



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8842nd meeting

Wednesday, 25 August 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Tirumurti (India)

Members:

China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Estonia	Mr. Lipand
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Niger	Mr. Aougi
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation	Ms. Estigneeva
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Prince
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Farrey
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2021/689)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2021/700)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2021/689)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2021/700)

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

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/689, which contains the thirty-first report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), and document S/2021/700, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2020).

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

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: To be back in the Security Council Chamber, after one and half years, feels, I must admit, like a particular privilege and honour. I truly hope that this progressive return to normalcy, or something approaching it, will soon be within reach for all.

However, for the time being, we must be realistic — the pandemic is far from over, taking its daily toll of cases, including in Iraq, and claiming even more lives when tragedy strikes, as it did with yet another devastating fire in the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) ward of a hospital in Nasiriyah last month.

If you, Mr. President, allow me, I will dedicate most of today's briefing to Iraq's all-important elections on 10 October. The clock is ticking, with 46 days left until Iraq goes to the polls.

I would like to start by emphasizing that the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is working diligently towards election day, in line with the electoral law and in accordance with the pre-approved timelines.

In recent months, the IHEC has reached several complex milestones. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has, of course, provided, and continues to provide, technical assistance wherever it can. It is worth noting that five times as many United Nations personnel are currently engaged as were in the 2018 elections.

As the Council may have gleaned from our monthly public reports, candidate lists have been finalized; a ballot lottery was conducted for all 83 constituencies; ballot printing is ongoing, with all ballot papers expected in country by mid-September; the polling and results-management information-technology (IT) systems are being reviewed by an independent audit firm; two out of the three planned polling day simulations have been conducted, with the most recent simulation, open to political parties and the media, on 23 August and the final simulation scheduled for September; the recruitment of polling staff is ongoing, and the training of electoral staff has also begun; and the IHEC's outreach strategy was launched on 6 June and covers key thematic areas, including the new electoral system, the role of the IHEC, the distribution of biometric cards, the counting process and the announcement of results and integrity measures, as well as specific awareness messages targeting, inter alia, women, youth, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons and returnees.

I wish to commend the IHEC not only for its dedication but also for its transformation. Iraq's authorities and parties would do well to publicly acknowledge the IHEC's achievements so far, and the same goes for its independence. Casting doubt about the IHEC's ability to operate risks further eroding voter confidence.

In parallel, preparations for United Nations monitoring are moving rapidly. Most members of the preparatory team have been contracted and are being deployed to Baghdad as we speak. They will soon

be followed by the regional teams, expected to be on the ground in the first week of September. Those regional teams will pave the way for the arrival of short-term experts.

Concurrently, and in line with its renewed mandate, UNAMI is stepping up its strategic communication efforts aimed at informing the Iraqi voters about election preparations and related United Nations activities, sharing facts and figures, tackling misinformation and managing public expectations.

We are often asked if the October elections will be different from the elections in 2018. That is a sensible question, as the lack of trust in the public authorities and institutions is long-standing and widespread.

In response, I can only point to the facts. The fact is that the IHEC is applying lessons learned from previous elections. The fact is that significant changes to improve the electoral processes and preparations for election day are being made, including an independent IT audit, new voter verification devices, numerous measures to tackle the misuse of electronic voting cards and displaying election results in real-time during transmission, tabulation and announcement. In other words, the October elections clearly have the potential to be different from the elections in 2018.

However, successful elections are not and cannot be the sole responsibility of IHEC. We therefore consistently call on all stakeholders, including Government officials, parties, candidates, political forces, civil-society organizations, media outlets and voters, to commit to transparent and credible elections in words and in deeds.

Not surprisingly, fear of electoral fraud is being expressed by many, including Iraqi citizens and political parties. Looking back on past events, that fear is well understood. At the same time, it is fair to emphasize that it is the political parties themselves that can make or break these elections. No matter how many technical measures are put in place, it is up to them, collectively, to refrain from any attempt to force or distort election results. It is up to them to stop the buying of loyalties, voter suppression and/or other intentional, illegal actions. It is they who must lead by example, collectively. One bad actor can ruin it for everyone else.

Another issue is the fact that misinformation — and even conspiracy theories — continue to create false

but accepted perceptions. Regrettably, misinformation about IHEC, protesters, Government officials, political rivals and even the United Nations is abundant and wide-ranging.

UNAMI is working tirelessly to provide IHEC and others with considerable technical support, spending millions of taxpayers' money for additional experts on the ground. And yet some have taken it upon themselves to baselessly claim that we were somehow calling for a postponement of these elections, which is, frankly, absurd. So let me be clear — if misinformation overtakes reality, it is not only an enormous energy drain for those working hard for the greater good of Iraq, it is also risky business.

I therefore call, yet again, on all stakeholders to stick to the facts, to focus on their own roles and responsibilities and to refrain from using the United Nations as a scapegoat. Truth, discipline and courage are required at this critical juncture. I would also like to call on all media outlets to provide accurate, reliable and timely information to the Iraqi people, instead of fuelling false perceptions to suit their backers.

It is high time to recognize that Iraq leads and owns the October elections. It is high time to stop blaming others for things of one's own doing. And it is high time to acknowledge that the credibility of these October elections will prove essential for Iraq's future.

Of course, elections are not an ultimate objective in and of themselves. They are a means to an end — improved governance to build a safer, more prosperous and just Iraq. And while the world is watching, I can only emphasize that the responsibility for the success of the upcoming elections rests with the Iraqi stakeholders and authorities. The same is true for the responsibility for what comes next: the formation of a new Government that is able — swiftly and effectively — to address Iraq's long list of unfinished domestic business.

I would like to say a few words on the calls for a boycott or postponement of the elections. The reasons for such calls vary from everyday Iraqis expressing their disillusionment, lack of trust, anger and loss of hope to apparent acts of political manoeuvring. However, to be frank, a boycott is not an effective strategy, nor will it solve anything. On the contrary, a vote not cast is, in fact, a gift to the opposition. Hence, it is important for voters and politicians alike to return to the process. Also and importantly, Iraq needs to move beyond the

elections to go, hopefully, from a prolonged political standstill to dynamic and responsive governance.

Now, to the Iraqis calling for a boycott because of their disillusionment, I would like to say that the Iraqi people are not a homogeneous and uniform group. Iraq is a diverse society, home to a vast array of peoples, languages and religions. Visions and opinions differ. That means that the outcome of the elections might not be what some are hoping for. It might even provide legitimacy to a Government that would not be one's personal preference.

But one thing is certain — by not voting, one places oneself outside the electoral process. Events that affect everyone would only be shaped by others. As I said, whoever does not cast a vote is gifting their silence to those they may disagree with.

There is no denying it — a sense of realism and pragmatism is important because these elections will not lead to immediate miracles. No elections can. Plainly speaking, Iraq is desperately in need of deep, structural reforms. And such reforms take unwavering determination, immense patience and lots of time.

It has to be said, democracy — for all its rewards — can be, in many ways, painstaking business. Balancing diverse interests and opinions always requires compromise. And the truth is that sustainable democratic societies across the world are often the opposite of overnight wonders; they require immense patience to build and constant efforts to maintain.

Do not get me wrong — after the many years of hoping, demanding and protesting, impatience is, of course, very understandable. Pain, disillusionment and frustration about a lack of economic, social and political prospects are very well understood. But in a democracy, one makes one's voice heard not only through public protests but also, and critically, at the ballot box. I say to the Iraqis, "This is your country, your vote. Stand up and be counted".

To the authorities, civil servants, officials, political forces, parties and candidates, my message is to not let the Iraqi people down. Service to the citizens — whatever their background, belief, religion, opinion or conviction — should be their first priority. The focus must be on solutions that represent the interests of all people. Solutions that only speak to the majority or a particular group are untenable in the long run.

Moreover, actions speak louder than words. Beautiful declarations and speeches abound, but at the end of the day it is all about getting things done — combating pervasive corruption, tackling negligence, fighting incompetence, leaving aside narrow partisan interests, overcoming factionalism and muhasasa, not allowing the pillaging of State institutions.

I ask them to proceed at once with desperately needed reforms, to diversify the economy to decrease Iraq's vulnerability to commodity price swings, to move away from constant crisis management and ad hoc deals. Instead, they must implement what they agreed upon and work towards a predictable modus operandi. They must halt the intimidation, aggression, abductions and assassinations, end impunity, understand that accountability is the key to restoring public trust and act upon it. The Iraqi people have a right to know.

I ask these leaders to work on Iraq's domestic resilience, to not fall prey to external power competitions, to rein in armed groups that continue to operate outside State control, be they foreign or domestic, to assert the sovereignty and authority of the State, to acknowledge that political inaction comes at a very high price that the Iraqi people ultimately pay, to recognize that empty or broken promises only further erode public trust and to be wary of the fact that simmering anger easily swells. All this to say that the stakes are immensely high. I hope that history will not repeat itself.

Before closing, I would like to give a progress report on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. Since my most recent briefing (see S/2021/474), the State of Kuwait conclusively identified the remains of a further 10 individuals from its list of persons missing since 1991. After 30 long years, a total of 30 cases of missing persons have been formally closed since November 2020, and I sincerely hope that that important step will bring some closure to the families of the missing.

Additionally, I would like to express my hope that an improvement in the COVID-19 situation and the subsequent easing of related restrictions will soon allow the resumption of field missions and explorations of potential burial sites to achieve further positive results.

In closing, let me underline that, with the election date rapidly approaching, Iraq will have our support every step of the way. These elections were hard earned,

and I can only emphasize the importance of credible elections for the future of Iraq's young democracy.

The President: I thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her very frank and informative briefing. We again thank her and the entire team of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for their dedicated and indispensable work helping forge a future for the Iraqi people.

Last month, President Biden hosted Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi in the Oval Office and reaffirmed the United States commitment to a strong, stable, democratic and prosperous Iraq. Shortly before that, Secretary Blinken hosted the United States-Iraq strategic dialogue at the State Department, which successfully ushered in a new chapter of this vital partnership. To ensure a long-term, sustainable and strategic partnership, we are broadening the aperture of our relationship to span the full spectrum of bilateral issues, including economic development, climate adaptation, public health and human rights. This is the assistance Iraqis tell us that they want, and we know we are uniquely positioned to help.

With this renewed commitment, the United States announced a donation of over 500,000 Pfizer BioNTech vaccine doses, which have since been delivered to Iraq, and an additional \$155 million in humanitarian assistance. The United States and Iraqi delegations mutually decided that the security relationship will fully transition to a training, advising, assisting and intelligence-sharing role. There will be no United States forces with a combat role in Iraq by 31 December 2021.

Make no mistake: as the Iraqi Government itself made clear, the mission to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) is still ongoing, but it is shifting to a new phase. The United States, its coalition partners and those in NATO Mission Iraq — all present in the country at the Iraqi Government's invitation — remain resolute and will continue to train, advise and enable the Iraqi security forces in the fight against terrorism and build their capacity to address future threats. The United States will continue to respect Iraq's sovereignty and laws, providing the resources Iraq needs to preserve

its territorial integrity and ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS.

UNAMI's crucial work factored into nearly every significant meeting during the Government of Iraq's trip to Washington. In particular, President Biden lauded the Iraqi Government's efforts to prepare for free and fair elections on 10 October, and he praised UNAMI's electoral assistance and the European Union Election Observer Mission as good-faith efforts by the international community to meet Iraqi demands for such support. The United States announced the \$5.2 million grant to the UNAMI election monitoring team, which follows a previous \$9.7 million United States commitment. This demonstrates that we have complete confidence in UNAMI, in its impartiality, expertise and earnest commitment to a better future for Iraqis.

And I would like to extend our deep and sincere gratitude to our partners and allies for joining us in funding the election monitoring team so soon after making voluntary contributions to UNAMI's equally important technical electoral assistance mission — the largest in the world of its kind. UNAMI's electoral advisers have worked diligently to train the Independent High Electoral Commission to enable free and fair elections. The Secretary-General's latest report on UNAMI (S/2021/700) outlines the phased deployment of 130 election monitors in advance of and on election day.

We welcome this prompt deployment pursuant to resolution 2576 (2021) and note the need to maximize the number of United Nations personnel on the ground in advance of the election. Further, we reiterate our appeals to the Government of Iraq to take all measures to protect the UNAMI election monitoring team, EU observers, domestic monitors and all other individuals deploying throughout the country to deter election fraud and contribute to the integrity and transparency of the election process.

Finally, we need judicial accountability for the militia killings of civil society actors. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her team have worked tirelessly on this front. We again call on Iraq to bring to justice the killers of innocent reformers and redouble its efforts to create a safe electoral environment for candidates and voters. Ehab Al-Wazni, Hisham Al-Hashimi and countless other activists, journalists and protesters deserve justice.

To this end, we applaud UNAMI's work documenting human rights abuses and violations and laying the groundwork for proper accountability. Together, let us hold perpetrators accountable, support free and fair elections in Iraq and prepare for the new phase of the campaign to defeat ISIS in Iraq, led by Iraq and its people.

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing. I also welcome the representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

Iraq has suffered enormously from wars, and its people are longing for a stable and prosperous life. We commend the Iraqi Government for its determination and efforts to address the many crises facing the country, in particular the socioeconomic and security challenges, and to bring about the Government's anti-corruption reform.

The Iraqi authorities' efforts to develop peaceful relations with their neighbours and to expand their partnership regionally and globally are praiseworthy. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/700), international cooperation remains essential to address the many challenges Iraq is facing.

With regard to the protection of human rights, my delegation deplores the obstruction of the exercise of fundamental rights and reiterates its call to the Government of Iraq to protect and guarantee the rights of peaceful protestors, civil society activists and human rights defenders.

With regard to the electoral process, we reiterate our support to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in assisting the Iraqi Government and the Independent High Electoral Commission in the preparations under way for the upcoming elections, with a view to ensuring free and fair elections that include all Iraqi social strata. My delegation also reiterates its call on the international community to provide the necessary support to the Iraqi Government with respect to these elections.

With regard to missing persons, property and archives from Kuwait and other third countries, my delegation commends the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait for the notable progress that they have made, and we urge them to continue in that direction in order to provide closure for the families of the missing.

In conclusion, it is regrettable that, at a time when Iraq is trying to overcome the severe crisis that it has

experienced in recent years, the transnational threat of terrorism remains present in the country with the recent terrorist attacks in Baghdad. The Niger reiterates that we must not lose sight of the fact that victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is not synonymous with its total eradication in this region of the world. That is why we call on the Iraqi authorities and the Global Coalition to Defeat Da'esh to remain vigilant and to continue the fight against terrorism, in order to thwart the dark motives of those evil forces.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, for her detailed briefing and acknowledge and appreciate her dedicated work for the benefit of the Iraqi people. I also welcome the presence of the delegation of Iraq at today's meeting.

First of all, on behalf of Mexico, I extend our condolences to the families of the victims of the 19 July attack. My country condemns all acts of violence and calls for the perpetrators to be identified and brought to justice.

With regard to the situation in Iraq and the upcoming general elections, I will focus my remarks on the following points:

First, we welcome the efforts of the Government of Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Development Programme to continue preparations for the elections. The holding of regular, free, inclusive and transparent elections is unquestionably a fundamental pillar in the building of any democratic State. We commend the support of the international community, not only through funding for UNAMI but also through the deployment of electoral monitoring missions.

Similarly, Mexico acknowledges women's increasing participation with regard to the upcoming elections, and we urge that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making in Iraqi political, economic and social life continue to be ensured.

Secondly, Mexico commends the progress made in institutional capacity-building such as the implementation of economic reforms and, above all, the fight against corruption and the promotion of accountability measures.

Thirdly, we note with deep concern that incidents of repression against demonstrators continue. Investigations of such incidents and the Prime Minister's stated support for peaceful demonstrations are encouraging signs. However, we urge the Government of Iraq to protect the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association. My country also condemns forced disappearances and the harassment of journalists and human rights activists, and we urge stepping up the fight against impunity.

Fourthly, my country firmly condemns the attacks carried out by the Islamic State on Iraqi territory, particularly those targeting civilians and diplomatic sites. While we encourage regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism, we urge the Government of Baghdad to redouble its efforts to promote a safe and intimidation-free environment during the upcoming elections, especially in view of the deployment of thousands of electoral officials and monitoring missions, as well as the protection of candidates.

Lastly, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons must take place in a safe, dignified, voluntary and orderly manner. The repatriation of 93 Iraqi families, including 245 minors, who were in the Al-Hol camp in Syria is certainly an encouraging sign. We hope that those families will be fully reintegrated in their places of origin. In echoing the call of the Secretary-General, we urge other Member States to follow in Iraq's footsteps and facilitate the return of their citizens currently in Al-Hol.

In conclusion, Mexico commends the progress made in the return of the remains of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals thanks to the assistance of UNAMI and the International Committee of the Red Cross. My delegation commends Iraq's active diplomatic efforts to promote security and stability in the region.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for her comprehensive briefing. I also welcome the representative of Iraq to our meeting today.

We commend the efforts made by the Iraqi Government in preparing for the upcoming October elections. We join the international community in supporting the Iraqi people to hold free and fair elections. We appreciate UNAMI and international organizations and partners for their strong commitment

to assisting Iraq in the elections, as well as tackling the multiple challenges currently facing the country.

We welcome all delegations of international observers deployed in Iraq at the invitation of the host country, and we stress the need to ensure security for the electoral process. Violence and threats against candidates and those engaged in the elections could jeopardize the credibility and legitimacy of any institution to be formed through elections. Therefore, we call on all relevant parties in Iraq to take the necessary steps to duly tackle the security concerns in the lead-up to the elections.

We are encouraged by the efforts made by the Iraqi Government in reaching out to regional and international partners that can help the country move forward on all fronts. We support the strengthening of cooperation between Iraq and the countries of the region in dealing with common challenges. At the same time, regional and international partners should support the promotion of security and stability in Iraq through cooperation and dialogue. Transborder threats should be addressed with full respect for the territorial sovereignty of the countries concerned.

Turning to humanitarian issues, we welcome progress on the issue of returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and continue to call on the relevant Iraqi authorities and international partners to strengthen their efforts to ensure the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return or settlement of IDPs, and avoid a crisis of secondary displacement. We also take note of the reported limitations and obstacles related to accessing humanitarian aid in Iraq. We call on the relevant authorities to tackle this issue and ensure the safety of international and local aid workers.

Last week marked the eighteenth anniversary of the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Bagdad, which killed 22 humanitarian workers. We take this opportunity to call on the Iraqi Government and every Government in the world to spare no effort in protecting aid workers from violence and threats.

We commend the strengthened cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait in the search for missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the return of Kuwaiti property. We welcomed the recent DNA identification of missing Kuwaiti citizens. The continued efforts and commitments made by the Government of Iraq in that regard are very encouraging. At the same time, we value the assistance of UNAMI

and the International Committee of the Red Cross to national authorities to uphold their obligations in accordance with resolution 2107 (2013).

Lastly, we would like to reaffirm Viet Nam's support for UNAMI and the relevant United Nations agencies in assisting Iraq to maintain stability and security, as well as providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflict, poverty and the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her briefing on the situation in Iraq. We also welcome the presence of the representative of Iraq at today's meeting.

We are closely following the changes taking place in the friendly country of Iraq, where the situation remains unstable. The precarious socioeconomic situation is triggering demonstrations among the people. The situation is aggravated by the sharp decline in State revenue owing to the fall in global oil prices, as well as the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic. In that regard, we support the efforts of the Government led by Mustafa Al-Kadhimi to stabilize the situation in the country, including ensuring security and the rule of law. At the same time, we understand that over the years a host of problems have accrued, owing to obvious reasons, and that they simply cannot be eliminated overnight. Iraq has had to recover from the events of 2003 and the subsequent challenging struggle against terrorists.

We understand that one of the priority tasks for the Council of Ministers at the current stage is to prepare for the early parliamentary elections scheduled for October. We note the progress made in preparations for the electoral process and trust that the elections will go ahead as planned. We understand how difficult it will be for the Iraqi leadership to incorporate the views of the entire political, social and ethnoreligious spectrum in the country. At the same time, we are convinced that such an inclusive dialogue will help to overcome internal divisions in Iraq.

We commend the continuation of dialogue aimed at restoring mutual trust and managing existing differences between Baghdad and Erbil. There is no doubt that further improvement of relations between them will help Iraq to strengthen its own security. Meanwhile, the resolution of accumulated ethnic and

religious problems will make it possible to effectively leverage the country's economic potential for the benefit of the entire Iraqi nation.

In turn, the international community should support Baghdad in developing comprehensive measures aimed at rebuilding the socioeconomic and humanitarian sectors, especially in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic. The country also needs to reconstruct the areas affected by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Baghdad and Kuwait deserve particular support in efforts aimed at the swift resolution of all outstanding issues in the Iraq-Kuwait dossier, taking into account the stable and positive trends observed in that process. That will serve the interests of strengthening peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

We welcome Baghdad's growing role in regional affairs, including across the Arab region. We believe that progress towards stability in the region must be gradual and based on equal cooperation among all regional and other stakeholders in resolving conflict situations and developing confidence-building and monitoring measures, which will ultimately lead to the establishment of a coherent mechanism for collective security and cooperation in the subregion. We invite all countries in the region, including Iraq, to cooperate in that area, including within the framework of Russia's updated collective security concept in the Persian Gulf.

We are concerned by the continued high level of the terrorist threat. Despite the successes achieved by Iraqis on the counter-terrorism front, the security situation in the country remains fragile. That is due, in part, to the increasing activity of underground terrorist groups that regularly carry out attacks in various parts of the country, including through the use of suicide bombers. That challenge can be effectively countered only through the broadest possible coordination of counter-terrorism efforts.

In that regard, we believe that all actors involved in the fight against terrorism in Iraq must respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi State and coordinate their actions with Baghdad. We believe that the presence of foreign military units in the country is acceptable only with the consent of the Iraqi authorities or following a relevant Security Council decision.

We call on all external players interested in stabilizing the internal situation in Iraq to refrain

from unilateral destructive steps that would negatively impact the situation both within and beyond the country. Iraq must not become an arena for settling scores and regional confrontation.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her briefing. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is doing a remarkable job in the service of the Iraqi people under the leadership of Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, who has, of course, France's full support. I also welcome the presence of the representative of Iraq here this morning.

I have three messages to relay today.

My first message is one of support for Iraq as it reaffirm its vital role in ensuring regional stability and security. The regional conference to be held in Baghdad on 28 August, which will be co-chaired by the Iraqi Prime Minister and President Macron, will be an opportunity for Iraq to assert itself as a beacon of stability in the region. France is firmly convinced that a prosperous and peaceful Middle East is inextricably linked to a sovereign and stable Iraq. That requires in particular the Iraqi authorities to exercise effective control over all armed groups present in the country. It also means pursuing the fight against Da'esh, as recent deadly attacks have shown that the terrorist group continues to be active in Iraq. It is imperative that the Global Coalition against Da'esh continue to support the Iraqi authorities by adapting its working methods to the threat.

My second message concerns the need to respond to the legitimate demands expressed by the Iraqi people, particularly since the start of the October 2019 protest movement. The organization of early elections, which are scheduled for next October, is very welcome in that regard. We are pleased that the Council has given UNAMI broader responsibilities, at the request of the Iraqi authorities, to support and observe the elections. By way of a national contribution, France has allocated €1 million to the financing of those activities. It is important that the elections have a high participation rate. It is therefore particularly vital that the climate be conducive to a peaceful campaign and the security of candidates, in particular those from the October 2019 movement and civil society, be guaranteed.

Responding to the needs of the population also means, of course, carrying out the reforms that the

country needs in order to overcome its dependence on oil, to fight against corruption and to ensure quality public services, especially in the field of health. It also means ensuring that the perpetrators of crimes against demonstrators do not go unpunished, which is, unfortunately, largely still the case today.

My third message relates to the humanitarian challenges facing the country, particularly in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic. It is crucial that the United Nations humanitarian response plan be adequately resourced. With regard to the situation in Sinjar specifically, it is vital that the security component of the agreement concerning that area be effectively implemented in order to allow for the return of the displaced Yazidi population. More broadly, we hope that the dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil will intensify in order to resolve all outstanding issues.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of missing Kuwaitis, as mentioned by the Special Representative, as well as missing third-country nationals. Progress on that front has been made with the identification of the remains of 10 additional individuals in July. We look forward to continued cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait to put an end to the suffering of the victims' families.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming France's full support for Iraq in the light of all the challenges it faces.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I wish to thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her very useful briefing. It is great to see her physically present here in this Chamber. I also welcome the representative of Iraq to the Council.

Norway fully supports the ongoing efforts in preparing for the elections on 10 October and commends the Independent High Electoral Commission and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq for the progress made in that regard. Free, fair and transparent elections with broad representation and participation, including of those internally displaced, are vital to the integrity of the electoral process and the stability of Iraq. We urge all Iraqi stakeholders to contribute to a conducive environment for the elections.

Successful elections require safe electoral environments, free from fear and intimidation, not least for female candidates and voters. We commend the June launch of the work plan to promote and monitor

women's electoral participation and encourage its continued prioritization as the election draws near.

Additionally, the security and protection of all Iraqi citizens, including their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, are essential. Once again, we condemn the continued targeted attacks against Iraqi protesters, human rights defenders, activists and journalists. We reiterate our call on the Iraqi authorities to end the cycle of impunity by investigating incidents and holding perpetrators accountable.

The security situation in Iraq continues to be fragile and volatile. We are concerned by the continued terrorist activity of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and we convey our deepest condolences to the victims and families following the appalling attack in Baghdad on 19 July. Furthermore, we call for the end of all attacks against diplomatic facilities and coalition forces.

Nevertheless, we are encouraged by signs of progress on justice and security issues, and welcome the passing of the Yazidi Female Survivors Law. It is vital that the United Nations support the Iraqi Government in implementing this legislation to ensure accountability, justice and reparations for the survivors. Furthermore, we commend the Iraqi Government's efforts aimed at promoting cooperation and regional stability, and we welcome the upcoming Iraqi Neighbouring Countries Conference in Baghdad. Regional and transnational threats, disputes and challenges, including environmental issues, should be addressed on the basis of the principle of good neighbourly relations and respect for the territorial sovereignty of the States in question. All actors need to uphold their responsibilities under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians.

Turning now to Baghdad-Erbil relations, we are pleased to see progress on the budget law, and we call for its expedient implementation. We urge the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to further develop their dialogue to resolve outstanding issues and promote increased cooperation. Similarly, we encourage broader security cooperation in the disputed territories and urge the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement.

I conclude by welcoming the progress made on the Iraq-Kuwait file and the recent identification of the remains of another 10 missing individuals. We commend the cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait in bringing that humanitarian file to a close.

Mr. Lipand (Estonia): I would like to start by thanking Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her thorough briefing. We would like to express our full support to the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I also welcome the representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

Estonia appreciates the continued commitment of the Government of Iraq to holding free and fair parliamentary elections in October and welcomes the progress in electoral preparations. We call upon all Iraqi stakeholders to contribute to an environment conducive to holding inclusive, credible and participatory elections, which are a crucial element in the path towards stability and restored public trust in the political system. The importance of public trust was well highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in her briefing.

Estonia welcomes the launching of the workplan of the higher committee to promote and monitor women's electoral participation and urges the Iraqi Government to ensure the full and equal participation of women in the elections. We also express our support for the Government's commitment to implementing economic reforms, fighting corruption and ensuring State control over all armed forces, in order to respond to the legitimate calls of Iraqis for improving the socioeconomic situation, governance and long-term stability of the country. In the context of continued attacks against demonstrators, political activists and journalists, we encourage the Iraqi authorities to increase its efforts aimed at ensuring accountability for those responsible for violations and at safeguarding the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. With regard to the Yazidi Female Survivors Law, we urge the Government to ensure its implementation and the development of necessary by-laws, which will ensure the return to normalcy for the survivors.

The continued terrorist attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), as well as attacks against diplomatic missions and coalition forces, are deeply worrisome. We strongly condemn such activity, which contributes to undermining Iraq's stability, and we call upon the Government to ensure that those responsible are held accountable. It is clear that the fight against ISIL is not over, and Estonia remains ready to support Iraq in that regard. At the same time, it is essential that all actors respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and refrain from any military action, as that would threaten the stability of the country.

We support Iraq's constructive engagement with its neighbours, including the planned conference with regional actors in Baghdad on 28 August.

We also commend the constructive engagement of the Iraqi Government with respect to the issue of irregular crossings of migrants from Belarus into the European Union. I would like to highlight that Estonia strongly condemns the instrumentalization of migration and the use of innocent people to advance political goals.

Turning to relations between Baghdad and Erbil, we encourage both Governments to increase efforts to implement the federal budget law and also reach agreement on other outstanding issues. That would contribute to increased stability for the country as a whole.

Ms. Prince (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): We begin by expressing our appreciation to Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing on the recent developments in Iraq and for her efforts aimed at discharging the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

We welcome the Government's commitment to conducting free and just elections. We recognize the importance of the enhanced technical support provided by UNAMI to the Independent High Electoral Commission, which has made significant advancements in its preparation for elections. UNAMI's deployment of additional electoral advisers will contribute to the integrity of the electoral process, and we encourage Iraq's international partners to positively consider the Government's request for electoral observers.

The elections will be a flagship moment for the people of Iraq in exercising their rights to freely choose their representatives, make their voices heard and bolster the trust between the Government and the citizens. To that end, we emphasize the importance of broad and genuine participation in the elections from all sectors of society. We encourage the Government and other stakeholders in the country to engage in dialogue in these critical weeks preceding the scheduled elections. We stress that the involvement of women in the elections and in Government will advance the shaping of an inclusive and prosperous Iraq, as women play an important role in the stability, progress and long-term development of nations. Indeed, the holding of free, fair and credible elections is critical to the future of Iraq.

Also important to Iraq's reconstruction is respect for human rights and the rule of law. The preservation of those core pillars requires accountability and justice, and we call on the authorities to ensure that the violators of human rights, including those who have targeted civil society activists, human rights defenders and peaceful demonstrators, are held accountable. In this context, we express concern at the fact that attacks by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continue to be carried out and that they continue to result in civilian casualties. It is imperative that the perpetrators of these attacks are also held accountable and that justice for the victims and survivors is secured.

In that vein, we recall the adoption of the milestone Yazidi Female Survivors Law and welcome the progress that has since been made, particularly with the establishment of a General Directorate of Yazidi Affairs, to which a Yazidi female lawyer was appointed Director General.

The overall stability of the region is closely linked to the security and stability of its individual countries. A collaborative regional approach to such challenges as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and terrorism is indispensable to regional peace, security and sustainable development. Barriers to this type of regional cooperation must be overcome, and, to that end, dialogue is a key tool. We therefore welcome the efforts undertaken by the Government to engage with countries of the region with a view to enhancing regional ties and coordinating on common issues and threats. The sustained engagement with international partners and key stakeholders is also important.

Before concluding, we recognize the dedication of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait in resolving the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, which is important to ensuring closure for the affected families. The progress that has been made, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, is indicative of their unwavering commitment to this file.

In conclusion, we emphasize Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence in handling its own internal affairs. We reaffirm our support for UNAMI and the Government of Iraq and continue to stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Iraq.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine

Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing, and I take note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/700) on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We welcome the participation of the representative of Iraq in this meeting.

Iraq is now weeks away from the much-anticipated parliamentary election scheduled for 10 October. Kenya commends the relevant Iraqi authorities for the preparations aimed at inclusive, transparent, free and credible elections, whose outcome would reflect the will of the people.

In that regard, we laud the collaborative efforts of the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Supreme Electoral Security Committee, the governorate electoral officials and other stakeholders and urge them to continue working together for the success of the elections.

We must also commend the United Nations for providing the necessary technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission and election monitoring. We particularly laud the Special Representative's continued regular engagement with the stakeholders and welcome the continued deployment of additional electoral advisers as part of UNAMI's strengthened technical electoral assistance project in support of the electoral process.

For the outcome of the elections to be truly reflective of the voice of the people, they must be not only free and transparent, but also devoid of fear, intimidation and boycotts. Every effort should therefore be made to attract the widest possible participation. In particular, the targeting of political activists and whistle-blowers should be prevented and dealt with by promptly holding those responsible to account, in accordance with the law.

On a positive note, Kenya is pleased that there are significant developments being made through the higher committee to promote and monitor women's electoral participation. That is a welcome step towards equity and inclusivity.

Kenya also takes note of other positive developments, including the substantial progress on the implementation of the Federal Budget Law through constructive discussions between Baghdad and Erbil. We encourage the parties to continue that positive impetus in order to build trust and shape strong relations for future prosperity.

On the security situation, Kenya condemns the continued attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in several governorates. We commend the Iraqi security forces for their continued response counter-terrorism operations. We call for coordinated regional and international support in a manner that promotes the security and stability of Iraq.

We further reiterate that Iraq should be protected from becoming an international arena for States and non-State actors to settle scores to the detriment of the security, political stability and socioeconomic progress of the country and its people.

Kenya takes note of the commendable progress made in the identification of an additional 10 Kuwaiti missing persons, whose families can now have closure. We encourage continued dedicated cooperation and look forward to further progress on that file.

On the humanitarian situation, Kenya welcomes the facilitation of returns to areas of origin. We continue to encourage the continued repatriation of refugees from the Al-Hol camp to enable their return to normalcy. In that regard, Kenya appreciates the role of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in carrying out stabilization projects. Furthermore, Kenya calls for more support to the humanitarian response plan to ensure that the 1.5 million people in need are supported, particularly during these challenging circumstances of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In conclusion, Kenya reiterates its call for all actors to uphold the political independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and that all actions should be informed by the needs of the Iraqi people. We affirm our support for UNAMI in its assistance to the Government and the people of Iraq to help them address foreseen challenges and ensure that the forthcoming elections are held successfully.

Ms. Farrey (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom commends the continued work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert. I thank her for her briefing. I would like to join other speakers in welcoming the representative of Iraq here today. I would like to make four points.

First, the elections on 10 October are critical to Iraq's stability and security. They follow the calls for

reform by ordinary Iraqis across the country in 2019. We remain committed to Iraq's democratic progress and welcome the efforts of the United Nations to support Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission to deliver a free, fair and credible vote in October. However, we remain concerned by the continued reports of threats and violence against independent candidates and activists and the possibility of a low turnout. We urge the Iraqi Government and the United Nations mission to enhance their efforts to communicate the Electoral Commission's progress in preparing for the elections in order to boost the turnout and increase the credibility. We call on all stakeholders to redouble their efforts and support for a peaceful electoral process in which Iraqis are able to participate without fear.

Secondly, the United Kingdom welcomes the outcome of the United States-Iraq strategic dialogue and the joint statement confirming a continuing basis for the work of the Global Coalition against Da'esh in supporting the fight against that group. We call on the international community to continue its close collaboration to secure Da'esh's lasting defeat. The United Kingdom continues to support the Government of Iraq, the Global Coalition and NATO in tackling the Da'esh threat.

Thirdly, we remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Iraq and, in particular, the 1.2 million Iraqis who remain internally displaced. We urge the Iraqi Government to continue working closely with the United Nations to ensure that internally displaced people are able to access assistance and return voluntarily and in a safe and dignified manner. The leadership of the Iraqi Government, working closely with the international community, is essential to finding durable solutions to the displacement in Iraq and to addressing the longer-term drivers of instability.

Finally, like other speakers, we welcome the ongoing cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait in the search for missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. The identification of the remains of a further 10 Kuwaiti missing persons is a significant step.

The United Kingdom stands alongside the Government of Iraq as it seeks to deliver free, fair and inclusive elections, combat terrorism and implement durable solutions for its internally displaced population.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Special Representative Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing, and we welcome

the presence of the Permanent Representative of Iraq at today's meeting.

In May this year, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2576 (2021), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for one year. That embodies the resolve and commitment of the international community to Iraq's peace, reconstruction and development. I wish to reiterate China's support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI. In the light of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/700) and the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I have three points to make.

First, the international community should continue to support Iraq in advancing its national political process. The upcoming parliamentary elections in October are a top priority on Iraq's current political agenda and a crucial step forward in its political transition. China supports the Iraqi people's independent choice of a development path that caters to their national situation.

We are pleased to see the positive progress on the electoral preparations. We support United Nations efforts to provide electoral assistance to Iraq and hope that UNAMI will play a constructive role in ensuring the smooth and successful conduct of the elections, underpinned by the Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned principle. Two recent shipments of office supplies to Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission are but one example of our practical support of the country's electoral preparations. Greater unity and cooperation among all Iraqi parties for more inclusive reconciliation and faster integration and development serves the fundamental interests of the Iraqi people. We support a better relationship between the federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq, as well as their enhanced coordination on the enactment of the 2021 federal budget law and finding inclusive solutions to issues of common concern.

Secondly, the international community should continue to support Iraq in combating terrorism and maintaining national security and stability. Since the beginning of this year, there has been a marked surge in terrorist attacks on Iraqi soil, causing extensive casualties and damage to its infrastructure. It is imperative to increase international support so as to help Iraq address the threat of terrorism, combat the remnants of terrorist groups and accelerate the

repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters. In order to do so, the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant needs to be further facilitated to support Iraq in bringing terrorists to justice in accordance with its domestic legislation.

Good-neighbourly relations between Iraq and the countries of the region can bolster their collective efforts to address cross-border challenges. China welcomes the joint work of Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and Kuwaiti property, as well as the progress achieved in that regard. Iraq has repeatedly protested against unilateral foreign military actions on its territory. We urge the parties concerned to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity in good faith and to put an end to any action that may endanger Iraq's security and stability and aggravate regional tensions.

Thirdly, the international community should continue to support Iraq in fighting the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and speeding up its recovery and development. Iraq has borne the brunt of the war since 2003. Its people have suffered tremendously and are eager to rebuild their homeland. The international community should translate its assistance commitment into action, effectively help Iraq rebuild its infrastructure, accelerate its socioeconomic development and reverse the plight of displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. Such assistance must not come with political strings attached.

Control of the pandemic is a pressing task facing the Iraqi Government, which we commend for actively rolling out the vaccination programme. We call on the international community to provide more assistance to Iraq in its fight against COVID-19. After Iraq was hit by the pandemic, China was one of the first countries to come to its aid by providing supplies, helping to set up a polymerase chain-reaction testing lab, sending a team of health experts and supplying them with vaccines. On 12 August, the third shipment of vaccines from the Chinese Government arrived in Baghdad. China stands ready to continue working with the rest of the international community to support the Iraqi Government in fighting COVID-19, accelerating reconstruction, restoring development and achieving long-term peace and security.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I welcome and thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her

trademark frank and excellent briefing. I would also like to welcome our Iraqi colleague to this meeting.

I begin by extending my deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones of those who tragically lost their lives in the fire at Al-Hussein Teaching Hospital on 12 July. I also wish to extend our condolences on the loss of life from the heinous terrorist attack carried out in Baghdad just one week after that. Ireland strongly condemns this attack and others carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Such attacks highlight the volatile security situation that persists across the country.

The continued malign behaviour of such actors threatens Iraq's stability at a crucial time, just ahead of elections that are critical to Iraq's future and the security of the entire region. I want to reiterate Ireland's full support for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We look forward to the planned elections proceeding on time, in transparency and in safety on 10 October. We have previously underscored our strong belief that women, young people and minority communities should be included in the electoral process. Recognizing challenging circumstances, not least the coronavirus disease pandemic, Ireland welcomes the continued progress in preparations towards free and fair elections, in particular the work undertaken by the higher committee to promote and monitor women's electoral participation.

I would like now to strongly echo the Special Representative's earlier appeal today to the Iraqi people themselves to come out on the day and to exercise their rights at the ballot box. We are pleased that the European Union will deploy electoral observers to Iraq, bolstering the expanded role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in monitoring elections, as we mandated here in the Council in May (see S/PV.8780). These will be important elections and we want to do all we can to build confidence around their delivery.

A vibrant civil society is vital to a thriving democracy, as we know, and to any credible electoral process. Any national effort aimed at promoting and protecting human rights requires ensuring that international human rights obligations are incorporated into domestic legislation, delivered on the ground and implemented in practice. Ireland therefore welcomes Iraq's recent adoption of a five-year human rights national action plan.

However, we remain deeply concerned by developments on the ground in terms of shrinking civic space, with disgraceful attacks on activists, journalists, human rights defenders and women's groups. We are also very concerned that accountability for such serious crimes and human rights violations remains very limited. Strong and coherent action on human rights is critical. We call for the full implementation of the human rights national action plan for justice, an end to impunity and fair-trial guarantees for all.

Earlier this month, we marked seven years since ISIL brutally targeted Yazidis in northern Iraq. We take this opportunity to call on the Iraqi Government to deliver accountability for the brave survivors of ISIL crimes, mostly women and children, by swiftly putting into practice the provisions of the Yazidi Female Survivors Law. We welcome the establishment of the General Directorate of Yazidi Affairs and the appointment of a Yazidi female lawyer as Director General to take forward this work.

We regret that the humanitarian situation remains dire for many Iraqis. Internally displaced persons are particularly vulnerable. We commend the Government of Iraq in securing the safe return of 93 families from Al-Hol camp in Syria in May. This is the beginning. It is important to follow up by ensuring the resettlement of these families and to work on the return and resettlement of others across the country in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner.

Finally, we know the stability of Iraq is inextricably linked to that of the region more broadly. With that in mind, I would like to note the commendable role played by Iraq in facilitating and indeed encouraging regional dialogue in recent months. We look forward to hearing the outcome of the proposed Iraqi-led regional summit later this month.

I conclude by echoing the comments of others today in commending the efforts of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait with regard to missing persons, and we welcome the progress we have seen in that respect in recent months, thereby bringing closure to many families.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for her valuable briefing. I

also welcome the participation of the representative of Iraq in our meeting.

Iraq is witnessing positive developments, especially in relation to the Government's efforts to fight corruption, implement economic reforms, promote security and stability by bringing weapons under State control, and implement the Sinjar Agreement. We also welcome the progress in the preparations for the elections to be held in October. We hope that the elections will take place in a calm and transparent environment and pave the way for a new chapter of political stability in Iraq. We also welcome any measure that promotes women's participation in that important national undertaking.

While we call on all the components of Iraqi society to support the Government and the Independent High Electoral Commission, we also stress the need for the international community to provide support and help Iraq in ensuring conditions conducive to successful transparent and credible elections, paving the way for a promising future for the country, in which national unity, democracy and the rule of law are promoted and the welfare of the people is guaranteed.

We commend once again Iraq's counter-terrorism efforts and the way it is addressing terrorist organizations. Despite their defeat on the ground, terrorist groups continue to destabilize the country and thwart its development. They continue to spread fear and chaos in Iraq and the wider region. Tunisia strongly condemns terrorist attacks and schemes and stands united with Iraq in its fight against this scourge. We also stress the need to hold the perpetrators of these crimes accountable. Furthermore, we stress the need to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity in line with the Charter of the United Nations, and we call for constructive cooperation in the fight against cross-border threats while respecting the territorial integrity of States and the principle of good-neighbourliness.

With regard to the relationship between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, Tunisia welcomes the progress made between the two and the agreement to resume federal budgetary transfers to the Kurdistan Regional Government. That is a positive step in the direction of resolving outstanding issues, and it paves the way for a constructive relationship that promotes stability in Iraq.

Despite continuous efforts to address internal displacement in Iraq, that issue continues to pose a

big challenge. Nearly 1.2 million displaced persons are still living in camps. We urge the Iraqi authorities to continue making efforts to ensure their safe return to their places of origin, which would promote security, stability and social cohesion.

My delegation would like to commend the role of UNAMI and all United Nations agencies working on the ground in Iraq. We highly value the efforts they make to support the preparations for the elections, fight corruption and ensure justice and accountability.

In conclusion, we commend both the Iraqi and Kuwaiti Governments for the positive results achieved, despite all the difficulties, on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals. We look forward to seeing those efforts continue and to achieving further progress on the issue of missing Kuwaiti property and the national archives.

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

I thank Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing. We appreciate the detailed briefing, the insights provided and the support given by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). I also welcome the representative of Iraq to this meeting.

The upcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq provide a valuable opportunity to further consolidate democracy in the country. A transparent, free and credible election conducted in a violence-free environment with high voter turnout will empower the new Government to implement reforms, improve accountability and meet the genuine aspirations of the Iraqi people, especially women and youth. We commend the steps taken by the Iraqi authorities and the Independent High Electoral Commission to ensure a free, fair and inclusive electoral process, despite constraints owing to the pandemic. The support, including electoral technical assistance, extended by UNAMI to the Independent High Electoral Commission in its efforts to ensure full preparedness for the elections is greatly appreciated.

India strongly supported the additional mandate provided to UNAMI to deploy an election monitoring team and to assist the Government of Iraq with the elections, including through a public information campaign to enhance election-related awareness among Iraqi voters (resolution 2576 (2021)). We take note of the update by the Special Representative of the Secretary-

General on the mobilization of the team and call for its early deployment to ensure the effective fulfilment of the monitoring mandate provided by the Council. We appreciate the financial support extended by various Member States to UNAMI and other United Nations agencies in implementing this mandate. In line with our strong democratic traditions, India contributed to the democratic and electoral process in Iraq as an observer of the 2018 elections, and we hope to make a similar contribution during the upcoming elections as well.

We are also encouraged by the increasing number of women candidates who are participating in the elections. The credible steps taken by the Government to promote women's electoral participation and to prevent and address violence against women candidates must continue so as to ensure full and effective participation of Iraqi women in the political process.

The successful recovery, reconstruction and economic development of Iraq are constantly threatened by the menace of terrorism. The recent report of the Secretary-General on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (S/2021/682) has provided another stark reminder of the critical danger posed by ISIL to the stability of Iraq and to regional and international peace and security. ISIL remains active in Iraq with a changed modus operandi. The group's core is now focused on regaining ground in Iraq and Syria, while its affiliates are functioning independently. These evolving phenomena are extremely dangerous and pose a new set of challenges to our collective efforts in the fight against ISIL and terrorism.

I express solidarity with all the victims and offer my deep condolences to their families in Iraq, who have suffered and continue to suffer from the scourge of terrorism. India had unfortunately lost 39 of its nationals to ISIL's terrorism in Iraq. Further, thousands of other Indian nationals had to be evacuated. We also recognize the immense sacrifices made by the people of Iraq, the country's national security personnel in particular, in their fight against ISIL. We cannot afford to lower the guard against terrorist groups. In this regard, we welcome the continued international efforts aimed at supporting Iraq to combat terrorism, restore stability, undertake reconstruction and train the Iraqi forces.

The constructive dialogue and engagement between the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government on the budget, revenue sharing and

border management has created a positive environment conducive to reaching a sustainable agreement on all outstanding issues. We encourage UNAMI to support and facilitate the dialogue as and when requested by both these Governments.

India condemns military action in Iraq's territory undertaken by its neighbours without the consent of the Government of Iraq under the pretext of counter-terrorism operations. There can be no violations of Iraq's sovereignty, and its territorial integrity and independence must be fully respected.

We welcome the sustained joint efforts of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait to locate, identify and repatriate the missing Kuwaiti and other nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. Kuwait's identification of 10 individuals from the remains sent by Iraq will help provide closure to the victims' families. We commend the efforts made by the members of the tripartite mechanism and hope that the parties will continue to strengthen their cooperation until the matter is resolved to the mutual satisfaction of Iraq and Kuwait.

India appreciates the efforts of the Iraqi Government to contribute to regional stabilization and overcoming tensions through dialogue with neighbouring States. We wish Iraq success in its initiative to convene a regional conference for fostering friendly relations among countries in the region.

Let me conclude by reaffirming India's steadfast support for a democratic, pluralistic, federal, unified and prosperous Iraq. As a long-standing friend, India will remain a willing partner of Iraq in its efforts to achieve economic recovery, peace and stability, national reconciliation and reconstruction.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Fatah (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Tirumurti, the Permanent Representative of India, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also thank Mr. Nicolas de Rivière on his outstanding efforts as President of the Council last month. I express my appreciation to Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for her valuable briefing.

The Iraqi Government continues to implement its programme to fulfil the promises that it has made to the Iraqi people. Despite tremendous and interconnected challenges, the Government is working tirelessly, as promised, to meet the demands of the people by preparing for the holding of early, free and fair elections, maintaining peace and security, combating terrorism, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and corruption, and implementing urgently needed economic reforms.

Since its formation, the current Iraqi Government has shouldered the task of restoring public trust, especially among young people, by taking the following steps. First, we are listening to the voices of the people and respecting their constitutional rights to peaceful demonstration, freedom of expression and protection. Secondly, we are providing support to young people through employment and housing. The Government has launched an initiative to provide long-term low-interest loans for the Dari housing project, which has received so far 3.5 million applications. Thirdly, we are promoting accountability for those responsible for violations by establishing a team to investigate them and ensure non-recurrence. The Government has taken legal action against members of the security service whose involvement in attacks against demonstrators has been confirmed. We have also arrested a number of people responsible for crimes against civilian activists and demonstrators. Fourthly, we are imposing the rule of law and bringing weapons under State control, while we are promoting security sector reform so to ensure human rights compliance in law enforcement.

With regard to COVID-19, in mid-August, the Government has launched a national vaccination campaign to vaccinate people against the virus. In that regard, we thank the United Nations and the World Health Organization for their role in providing vaccines through the COVAX programme. We also thank the United States for providing Iraq with 500,000 vaccine doses.

A number of tremendous security challenges are affecting Government efforts. Terrorism remains the greatest and most persistent threat. The Iraqi Government thanks the Security Council for showing its support and solidarity with the Government and the people of Iraq by condemning the latest cowardly terrorist attack against a market in Baghdad. The significant threats of terrorism are hindering the work of the Government and its efforts, especially its plans

for development. For example, terrorists have attacked power lines, which have resulted in severe material damage and disrupted services.

Iraq calls once again for its territories not to be used to settle political scores or carry out actions under the pretext of combating terrorism, thereby threatening the country's security and stability. We stress the need to respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for State sovereignty, good-neighbourly relations and cooperation. We call on the Security Council to pay serious attention to this matter and on all States Member of the United Nations to fully comply with these principles.

Iraq remains committed to cooperating with the international community to combat terrorism. During the fourth round of the strategic dialogue between Iraq and the United States, the parties agreed on the withdrawal of all United States combat forces from Iraq by the end of the year while maintaining cooperation through the international coalition against Da'esh. The parties also agreed on promoting long-term partnerships in a number of areas, including security, the economy, health care, culture, education, energy, the environment and finance.

Iraq is committed to providing support for the victims of terrorism, including the female survivors of the attacks on the Yazidi people. The Iraqi Government established the General Directorate of Yazidi Affairs within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in May. In line with our commitment to implementing the Yazidi Female Survivors Law, the Prime Minister recently visited Sinjar to meet with a number of female survivors where he listened to their needs.

Iraq is also committed to repatriating Iraqis stranded in the Al-Hol camp in Syria. The Iraqi Government recently repatriated 93 Iraqi families composed of 382 members, including 145 children, who were transported to the Jed'ah 1 camp in Ninewa governorate for rehabilitation.

The Iraqi Government is fully committed to protecting diplomatic and consular missions and their personnel in Iraq. The Government has made significant efforts to avoid the recurrence of rocket attacks launched by illegal groups that are seeking to destabilize Iraq and undermine its relations with the international community in its actions to combat terrorism.

Iraq is committed to cooperating with the State of Kuwait, as reflected in its continued commitment to paying all compensation it owes on time, with the most recent instalment of \$600 million having been disbursed on 27 July. With respect to missing Kuwaiti persons, Iraq welcomed the announcement by the Kuwaiti authorities of the identification of the remains of eight missing individuals, thereby bringing the total number of those identified to 28 out of the 69 missing. Since August 2019, we have returned the remains of the identified missing persons to Kuwait in two groups. In the meantime, we call on the tripartite commission and the State of Kuwait to announce the results of the DNA testing of the other remains as soon as possible.

Iraq's compliance with its commitments towards the sisterly State of Kuwait reflects the principles of cooperation, moderation and commitment to international law. These are pillars of our foreign policy, both within the region and throughout the world. Iraq has always sought to contribute seriously and effectively to efforts aimed at promoting regional stability and trust. Accordingly, Iraq has called on its neighbours in the region to attend a summit entitled the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, to be held on 28 August, with a view to promoting dialogue and taking new trusted steps towards establishing mechanisms for cooperation and lasting stability.

The upcoming early elections in Iraq are fundamental part of the Government's reform programme. That is why the Government has asked for United Nations support in monitoring them, pursuant to resolution 2576 (2021). On this occasion, on behalf of my country's Government, I would like to thank the members of the Security Council for adopting resolution 2576 (2021) and for fulfilling Iraq's request to observe the elections. I also thank the Secretariat, UNAMI and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in particular for their tremendous efforts aimed at helping Iraq implement the resolution. We look forward to receiving a robust and notable United Nations electoral team to carry out its work in Iraq as soon as possible and cover all Iraqi provinces.

We value the decision by the European Union to send an electoral observation mission to Iraq. Our Government seeks to establish a close cooperation with UNAMI and other international observation missions to facilitate the work of the observers and provide them with the optimal conditions to complete their tasks.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his steadfast and firm support for Iraq. He has repeatedly called for respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as the international community, through its ongoing cooperation, continues to support and assist my country and its people to achieve prosperity and stability. Also on behalf of my country's Government, I

wish to express our appreciation for the tireless efforts UNAMI has made in various areas, especially at the humanitarian and development levels, throughout the reporting period.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.