls.

“I was thrilled to hear about the existence of such a centre. I had been looking for the opportunity to have professional advice and someone to guide me through my recovery,” she added.

“I have been attending the centre for three years now; I have so far attended

literacy classes, sports, sewing, drawing, and the adolescent courses in an attempt to remember some basic life skills. The social workers have registered me for as many classes as possible, to help me regain my memory and catch-up on what I could have forgotten.”

All the care and support Sana’ received from her family and from the social workers at the Women Centre pushed her to dream big. “My plan is to start playing the guitar again. I reached out to the House of Artists, the UNFPA-supported initiative in Domiz 1 camp to help young refugees develop their talents in the camp, and I will start attending the guitar teaching lessons very soon”.



A doorstep to a tent campaign for Iraqi children's vaccination against Polio ends today



Baghdad, 27 December 2018 – The Ministry of Health in coordination with the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Health and the support of WHO, launched on Sunday 23rd December 2018 a five-day campaign to immunize Iraq's children against polio.

The campaign aimed at reaching about 5.9 Million children under the age of five in 145 health districts including those living in Iraq's most vulnerable newly retaken areas of Anbar, Kirkuk, and Ninewa governorates, in addition to poor areas, displaced and refugee children living in camps. The campaign is part of the vaccination strategy in response to strengthening the immunity profile against polio. Vaccination teams were going house to house and tent to tent to ensure that all targeted

children are covered; visited slums; internally displaced people and refugee camps and settlements; and other marginalized communities to promote vaccination.

Two subnational vaccination rounds against polio have already been successfully implemented this year, in March and April, in addition to three targeted campaigns against polio in newly retaken districts. Efforts were being made to achieve uniformly high quality vaccination at both district and sub-district levels.

"WHO is supporting the operational costs of the nationwide campaign which include incentives for vaccination teams, transportation, finger marking and independent monitoring. WHO also provides technical surge support to

ministries of health at federal, regional and sub-national levels, prioritizing support to high-risk governorates." said Dr. Adham Rashad Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq.

It was the only national polio campaign scheduled in Iraq for this year, and came after 20 months from the last Polio NID which took place in April 2017. Dr. Mutaz Abbas, Head of Polio Campaign at MOH said: "During the campaign, more than 25,000 trained vaccinators would travel from house to house to administer oral polio vaccine, free-of-charge to children. 2864 supervisors of different levels (team, district, provincial and central) would participate in the campaign." Dr. Abbas stressed that all children under five should be vaccinated against polio, regardless of previous vaccination history.

Since April 2014, no new polio cases have been reported in Iraq thanks to the government's strong commitment and frontline health workers' dedication. There has been significant improvement in overall population immunity in Iraq due to efforts made by the Ministry of Health Iraq, Ministry of Health KRG and Departments of Health. The campaign helped to sustain population immunity gains as vaccination is the most cost effective public health intervention and its immediate beneficiaries, children and mothers, gain a great deal from its benefits.

Culture

UNESCO opens a conservation laboratory at the Digital Centre of Eastern Manuscripts in Iraq

Erbil 15 December 2018 - The UNESCO office for Iraq, within the context of the project "Supporting the Digital Center of Eastern Manuscripts in Iraq", funded by Hungary, opened a new conservation facility as part of the Centre's ongoing programme for the digitization and conservation of a rare collection of ancient manuscripts. The ceremony represents the culmination of UNESCO's engagement with the Centre to provide both essential equipment and materials, in addition to training in conservation and restoration techniques for its staff.

Father Najeeb, Director of the Centre and Louise Haxthausen, UNESCO Iraq Country Representative, formally opened the new facility and handed over certificates to a group of volun-

teers who are being trained in the conservation, digitizing and archiving of the rescued library, as part of the project. "The archives of the Digital Centre of Eastern Manuscripts embody the Spirit of Mosul – a spirit of trust, confidence and peaceful co-existence between Iraq's numerous communities. It is essential to preserve and give public access to these archives so that in building the future, the history of interaction between communities is remembered and can serve as inspiration. UNESCO is grateful to Hungary for its support that has enabled to further strengthen the Digital Center of Eastern Manuscripts' capacity to protect this rich cultural heritage", said Louise Haxthausen.

The NGO SOS Chrétiens d'Orient has

facilitated the provision of a space within the Centre for the specific purpose of analyzing and conserving many of the thousands of documents currently held in the Centre. UNESCO has provided technical equipment and conservation consumables required for its activities. It has also strengthened the technical capacity and enhanced the knowledge of the Centre's dedicated volunteer staff through a series of specialist training programmes. During the opening, Father Najeeb stressed that "the archives of the Digital Centre of Eastern Manuscripts are the heritage of Humanity – they are an integral part of the history of Iraq and also of the world. We all have a responsibility to preserve this heritage of diversity and universality".

UNESCO opens a conservation laboratory at the Digital Centre of Eastern Manuscripts in Iraq *(continued)*



This unique collection of manuscripts, now being conserved and digitized in Erbil, was originally housed in the Dominican monastery in Mosul; however, after a succession of threats it was moved to the nearby town of Qaraqosh in 2007 for its safekeeping. During the course of the occupation by Daesh of

Mosul in 2014 and their rapid progress east, concerns over the continued safety of the archive necessitated its movement again to an undisclosed location. Father Najeeb along with many of his supporters were able to remove a significant number of manuscripts and documents before the monastery was

partially destroyed and the remains of the library burnt to the ground.

The library in Mosul originally housed a unique collection of ancient manuscripts dating back to the 9th century in addition to printed books from 1515. Multi-faith in origin, the archive contained not only ancient Christian texts (Syrian and Aramaic), but also Muslim, Jewish and Yezidi papers on history, mathematics, history and literature. More than 8,000 manuscripts from 105 different collections from Iraq, Turkey and Iran are currently being digitized. Currently there are circa 10,000 manuscripts still to be conserved and archived.

The "Supporting the Digital Center of Eastern Manuscripts in Iraq" project represents a timely and significant contribution to the ongoing process of protecting the areas diverse and fragile heritage, generously facilitated by funds from the Government of Hungary.

Foundation stone ceremony of the Al-Nouri Mosque in the Old City of Mosul

Mosul, 16 December 2018 - The Sunni Religious Endowment (Waqf) of Iraq successfully held a symbolic foundation stone ceremony at the iconic Al-Nouri mosque & Al-Hadba minaret complex in West Mosul, the historic heart of the Old City, devastated by insurgency occupation and intense combat over a three-year period. The mosque and its distinctive leaning minaret having represented an iconic landmark across the city scape of both modern and ancient Mosul.

The ceremony marked the effective starting point of an ambitious project implemented by UNESCO and funded by the United Arab Emirates to preserve and reconstruct the monumental buildings at the complex. The project is carried out in close consultation with the Sunni Waqf, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, local authorities and the community of the Old City. "Today, as we are laying the foundation stone of the al-Nuri Mosque, we are starting a journey of rebuilding at the heart of the Old City. It is also a journey of revival of the life of the community and of the "Spirit of Mosul", which the al-Nuri Mosque and al-Hadba Minaret embody. This endeavour is at the very core of UNESCO "Revival of the Spirit of Mosul" initiative launched by UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay at the Kuwait Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, earlier this



year", said UNESCO Iraq Country Representative, Ms. Louise Haxthausen.

Dr. Abdulatif Al Hemyem, Head of the Sunni Waqf, stressed that "the reconstruction of the al-Nuri Mosque and al-Hadba are symbols of peaceful coexistence for the people of Mosul and Iraq. As we engage with UNESCO in this reconstruction, we contribute to bringing life back to the Old City, as well as to lasting peace in our country". Ms. Alice Walpole, Acting UN Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, was also present at the ceremony and emphasized that "the reconstruction of the al-Nuri Mosque is integral not just to the repair of the physical environment in Mosul but to the rehabilitation of Mosul's community. This religious, cultur-

al and historical symbol is at the heart of sustainable recovery for Mosul. The United Nations family in Iraq will continue to support the Government's efforts across the country".

Attended by some 200 people, including many residents from the Old City and the neighbourhoods directly surrounding the Al-Nouri mosque complex, the event marks the official start of a detailed four year phased programme of conservation, restoration and rehabilitation to commence. The official commencement of Phase I will include essential operational activities such as site clearance, historic documentation and preparatory planning. UNESCO will cooperate with the UNMAS on explosive ordnance disposal and 'heritage aware' debris clearance, rep-

Foundation stone ceremony of the Al-Nouri Mosque in the Old City of Mosul *(continued)*

representing a new joint venture between the two agencies in Iraq. Phase II include the restoration of the base of the Al-Hadba Minaret, construction of a replica of the historic leaning minaret on site, reconstruction of Al-Nouri mosque, rehabilitation of the gardens and the establishment of a museum of memory or memorial.

Complementing this project, the European Union will support the pilot reconstruction and restoration in the neighborhood surrounding the al-Nuri Mosque, with a view to foster resili-

ence, cultural identity, social cohesion and inter-community reconciliation through the creation of job opportunities and the development of youth skills among IDPs/returnees of the Old City's local communities. EU Ambassador to the EU, Ramon Bleucia who was also present at the ceremony stressed that "the reconstruction and preservation of Old Mosul's cultural heritage is a venue for skills development, livelihoods and job creation for the people of Mosul, in particular its youth. Our efforts aim at the victory of humanity over intoler-

ance and conflict".

The foundation stone ceremony at the Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba minaret complex forms an integral element of the initiative, 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul', launched by the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay, during the International Conference on the Reconstruction and Development of Iraq (Kuwait City), in February 2018, and is fully aligned with the Government of Iraq's Reconstruction and Development framework.

UNESCO supports the TVET Aid Coordination Group (TVET ACG) in Iraq

Baghdad, 17 December 2018 – The Prime Minister's Advisory Council (PMAC) have established the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Aid Coordination Group (TVET ACG) with the support of the UNESCO Iraq office and with funding support from the European Union funded TVET Reform Project. The TVET Aid Coordination Group is an adhoc advisory (non-decision-making) forum established by the Government of Iraq with the purpose of coordinating the work of international partners in the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to ensure the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The Government of Iraq has been working to reform the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector with the intention of improving its relevance, coordination and alignment with the needs of the labour market. The work has culminated in the drafting of a TVET Law that will give rise to an overarching TVET Council with a strategic planning and coordination role as well as being responsible, working with line ministries, for amongst others a Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework, quality assurance and accreditation, funding and capacity development for the sector.

The first meeting of the TVET ACG was attended by senior Iraqi TVET officials and a wide ranging group of international partners. Participants included representatives of the Prime Minister's Advisory Council (PMAC), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR), the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and the Ministry of Finance (MoF).



International partners in attendance included the UNDP, ILO, European Union, the French Embassy, the Embassy of Finland, KOICA, Ernst and Young/EDJADA, GIZ, Canadian Embassy/BRIDGE-project and World Bank. Subsequent meeting will include representatives of the private sector. The meeting discussed the TVET reform programme, new governance arrangements, future needs and developments arising from the process to decentralize TVET within the MoLSA.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Hamid Ahmad, the Deputy Chairman of PMAC and the Co-Chair of the TVET Reform Project Steering Committee stressed that "Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Iraq is one of the main sectors contributing to the development of Iraq. Therefore, it is necessary to invite all relevant international organizations and donor countries to join the TVET Aid Coordination Group to ensure effective and integrated coordination of programs provided to the sector; to avoid the overlapping or conflicting programs; and to better meet priority needs in accordance with a clear and comprehensive vision to promote the TVET sector for the development of Iraq".

"UNESCO Iraq is pleased to have been asked to support this valuable government initiative. TVET is increasingly seen as a vital part of an integrated solution for job creation and sustainable livelihoods. Government's commitment to the TVET reform agenda has caught the attention of international partners and there is a willingness to improve coordination across the sector so that collectively we can maximize the impact of our work with the government, training providers and the private sector" said Louise Haxthausen, Director of the UNESCO Office for Iraq.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is an important factor in sustainable economic development and income generation in particular in Iraq with its economic dependence on oil production and unemployment rapidly growing in the country. UNESCO, with financial support of the EU, is implementing a project entitled "Reforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Iraq" to make TVET a key driver for Iraq's economic development, by increasing its competitiveness and relevance in line with international standards. One of Iraq's main development challenges is youth unemployment, currently at around 18% for ages 15 to 29. A large number of Iraqi's youth are seeking jobs in the public sector, but with limited capacity for job creation and a restricted number of available career posts, there is an urgent need to develop alternative employment opportunities in the private sector. The project represents a key initiative to make the private sector the nation's main employer and equip Iraqi youth with skills and qualifications necessary to meet the job market demands.

Deep inequality continues to shape the lives of children in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 November 2018 – A comprehensive survey on children’s wellbeing in Iraq released today found that conflict and inequality remain defining features of childhood. A majority of poor children are not receiving any form of government assistance. Even as the fighting has subsided, 80 per cent of all children experience violence at home or in school.

While almost all children (92%) are enrolled in primary school, just over half of children from poorer backgrounds complete their primary education. The gap widens in upper secondary school, where less than a quarter of poor children graduate, compared to three quarters of children from wealthier backgrounds.

Children’s education needs in Iraq are vast: half of all public schools in the country require rehabilitation and one in three schools run multiple shifts, squeezing children’s learning time. The five governorates with the lowest school enrollment and attendance rates are

concentrated in the country’s southern governorates which remain its poorest, and in Anbar and Ninawa – the two governorates that have borne the brunt of the violence of the last few years. Attending school regularly is an essential part of healing for the more than 1 million children estimated to require psychosocial support to cope with the invisible wounds of war.

“The data is the clearest indication yet that the most vulnerable children in Iraq are the ones that are most likely to fall behind,” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. “The hard-won gains to end the conflict in Iraq and transition to a stable future could be lost without additional investments for all children to reach their full potential.”

Iraq has made notable progress on newborn and child health, including maintaining high levels of assisted births and reducing the number of children who die in their first month of life from 20 deaths per 1000 live births to 14



since the last survey was conducted in 2011. But the challenges arise soon after birth: Only 4 out of 10 of children are fully vaccinated, with the poorest children missing out the most. Half of all Iraqi households are at risk of drinking contaminated water and less than 40 per cent of the population has access to drinking water at home, placing children at grave risk of waterborne diseases.

“As Iraq moves past the violence of the last few years and forges a new path for itself, it must prioritize the wellbeing of all children,” said Hawkins. “Children are the future of this country, and a growing gap between the haves and the have nots sows discord and is detrimental for children and for Iraq. With the right commitment and the right policies in place, the Government of Iraq can make a difference.”

To maintain Iraq’s recent gains and protect the rights of all children, UNICEF calls on the Government of Iraq to invest in services that directly benefit those children affected by conflict and poverty, and to work towards putting an end to all forms of violence against children.



Four children killed on their way to school in the city of Mosul

Baghdad, 22 November 2018 - Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq said: “The violence that took the

lives of four school children today and injured several others in al-Shoura subdistrict south of the city of Mosul is

a stark reminder that the vicious cycle of violence continues in Iraq.

UNICEF verified that 11 secondary-school children between the age of 12-17 were making the long journey to school from their remote village when the truck they were riding came under attack.

This attack might jeopardise the tremendous efforts to get children back to school in areas where violence was the heaviest.

Iraqi children keep saying over and over again, ‘if there is no school there is no life and if there no life there is no school’.

Attacks on children are senseless and must stop. Children and their right to education must be protected at all times.”



UNICEF—for every child

Baghdad, 9 December 2018 – With support from the Government of Germany, UNICEF promotes adolescent access to safe spaces, networking and learning opportunities to help young people realize their full potential.

'I witnessed so much tragedy,' says 16 year old Bushra. 'But now I feel like things are changing. This workshop feels like a breath of fresh air - to be a part of something again.'

Bushra attended a UNICEF-supported photography workshop to empower Yazidi girls and women in a camp for internally displaced people near Dohuk, Kurdistan region of Iraq.

During 2018 UNICEF installed 146 prefabricated classrooms in schools in 8

governorates set up 28 tents and repaired 643 with generous support from the Government of Germany.

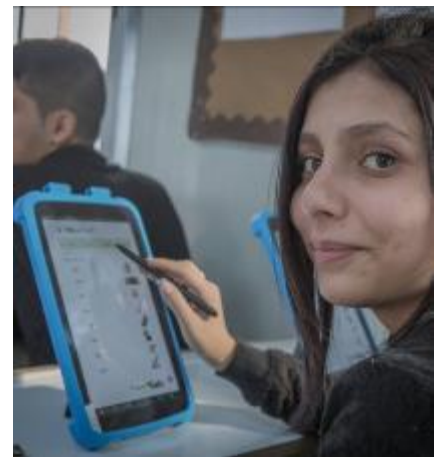
UNICEF is running a pilot e-learning program for 300 Syrian refugee students in Erbil, Sulimaniya and Dohuk in partnership with The International School of Choueifat – Erbil.

Class materials are ready to view on iPads. This way, students have a teacher with them always -lessons, homework, tests, and textbooks are all available on demand!

UNICEF gave out backpacks, books and pencils to Manar Al Huda school outside of Baghdad. The school was built and fully equipped this year by UNICEF.

For decades, this large number of teachers have not been trained in Hawija. With support from the Government of Germany, UNICEF in cooperation with the General Directorate of Education in Kirkuk trained 649 primary and post-primary teachers in Hawija for eleven days on the main subject matters.

With support from the Governments of Norway and the United States UNICEF is providing pay incentives to 752 volunteer teaching staff and 116 non-teaching staff at all Syrian refugee schools in Erbil and Suleimaniyah governorates. This will make it possible for over 17,000 Syrian refugee children to stay in school.



Latest threat to displaced children in Iraq: winter - UNICEF racing against time to protect over 151,000 internally displaced children

Baghdad, 10 December 2018 - As Nadia Murad, the Yazidi activist and survivor of gender-based violence is honored with the Nobel Prize for Peace, UNICEF is calling attention to the plight of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced children in Iraq whose lives are threatened by freezing temperatures and floods that have affected large parts of the country.

“As the world celebrates Nadia Murad’s

incredible story of survival and her work for human rights, let us remember that there are many vulnerable children in Iraq who still need our support, even if the worse of the violence may be over” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

Winters in Iraq are harsh. It rains, and snows and temperatures can fall below zero in the northern part of the country, where a majority of Yazidi and

other displaced children live. Most displaced families live below the poverty line, in dilapidated housing with poor heating, or in camps with little protection from the cold. It is impossible to afford fuel for heating and winter clothing to keep their children warm.

“The devastating floods have made this winter even more difficult for displaced children who are extremely vulnerable to hypothermia and respiratory diseases. No child should be subjected to such risks. Every child deserves to be warm and healthy,” added Mr. Hawkins.

UNICEF is providing winter clothes, including boots, scarves, and hats to approximately 161,000 children in Sinjar, Erbil, Dohuk, Ninawa, Anbar, Diwaniya, Basra, Salaheddin, Baghdad and Suleimaniyah, including through cash support.

UNICEF’s winter campaign aims to reach the most vulnerable children aged between three months and 14 years living in camps for the internally displaced and in hard-to-reach areas.



UNAMI hosted the Iraqi leg of the Run the World challenge

Baghdad, 21 November 2018 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) hosted today the Iraqi leg of the Run the World challenge.

The Run the World is an extraordinary challenge that has been created by Dan Thompson, a British business man and sports enthusiast who has undertaken to complete a 10 km run in all 206 countries of the world by the 2020 Olympics / Paralympics. Dan is undertaking this challenge to promote the physical and mental health benefits of sport and physical activity all over the world, and to raise money for cancer research. Iraq was No. 159 country run.



Erbil International bike marathon brings communities together

Erbil, 30 November 2018 - The first Ride On! Erbil International Bike Marathon, which took place this afternoon, involved hundreds of bike riders, including professional cyclists, local community members, displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees, under the theme Unity in Diversity.

The 3.2km route started from the edge of the historic Ainkawa neighbourhood and ended at the world-renowned Citadel – a UNESCO world heritage site. The event was organized by IOM's in partnership with the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG), Kurdistan 24 TV and local community members, and is supported by the US Government.

More than 500 people participated in the bike ride, including over 200 women. Emphasizing Unity in Diversity, the event invited anyone who can ride a bike, and welcomed all community members for the music and dance performances.

Attendees to the closing ceremony included members of the Parliament,



Kurdistan High Council of Women Affairs, and representatives of minority ethno-religious and religious groups. IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite said, "The Bike Marathon was the first bike event of this scope in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The event is not a race – it is an opportunity for community members to come together for a unifying sports and social activi-

ty." The KRG Health Directorate was present to provide health services. The Governor of Erbil, Nawzad Hadi said, "This bike marathon is a positive development for community activities in Erbil, bringing diverse community members together. We are pleased to support and contribute to this event, along with IOM and partners."

SRSG Kubiš visited the Baghdad National Museum

Baghdad, 01 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, visited the Baghdad National Museum in the Iraqi capital today. He met with Dr. Qais Hussein Rashid, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture for Tourism and Antiquities Affairs and was given a tour of the museum that holds artefacts documenting the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia. "The terrorists Da'esh has failed to destroy this country's history to impose its cruel rule. Iraq, with such rich diversity and magnificent history, has triumphed and will always be a beacon for learning and progress."



Nepalese contingent Medal parade held in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 09 December 2018 - UNAMI guards put on an impressive Nepalese cultural show, display of traditional dances and martial arts skills, as part of a medal-awarding ceremony for members who have completed a six-month rotation as a unit guarding the UN compounds.



Global Migration Film Festival held in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 December 2018 – Over the years, films have been used to inform, entertain, educate and provoke debate. It is in this spirit that IOM, the UN Migration Agency, launched The Global Migration Film Festival (GMFF) in 2016.

The Festival features films and documentaries that capture the promise and challenges of migration, and the unique contributions that migrants make to their new communities.

The GMFF in 2018 includes more than 30 films being screened in over 100 countries.

The Global Migration Film Festival 2018 in Iraq was opened and closed at the UNAMI Auditorium in Baghdad and was hosted by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN Migration Agency (IOM). Over the two weeks' duration in Iraq of the GMFF movies were screened in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah.

“This is a beautiful event, and the first time it is held in Basra. Abu Adnan’s



film showed me that migrant families face challenges when trying to integrate in western countries in terms of family relations and culture,” said Yasser, a 21-year-old from Basra who attended the GMFF held by IOM Iraq in Basrah on 9 December 2018.

Students from the University of Basrah enjoyed watching the films of Abu Adnan, “Adnan’s Father” and “Invisibles”. “It is a fantastic opportuni-

ty to understand what it is like to migrate to another country that has a different culture. Two of my family members migrated to Europe in recent years,” said Malak, a 22-year-old, a student from Basra.

GMFF in Iraq included screenings of movies in Dibaga camp for displaced Iraqis and at Kawer Gosik camp for Syrian refugees, as well as Mosul University.



SRSG's Christmas and New Year Greetings Message

Iraq, 18 December 2018 - In 2010, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated December 18 as the World Arabic Language Day, seeking to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as key pillars of scientific, research, and social advancement to date.

The UNMAS Iraq Liaison team, based in Baghdad, comprises four members (from left: Hayder, Ayat, Ru'aa, and Saif) who are all native Arabic speakers. They collectively form the backbone of UNMAS liaison activities in

Iraq.

All credit Arabic as the mainstay of their jobs, and believe that the intertwining of languages at UNMAS has vastly enhanced their knowledge beyond mere language and communication skills. Instead, it has amplified their access to precise and technical language, allowing them to expand their vocabulary in both Arabic and English.

For this World Arabic Language Day, UNMAS extends its appreciation to all of its Arabic-speaking employees for their continuous efforts in facilitating

dialogue between UNMAS, the Iraqi government, and the Iraqi community at large.



SRSG's Christmas and New Year Greetings Message

Baghdad, 24 December 2018 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, extends her greetings and conveys her very best wishes to the Iraqi people, in particular the Christian community, on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year

celebrations.

“On this occasion we cannot but remember those who have lost their lives in the fight against terrorism, those who remain captive by the terrorists, and those displaced who remain away from their homes,” Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said. “Iraq is seeing a new

beginning, after the military defeat of the Da'esh terrorists. The road to a well-deserved, long-term stability will not be easy, but I look forward to a 2019 full of hope and optimism. I wish you a Merry and peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.”



SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert attended the Vigil Mass of Christmas at the St. Joseph Church of Chaldeans in Baghdad

Baghdad, 24 December 2018 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended tonight the Vigil Mass of Christmas at the St. Joseph Church of Chaldeans in

Baghdad. The mass was served by the Vatican Secretary of State - Cardinal Pietro Paroli and the Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans - Cardinal Louis Sako. The President of the Republic, H. E. Barham Salih, addressed those pre-

sent among whom were Ministers, Muslim clerics, representatives of the diplomatic corps, as well as numerous Iraqis.

Photos by UNAMI PIO and courtesy of the Chaldean Patriarchate of Babylon.

