



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8910th meeting

Tuesday, 23 November 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco. (Mexico)

Members:

China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
India	Mr. Bhattacharyya
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mr. Kimani
Niger	Mr. Abarry
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation.	Mr. Polyanskiy
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Gonsalves
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America.	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-second report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2021/930)

Report of the Secretary-General on electoral process in Iraq (S/2021/932)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2021/946)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-second report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2021/930)

Report of the Secretary-General on the electoral process in Iraq (S/2021/932)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2021/946)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, and Ms. Amal Kabashi, Coordinator of the Iraqi Women's Network, 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/2021/930, which contains the thirty-second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), document S/2021/932, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the electoral process in Iraq, and document S/2021/946, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2021).

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

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: As much as I would have liked to be with everyone in the Chamber today, with the 10 October elections just behind us, we judged it more efficient to address the Security Council from Baghdad. It goes without saying that I very much look forward to participating in person early next year. Given the importance of the recent parliamentary elections, as

well as the political and security developments since, today's briefing will focus primarily on the electoral and post-electoral environment.

At the outset, I wish to make a resolutely positive observation — these were the fifth national elections held under Iraq's 2005 Constitution, and there is much for Iraqis to be proud of in these elections. As we have noted before, the elections were assessed as generally peaceful and well run, featuring significant technical and procedural improvements. All in all, they were a substantial achievement that Iraq's authorities and parties would do well to publicly acknowledge.

Moreover — and I cannot overstate this — the elections were hard-earned. Let us not forget that the October elections emerged from an unprecedented wave of country-wide demonstrations in 2019, which were marked by violence, excessive use of force, abductions and targeted killings and resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries.

There is no denying it — elections and their outcomes can provoke strong feelings. That goes for any democracy across the globe, and Iraq is no different. Depending on where one stands, emotions can run high. Most of the time, those strong feelings will spark intense debate — for instance, on the direction the country should go in. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Such debates are the bedrock of pluralism and demonstrate political engagement.

However, if such feelings and debates give way to undemocratic impulses, such as disinformation, baseless accusations, intimidation, threats of violence or worse, then — sooner or later — the door is opened to acts that are simply intolerable. On 17 October, parties rejecting the electoral results began demonstrations and sit-ins, which escalated on 5 November, with casualties reported in Baghdad. In the early hours of 7 November, an assassination attempt on the Prime Minister took place. That was a heinous act and a direct attack on the State that can only be condemned in the strongest of terms. Let me be clear — under no circumstances must terrorism, violence and/or any other unlawful acts be allowed to derail Iraq's democratic process. If we are to ease tensions, calm, restraint and dialogue are the only way forward.

The fact is that citizens in democracies often must recognize that, even if the results are not what one hoped for, the process itself could still be sound. In fact, one of the clearest signs of a strengthening democracy

is the ability for parties and electors to recognize outcomes — regardless of desired results.

In the case of Iraq, the aggregated votes at the national level do not necessarily translate into the number of seats some parties might have expected. Too many candidates in one constituency, for example, could have led to a fragmentation of votes. Interesting in Iraq's case is that women candidates seem to have been very successful — meeting and likely exceeding the 25 per cent women quota, which is a floor, not a ceiling.

What I am saying is that, while losing seats can be difficult to digest, it is important for any party in any democracy to examine the reasons for that loss and to draw lessons for future elections. If there are concerns of foul play, including manipulation, the established legal channels are open and, in the case of Iraq, widely used. But so far, and as stated by the Iraqi judiciary, there has been no evidence of systemic fraud.

In recent weeks, we have observed a severe lack of trust among parties, between parties and institutions and between parties and the authorities, not to mention the long-standing lack of public trust in both politicians and institutions. That is not without risk, as mistrust often leads to escalation. Hence our consistent calls for political dialogue to prevail. Again, any outstanding electoral concerns must be dealt with only through established legal channels, in accordance with the law. There is no point in using others as a scapegoat for electoral grievances.

Where do things stand as we speak? The results will be final only after ratification by the Federal Supreme Court, which will take place once the Electoral Judicial Panel has adjudicated on those appeals brought before it. Today I can only say that further patience will have to be exercised. The Electoral Judicial Panel is finalizing its work, and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is conducting a further examination of more than 800 polling stations based on the decisions issued by the Electoral Judicial Panel. Once that has been completed, IHEC is expected to send the final results to the Federal Supreme Court. While it would be preferable to have the final results ratified sooner rather than later, it should be noted that there are no constitutional time limits for ratification by the Federal Supreme Court.

Having said that, let me emphasize that any unlawful attempts to prolong or discredit the electoral

results process, or worse — alter the electoral results through intimidation and pressure, for example — can only backfire. I call on all stakeholders not to go down that path.

In the midst of this post-electoral turmoil, it is clear that Iraq cannot allow its national interest to be neglected. As I noted before, elections are never an end, but rather a means. While the risk of continued political deadlock is real, Iraq desperately needs a Government that is able to swiftly and effectively tackle the long list of unfinished domestic business. That is the primary responsibility of all political stakeholders. In other words, it is important for the current situation not to drag on. Statesmanship, leadership and sound judgment are all needed, as is a broad commitment to political dialogue, with factual information as a basis for deliberations and decision-making.

Clearly, time is of the essence. As I stated in August (see S/PV.8842), it is high time for Iraq to emerge from a prolonged political standstill and establish dynamic, responsive governance mechanisms. The current post-electoral phase is the moment for all political actors to demonstrate their determination, in service of all Iraqis.

Yet again, I can only refer to the events that led to the October elections in the first place. A lack of political, economic and social prospects made many Iraqis take to the streets. Their demands and grievances remain as relevant as ever. As we all know, simmering anger easily swells.

Plainly speaking, Iraq's current outlook is precarious, to say the least. In the absence of genuine reforms, the situation will not improve, on the contrary.

I would like to provide some final notes on the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. On 18 November, Kuwait announced the identification of another 19 Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons, bringing the total number of Kuwaiti missing persons and third-country nationals identified to date to 59 people — 57 Kuwaitis and two Saudis.

That breakthrough was possible thanks to the concerted, persistent efforts over the past couple of years, combining two elements — witness information and satellite imagery. I would like to emphasize the importance that the Government of Iraq not lose that momentum and use those elements to locate the more than 300 remaining missing Kuwaitis and third-country

nationals. I am confident that the strong commitment of all actors could expedite the resolution of that humanitarian file.

I am also pleased to report that, after considerable delays due to the coronavirus disease pandemic, on 18 November, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq successfully completed the training of 20 Iraqi staff of the Ministry of Defence on the use of ground penetrating radar, which, in addition to witness information and satellite imagery, could further contribute to locating human remains.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that the October elections were hard-earned and, importantly, technically well managed — a process for which IHEC and others deserve credit. The recent parliamentary elections can serve as an important steppingstone on a longer path towards regaining public trust. As we await the ratification of the results by the Federal Supreme Court, I can only underline that what happens in the coming days and weeks will prove to be even more significant for Iraq's immediate future. The importance of a sound and inclusive process for the formation of the Government cannot be overstated.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for the valuable information she provided and for her assessment of the situation in Iraq.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kabashi.

Ms. Kabashi (*spoke in Arabic*): My name is Amal Kabashi, I am a representative of the Iraqi Women's Network, which was established in 2004 as a civil society feminist alliance. The Network includes more than 100 local organizations from all over Iraq. I played a prominent role in drafting the first national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and in preparing the second plan, which focuses on the role of Iraqi women in achieving stability, security and peace, as well as combating terrorism and extremism.

As a feminist activist and a defender of women's rights, I would like to share with the Security Council my growing concerns over the assassinations, kidnappings, assaults, threats of assassination against, and defamation of, feminist activists and human rights defenders that women have faced, particularly during the popular protests in 2019 and 2020, all of which occurred with impunity. Over the past two years, Iraqi women have faced daily challenges in realizing their

full, equal and meaningful participation in establishing peace and ensuring protection from violence in Iraq.

In my statement, I will focus on three key issues that must be addressed to end this cycle of discrimination and exclusion against Iraqi women.

First, the elections and the present negotiations to form a new Government are critical both to ensuring women's meaningful participation and to promoting democracy in Iraq.

The early elections in Iraq last month were organized in response to the demands of the peaceful protests that shook the country from October 2019 to 2020. Women played a key role in those protests and defied social norms in order to do so. Protesters were confronted with the excessive use of force, which left more than 100 people dead and thousands wounded. Despite the announced boycott of the elections, they proceeded under the monitoring of the United Nations and the European Union. A total of 3,240 candidates, including 951 women, participated in the elections, competing for the 329 seats in the Council of Representatives. The elections resulted in the emergence of new and independent political movements.

Moreover, many women candidates received thousands of votes, indicating the general electorate's support for women's political participation. The results of the election are expected to raise the percentage of women's representation in the Council of Representatives to more than 30 per cent.

I would like to emphasize the critical role of, and need for, women as active participants in Parliament and in negotiations to form the new Government. Their meaningful representation must also be reflected through an increase in the number of women in ministerial positions in order to ensure gender equality and equal opportunity, as set out in the Constitution.

Secondly, while women's engagement and increased participation in the electoral process is encouraging, an enabling environment for their participation is also critical, as they still face serious barriers in that regard. During the 2014 to 2021 parliamentary sessions, we advocated for Parliament to pass a law against domestic violence. Despite the existence of a law in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, we did not succeed in adopting such a law in the Iraqi Parliament. That is due to the tyrannical mentality of many Iraqi legislators who reject such efforts because they claim such laws unduly

regulate family relations, despite the fact that the Iraqi Constitution guarantees protection from all forms of violence and abuse in the family, school and society.

Those fundamental principles, as well as Iraq's international legal obligations, require the establishment of national laws and regulations that protect women and girls from gender-based violence in all spheres of society. This year has witnessed the adoption of some encouraging legislation, such as the Yazidi female survivors law in April. That law is part of the transitional justice framework adopted by the Iraqi Government to address the consequences of terrorism and violent extremism and is in line with the content of the joint communiqué signed in September 2016 between the Iraqi Government and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The law focuses on providing material compensation to women survivors; however, it does not take the necessary measures to institutionalize psychological health and social services for the survivors and their children. The law also fails to address access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence and their children born to fathers affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), particularly in terms of registering their birth and obtaining civil documentation.

There are also gaps in Government programmes to ensure rehabilitation and provide support for the reintegration of ISIS families into their local communities, especially women and girls forced to join ISIS or marry their fighters. The delay in resolving the situation of those families makes them into ticking time bombs that threaten peace and social security.

Stability in my country requires strengthened and gender-sensitive law enforcement and justice institutions, which are essential for fighting impunity, corruption and militarism, all of which negatively affect women's rights and their participation in promoting social cohesion, reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Thirdly, a national mechanism to support the inclusion of women is critical to ensure oversight of adequate resources for implementing Iraq's national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). The absence of such a mechanism has contributed to the weakening of women's participation in decision-making bodies and development programmes.

As a national feminist movement, we have called on the Iraqi Government to form a national council for women's empowerment, with the participation of representatives from the Government, Parliament, the Supreme Judicial Council and women-focused civil society organizations, as well as the media. It is necessary to implement the women and peace and security agenda and to invest in Iraqi women's potential to reform the political process and build a State of equal citizenship and social justice.

In conclusion, I urge the Security Council to call on the Government of Iraq to fulfil its duty to provide a legal framework and the necessary mechanisms to protect women and girls and to support victims and ensure their access to justice in line with resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. That includes enacting the anti-domestic violence law, amending the Iraqi penal code and preventing attempts to legislate laws based on sectarian grounds to regulate personal affairs.

Secondly, I urge the Security Council to call upon the Government of Iraq to create a national council for women's empowerment and allocate the necessary budget to implement the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000).

Thirdly, I urge the Council to ensure that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq prioritizes protection for women's rights as it supports the Government of Iraq in its judicial and legal reforms in order to protect the rights of women and prevent gender-based violence in line with resolution 2576 (2021).

Fourthly, I urge the Council to call on the Government of Iraq to ensure accountability for the killing of human rights defenders and civil society activists during the 2019 and 2020 protests and to protect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Fifthly, I urge the Council to call on the international community to fund women human rights defenders, their organizations and all civil society representatives and non-governmental organizations that are working to promote human rights, gender justice and the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and sustainable development.

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

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert and Ms. Kabashi for their briefings. I also thank the Special Representative for her steadfast leadership throughout Iraq's election process.

In October 2019, the people of Iraq took to the streets and demanded change through peaceful protest. Since then, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) team has been essential in facilitating sound and credible elections designed to reflect the will of the Iraqi people.

In May, the Security Council decided that UNAMI should provide a team to monitor Iraq's parliamentary elections. Thanks to the many States that gave financial support, UNAMI provided five times more United Nations officials to assist the Independent High Electoral Commission than during the 2018 election. The report of the Secretary-General on the election process, issued on 8 November (S/2021/932), like the interim report of the European Union Election Observation Mission to Iraq, concluded that the polling was well managed and that voters cast their ballots in an orderly manner in a peaceful environment.

The Independent High Electoral Commission promptly resolved the minor issues that arose and, crucially, its partial manual recount matched the results, further demonstrating the integrity of the voting and counting systems. That is a remarkable achievement. It was a genuine opportunity for the Iraqi people to choose their leaders, and they did. Congratulations to all Iraqis on the election. And a special congratulations to the Iraqi women and members of the religious and ethnic minority groups who voted and won a historic number of seats in Parliament.

In a world with far too much democratic backsliding, the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people should be proud of that election. The Council, too, should be proud of those results and seek to support replicating them in the future. After all, the Security Council spoke in unison, authorizing UNAMI to provide electoral technical assistance and election monitors. The Council came together and provided the resources the Government of Iraq needed to meet the legitimate demands of its people. The Council helped strengthen democratic institutions. Let us continue to work

together, in this spirit of cooperation, on this file and across the Council's agenda.

Looking forward, we are eager for the publication of UNAMI's detailed analysis of all data collected from its monitoring activity, as previewed in paragraph 65 of the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/932). With continued international and domestic investments in Iraq's electoral system, future elections can be informed by that valuable data, build on the momentum and provide even greater opportunities for voters to peacefully chart their country's desires.

As the electoral process laid out in Iraqi law proceeds, we call on all countries to respect the process and allow the judiciary to carry out its constitutional duty independently and expeditiously. Iraq's leaders must engage in constructive dialogue to form a Government upon the certification of the election results, one focused on transparent governance to support the aspirations of all the Iraqi people.

The process of forming a Government should be done without fear, intimidation or the threat of violence. We therefore condemn in the strongest terms the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi, as well as any other efforts to influence the electoral process through violence, intimidation or coercion. Any threat against personnel of the United Nations or the Independent High Electoral Commission must be met with full condemnation by the Council.

As Iraq looks to complete the final stages of this successful election process and build on it for elections to come, it has a strong partner in the United States. We are committed to deepening our bilateral relationship and supporting Iraq's democracy. We continue to implement the outcomes of our strategic dialogue with Iraq and are laser-focused on economic development, climate adaptation, public health and human rights for all. We support a sovereign and stable Iraq. And this election takes us one step closer to that objective.

Mr. Bhattacharyya (India): I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and Ms. Amal Kabashi, Coordinator of the Iraqi Women's Network, for their briefings.

Let me begin by commending the people and the Government of Iraq for the successful and peaceful conduct of the parliamentary elections. We hope that

the successful completion of the elections marks the beginning of a new phase towards a stable Iraq. The people of Iraq, despite the difficult economic and security situation and the continued threat of terrorism, have expressed their will for a safer, inclusive and prosperous Iraq. We look forward to the early formation of the Government, which would fulfil their aspirations.

We also appreciate the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) for its diligent and independent work towards holding the elections. We share the observations of the United Nations and other international election monitors that the elections were technically sound and conducted in a free and fair manner. We also acknowledge the important role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in supporting IHEC and the Government of Iraq, as per the mandate provided by the Council, and contributing to a genuinely free and fair electoral process.

Women candidates running for parliamentary elections secured 97 seats out of 329, an increase of 14 seats over and above the seats reserved for women. That represents a significant development towards ensuring greater political participation by women in Iraq. We appreciate the steps taken by the Iraqi Government and IHEC to promote women's political participation in the electoral process and to prevent and address violence against women candidates.

India has strongly condemned the assassination attempt on the Prime Minister of Iraq and expressed its concerns for the casualties caused by the attack. Terrorism and violence have no place in any civilized society. They cannot be allowed to undermine peace and stability in Iraq.

We reiterate our support for the democratic process in Iraq and encourage all political parties to respect the results of the elections. We note the concerns raised by some parties on the electoral process. Any concerns regarding the elections or its results should be addressed through legal and peaceful means within Iraq's constitutional framework. Violence and intimidation should not be the tools for redressing those grievances. We urge the parties to reject violence and resolve differences through a peaceful and inclusive dialogue.

The menace of terrorism continues to pose a major threat to the security, stability, governance and social and economic development of Iraq. We strongly condemn all terrorist attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against the people of Iraq and

extend our sincere and deep condolences to the families of victims. We wish the injured a speedy recovery.

The recent attack in Diyala, for instance, is yet another reminder that, despite the successes of the Iraqi security forces in combating this group, ISIL remains active in the country and the region, with its affiliates functioning independently at many places in the world. It is critical that the international community and Iraq's partners continue their support and training to enable the Iraqi security forces in the fight against terrorism and build their capacity to address future threats. Such support and assistance should respect Iraq's sovereignty and laws, while helping it preserve its territorial integrity and ensure the irreversible defeat of ISIL.

India welcomes the outcomes of the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership held in August. The conference was an expression of Iraq's desire to develop friendly relations with its neighbours and give priority to the language of dialogue and non-interference in the affairs of other countries. I also commend Iraq's proactive role in promoting greater regional security and stability and its efforts in bridging differences among the countries of the region through diplomacy and dialogue.

We welcome the continuing cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait to achieve an amicable solution to the pending issues. We also appreciate the efforts made by the members of the tripartite mechanism and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We hope that the parties will continue to strengthen their cooperation until the matter is resolved to the mutual satisfaction of Iraq and Kuwait.

India's friendship with Iraq is steeped in history. Our people-to-people ties and our multifaceted bilateral relations are very strong. India has always responded to the urgent needs of Iraq. Our Technical and Economic Cooperation programme has grown from strength to strength over the years and has continued even during the coronavirus disease pandemic.

As a steadfast supporter of a democratic, pluralistic, federal, unified and prosperous Iraq, India will remain a willing partner of the new Government in its efforts to achieve economic recovery, peace and stability, national reconciliation and reconstruction.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I should like to thank our briefers this morning, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and Amal Kabashi, for their critical and very frank

assessments of the recent legislative elections. I am also delighted to see our colleague Mr. Mohammed Bahr Aluloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq, among us in the Chamber this morning. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert and her team for the vital role they have played in assisting and monitoring the elections. We are fully aware of the considerable challenges they have faced over time, and they can be sure of our recognition and continued support.

Ms. Kabashi's remarks this morning with regard to what she called the daily challenges facing Iraqi women and what she described as discrimination and exclusion were not lost on us. I was also struck by her determined message with respect to Iraqi women's aspiration to help shape and participate in the new Government. Her messages were very clear, and we thank her for them.

Ireland welcomes the holding of early legislative elections in Iraq on 10 October. Through its enhanced role in monitoring these elections, the United Nations has found that the electoral process was largely peaceful, as we heard this morning, and orderly. We commend the extensive efforts of the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in preparing and conducting the elections.

The importance of the contributions of all who provided support towards strengthening Iraq's democracy, including regional and international observers, cannot be understated. We look forward to the European Union electoral observer mission publishing its own comprehensive report early next year.

Most important, we salute the courage and determination the people of Iraq showed in exercising their democratic right in a very challenging environment. I want to pay particular tribute to women, minorities and the internally displaced for their participation. The predicted record number of parliamentary seats won by women, as we heard, is very encouraging. Ireland looks forward to the peaceful formation of an inclusive Government that responds to the needs and aspirations of all Iraqis.

Against the backdrop of these positive developments, Ireland deeply regrets the recent shocking assassination attempt on Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi and hopes that those who were injured make swift recoveries. We strongly condemn this and all other incidents or threats of violence, including those targeting members of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, IHEC and

those who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the electoral process was free and fair.

Iraq's stability is already being threatened by what Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert described this morning as a precarious situation at best. We remain concerned at ongoing attacks across the country, including by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, that have claimed lives in recent months. We reject all attempts to destabilize Iraq, as well as, of course, all forms of terrorism.

The Iraqi people gathered in a popular protest movement just over two years ago to call for system-wide reform. While their determination has borne fruit in the holding of early elections, hundreds of Iraqis tragically paid the ultimate price for this progress. Regrettably, violence and threats against political and civic activists and human rights defenders continue, in particular against women candidates. We know this happened during the recent electoral campaign period. We can and must do more to break down the barriers to women's full participation in political life and to foster a political and civic space that welcomes and protects all members of Iraqi society. We call on the Iraqi authorities to urgently deliver accountability and redress for the crimes committed and to implement much-needed and urgent reforms.

Turning briefly to the humanitarian situation, Ireland was encouraged by the second round of voluntary returns from the Al-Hol camp in Syria in September, combined with the first returns of families from the Jeddah 1 camp to their areas of origin. We reiterate that all returns must be safe, voluntary, and dignified.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge recent progress made in the identification of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, as well as on reparations. These are vital steps towards full reconciliation, and we commend the spirit of cooperation demonstrated between the two countries. Indeed, Iraq's exemplary commitment to enhanced engagement with its neighbours more generally has, in our view, the potential to greatly improve the region's stability. In that regard, we welcome the trilateral partnership among Iraq, Jordan and Egypt and Iraq's successful hosting of the regional conference held in Baghdad on 28 August.

Ms. Gonsalves: (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her comprehensive

remarks this morning, as well as her and her team's continued support for the people of Iraq, particularly during the recent electoral period. We also welcome Ms. Amal Kabashi, whose work towards safeguarding women's rights and strengthening gender equality must be not only commended, but also supported. In this vein, we thank Mexico, as President of the Security Council, for its commitment to including women civil society briefers in Council discussions and creating the space for this important exchange with Ms. Kabashi.

Despite the myriad complex challenges that exist in Iraq, it is encouraging to witness the Iraqi people's commitment to the national peace and security agenda and the democratic and inclusive framework within which this could be achieved. The milestone parliamentary elections that were held on 10 October, in advance of the constitutional deadline, exemplified the commitment of the Government and the Independent High Electoral Commission to the political, economic, social and democratic progress of Iraq. In this regard, we recognize the critical role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) since well before the holding of elections. In addition to UNAMI's provision of technical electoral assistance and advice, and the provision of a strengthened, robust and visible United Nations team, in accordance with its mandate, UNAMI's sustained efforts to build trust and keep voters informed about the electoral process, including through public outreach campaigns, are all indeed commendable. The slogan "Your country. Your future. Your vote" is one that we wholeheartedly support, as it advocated a people-centred approach to a process inherently inclusive of all voices, including, yes, women and minorities.

The holding of elections was a much-welcomed step in the right direction; however, it was also the start of a long road to recovery, which must begin with the peaceful formation of a new Government. We are hopeful that the newly formed and inclusive Government will prioritize the creation of a space for dialogue with the Iraqi people, so that their needs and aspirations can be met. Emphasis should be placed on the most vulnerable and marginalized, so that they may meaningfully participate in discussions about their future and the direction of their country.

Regional and international stakeholders and partners of Iraq must also contribute to a constructive post-electoral environment. The right political will and momentum could open the door to effective governance

and much-needed reforms. In that regard, we underscore the need for all actors within Iraq to contribute to an atmosphere of peace that facilitates a stable, secure and prosperous future. We condemn the attempted assassination against the Prime Minister, as well as the ongoing threats against UNAMI and others, which risk eroding the political progress that has been made so far. We also express our concern over the continued attacks carried out by Da'esh, which undermine all ongoing efforts towards peace and security.

We welcome that, amid the preparations for elections, the Government continued its efforts to achieve such national priorities as the strengthening of regional and international relations, an approach that is indispensable to successfully tackling challenges, including those that are common to the region. The coronavirus disease pandemic remains an issue with far-reaching consequences, and we welcome the joint efforts, including by the World Health Organization and UNICEF, aimed at supporting the Government of Iraq in its rollout of vaccines. On the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, we take note of the pandemic's impact on efforts to move forward in this area, yet we remain encouraged by the commitment of UNAMI, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Government of Iraq, to making progress and ultimately resolving this important matter.

In conclusion, we reiterate our unwavering support for the work of UNAMI, and all efforts aimed at achieving peace, security and prosperity in Iraq, in line with the country's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and dedication. I also thank Ms. Amal Kabashi for her very timely and concrete briefing to the Security Council. We thank her for her important work and for speaking up on behalf of women, girls and human rights defenders. I also recognize and welcome the representative of Iraq to this meeting.

Norway commends the Iraqi Government for the 10 October elections. Free, fair and transparent elections are a pillar of democratic governance and are indeed vital for transparency and fostering confidence and dialogue, as well as for ensuring effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

We commend the Independent High Electoral Commission for their significant technical and procedural improvements to the election process. And we also commend the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission, including with monitoring on election day. While the final election results are not yet ratified, we urge those with complaints and concerns to address them through the established legal channels.

Last week, the Council came together to condemn the assassination attempt against Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi (see SC/14692). It is regrettable that spoilers seek to destabilize Iraq at this crucial juncture. We now look forward to the formation of a new Government that will meet the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people, in particular those of women, youth and marginalized communities. As we heard this morning, an inclusive Government, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, is needed to address the underlying causes of conflict and instability, as well as to usher in much-needed economic, social and political reforms. We are happy to note that the elections may have led to an increase in women's participation in Parliament. We hope that will enhance their role in political decision-making and participation in the upcoming parliamentary period.

We also welcome UNAMI's efforts to promote human rights and build capacity on issues of accountability, justice and the rule of law. We are concerned about the reported lack of progress on accountability and redress for crimes perpetrated against demonstrators, in particular attacks against political and civic activists by unidentified armed elements, as well as a concerning pattern of intimidation against those publicly advocating for accountability in such cases. We encourage the Government to increase its efforts in that regard.

We remain concerned about conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq. Momentum should be maintained on the Yazidi Female Survivor Law, and we encourage an update to the 2016 joint communiqué by the Republic of Iraq and the United Nations on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

Finally, we also commend Iraq's participation during the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The effects of climate change

are a significant issue in Iraq and the region, and we encourage sustained diplomacy, with support from UNAMI, in order to advance regional dialogue and cooperation, particularly on the use and distribution of water resources.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her comprehensive briefing. I also thank Ms. Kabashi for sharing her perspective, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

Let me begin by congratulating the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission on conducting a technically well-managed and generally peaceful election on 10 October. We are encouraged by the improvements resulting from the application of technical and procedural measures. We welcome the positive assessment of the international election monitors from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in that regard. The efforts made by the Government of Iraq and relevant national authorities in preparing for the elections and preventing violence on election day are commendable.

We appreciate UNAMI and international actors for assisting the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission's efforts in the lead-up to the elections. UNAMI's objectivity in that endeavour has been well recognized. We reiterate our strong support for the role of UNAMI and United Nations staff in assisting Iraq in the face of multiple challenges, including the coronavirus disease pandemic and violent threats from various sources.

Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the security situation in the country. In addition to hundreds of terrorist attacks over the past few months, we also witnessed a failed assassination attempt against the Prime Minister, which the Security Council condemned in its 8 November press statement (SC/14692). Those who publicly advocate accountability continue to face intimidation or even assassination attempts.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of all forms of terrorism and the use of violence or threats for political purposes. We echo the Secretary-General's call on all parties, candidates and other stakeholders in Iraq to be patient and address their concerns through established legal channels while creating an environment that promotes national unity through peaceful and constructive dialogue. All stakeholders should respect

existing legal processes and facilitate a peaceful and independent judicial review of electoral appeals.

We are delighted at the diplomatic efforts by the Iraqi Government to gain international support for the country and play a stronger role in regional affairs. The Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, held in August, is a great example of those efforts. We welcome the strengthened cooperation between Iraq and countries of the region in dealing with common challenges. At the same time, the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq must be respected.

On the humanitarian front, we remain concerned about the internally displaced persons (IDPs) issue. Nearly five years have passed since the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, but the return of IDPs continues to be delayed. Nearly 1.2 million IDPs have not yet returned to their homes, while thousands of others have been displaced again after attempting to return. We call upon the relevant Iraqi authorities and international partners to redouble their efforts to ensure the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return or settlement of IDPs, as well as their access to basic services, particularly food and water.

We commend the strengthened cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait in the search for missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals and the return of Kuwaiti property. We welcome the efforts of each country's relevant authorities to shed light on the identity of missing persons. It is also encouraging to witness the collaboration among the members of the Tripartite Commission, as well as the efforts of the Technical Subcommittee. The assistance and leadership of UNAMI and the International Committee of the Red Cross in the implementation of resolution 2107 (2013) are invaluable.

Today is Viet Nam's last meeting in the Security Council on the situation in Iraq. While challenges remain, we have seen progress on the ground and in UNAMI's work. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage one and all to intensify their efforts and hope for continued success in future. I pledge Viet Nam's unwavering support for Iraq's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, as well as for UNAMI and the Government and the people of Iraq.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert and Ms. Amal Kabashi, Coordinator of

the Iraqi Women's Network, for their briefings and welcomes the representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

China applauds the successful holding of parliamentary elections in Iraq last month. We appreciate the great efforts made by the Government and the people of Iraq and fully recognize the electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

China condemns the 7 November attack on the residence of Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi, and we express our concern over the recent threats of violence against the Independent High Electoral Commission and UNAMI. We hope that all parties in Iraq will remain calm, exercise restraint, express their demands and resolve their differences and disputes through peaceful means within the framework of the Constitution and the law. China encourages all factions in Iraq to use the opportunity of the elections to further build consensus, strengthen solidarity and form a new Government in an orderly manner so as to lay a solid political foundation for further progress in nation-building and achieving development and prosperity.

The security situation in Iraq remains grim, with frequent attacks launched by the remnants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The international community should continue its unwavering support for Iraq's counter-terrorism efforts. The countries concerned should shoulder their responsibilities by facilitating the early identification and repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters and their families in Iraq.

On 4 November, the Permanent Representative of Iraq wrote to the rotating presidency of the Security Council, listing Turkey's violations of Iraqi territory and airspace between June and September. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/946) also documents Iraqi civilian casualties caused by air strikes and shelling. China hopes that Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity will be respected by all countries. Iraq's long-term peace and stability will not be possible without a conducive environment. The Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, held in August, achieved important consensus on supporting Iraq's peaceful development and a joint response to regional challenges and established a follow-up implementation mechanism, which China welcomes. We hope that Iraq and major regional countries will fully leverage that mechanism, strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust and work together to safeguard regional

stability. We appreciate and support the ongoing close cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing persons and property.

The United Nations and the Iraqi Government signed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in September. We hope that the United Nations development system will take this opportunity to focus on the development-related governance priorities of the Iraqi Government, while stepping up resource mobilization with concrete actions so as to help Iraq achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as soon as possible.

China has always been a sincere friend of the Iraqi people. Last week, the fourth shipment of assistance from the Chinese Government, containing 1 million doses of coronavirus disease vaccines, arrived in Baghdad. China stands ready to continue working with the rest of the international community to support the Iraqi Government in fighting the pandemic, strengthening the economy and improving people's livelihoods.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her briefing. I wish to reiterate France's full support for her work. I would also like to thank Ms. Amal Kabashi for her testimony. I welcome the presence of the representative of Iraq here among us today.

I would first like to thank the United Nations for its mobilization alongside the Iraqi authorities throughout the electoral process, in accordance with the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council. The electoral assistance provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq significantly strengthened the capacities of the Independent High Electoral Commission, which was able to organize the elections under satisfactory conditions despite the many challenges posed by the current political and security context.

France shares the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/946) regarding the October elections, which overall proceeded well, without any major security incidents. In that regard, I would like to commend the efforts of the various observer missions present on the ground. I would note in particular that of the United Nations, but also those of the European Union and the League of Arab States.

France has followed with the utmost attention the evolving security and political situation in recent weeks. We condemned in the strongest terms the assassination attempt against Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi on 7 November. That is an extremely worrisome development, and we reject any form of destabilization of Iraq, violence and intimidation. Iraq must not fall back into the cycle of violence that it unfortunately experienced in recent years.

The Security Council has made it clear that any challenge to the election results must be made properly through legal channels. All political parties that wished to contest the results were able to do so with the Independent High Electoral Commission, which carried out recounts where it deemed it necessary. France calls for calm and political dialogue among all sectors of Iraqi society.

The Iraqi men and women who went to the polls expressed legitimate aspirations, which must be heard and implemented in order to meet the desire for reform and democracy voiced by the population in 2019. That first requires the formation of an inclusive, representative Government and that women, who were elected in large numbers to the Parliament, be fully involved in the next Government.

In terms of security, the threat posed by Da'esh is not diminishing, and it is essential to continue the fight against terrorism. The international coalition, present at the invitation of the Iraqi authorities, will continue to support them in the fight against Da'esh. In that regard, we recall the importance of ensuring the protection of diplomatic compounds, as well as the bases that accommodate the coalition forces. We have seen that Iraq can play a positive role in the region. We welcome the balanced diplomacy that has been promoted by the Iraqi Government, which made it possible to launch a dialogue among the countries of the region. The Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, in which the President of the Republic participated, was a great diplomatic success for Iraq at the regional level. We encourage the Iraqi Government and its successor to build on that success and continue to foster dialogue among its neighbours. That will contribute to the stability of Iraq and the region as a whole.

Finally, I would like to commend the ongoing cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals and the

recent progress made on the return of missing Kuwaiti property. We encourage both States to continue their cooperation.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): It is always a pleasure to hear the briefings of Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert on the situation in Iraq. The picture that she just painted for us was very usefully complemented by Ms. Kabashi through her perspective as a civil society representative. I welcome the participation of the Ambassador of Iraq at our meeting today.

As was clearly made evident in the briefings, the quest for stability in Iraq must involve the inclusive participation of all sectors of society in a democratic framework that respects human rights, particularly those of minorities. By returning to peace and stability, the country will regain its former glory and again take up its rightful place in the Persian Gulf region.

In that regard, the Niger welcomes the holding of the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, organized by Iraq on 28 August, which sought to ease tensions among the countries of the Middle East. After more than nearly two decades of war and a period of insecurity and suffering of all kinds in the fate of the Iraqis, today they deserve to live in peace and prosperity.

My delegation welcomes the efforts of the Iraqi Government to tackle the numerous crises that the country continues to face, particularly the socioeconomic and security challenges, as well as the effects of climate change.

It always bears repeating that political violence can lead only to more division and increasing tensions among the political class, at a time when the electoral contests have just been held. The Niger strongly condemns the assassination attempt against the Iraqi Prime Minister, Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, on 7 November and the continuing threats of violence against the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the other international groups present in Iraq.

In that regard, the Iraqi Government must redouble its efforts to protect and guarantee the fundamental rights of all peaceful demonstrators, civil society activists and human rights defenders. The systematic attempts to threaten and prevent the people from exercising their fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression are contrary to the democratic values to which the Iraqi people aspire.

The Niger welcomes the holding of largely peaceful legislative elections in Iraq, which made it possible for the Iraqi people to make their voices heard at the polls in favour of reform. We call upon all political actors to respect the rules of democracy and to resort only to legal means should there be any complaints with regard to the results as announced. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq for the invaluable support it provided to the Government and its institutions throughout the electoral process.

With regard to the missing persons, property and archives of Kuwait and third countries, my delegation congratulates the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait for the notable progress achieved in that process. We take note of the agreement proposed by the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq to exchange technical laboratory capabilities between the two countries. My delegation encourages the Iraqi Foreign Minister to pursue his efforts with a view to locating the remaining Kuwaiti property and archives that have not yet been recovered.

In conclusion, the gains made thus far could be called into question without a resolute commitment to fight the Da'esh terrorists attacking Iraqi forces. More than ever before, Iraq needs our solidarity and our decisive action throughout the post-electoral period in order to help it turn the page on its recent tumultuous history.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her informative briefing on the situation in Iraq. We also listened carefully to Ms. Kabashi's remarks.

We welcome the early elections to the Council of Representatives of Iraq on 10 October. We trust that the members of Parliament will soon be able to reach an agreement on the formation of a new and capable Government that will have the support of all major political parties and ethno-confessional groups in the country. We understand that the Iraqi people are going through a difficult period and urge the leading political forces to demonstrate restraint and seek out mutually acceptable solutions to the internal political differences that have worsened since the elections.

It is clear that a vast range of issues that have accumulated over the years due to objective causes cannot be eliminated overnight. We fully appreciate

how difficult it will be for the future Iraqi leadership to take into account the views of the country's entire political, social and ethno-confessional spectrum in order to improve the state of affairs in Iraq, as well as to ensure security and law and order.

The situation is complicated by the challenging socioeconomic situation and the spread of the coronavirus disease. In that context, we underscore the need to provide international assistance to Baghdad in rebuilding the economic and humanitarian sectors of the country destroyed by the long-term war with Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. At the same time, we must acknowledge that terrorists are continuing to carry out regular subversive actions in various regions of the country.

We strongly condemn the attack on the residence of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, using unmanned aerial vehicles rigged with explosives, which we regard as an attempt to undermine the security and stability of the country.

We reaffirm our readiness to strengthen practical interaction with our Iraqi partners in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We note the importance of stepping up collective international efforts with the aim of relentlessly countering that global threat. We would like to highlight that such a challenge can be effectively overcome only through the broadest possible coordination of counter-terrorism efforts. In that regard, we highly commend the activities of the Quadripartite Information Centre in Baghdad with the participation of the Russian, Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian militaries. We believe that mechanism plays an important role in terms of coordinating efforts in the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Syria.

We welcome the efforts of the authorities of Iraq and the Kurdish Autonomous Region to settle their differences. We are convinced that the further improvement of relations between Baghdad and Erbil will contribute to strengthening security and solving the accumulated issues to the benefit of both the Kurds and the entire Iraqi people.

We consider any illegal military presence in Iraq unacceptable. It is our view that the presence of foreign military units in the country must be based only on the consent of the local authorities or an appropriate decision by the Security Council. We call on all external players interested in stabilizing the internal situation in Iraq to refrain from taking destructive unilateral action

that will negatively affect the situation in the country and beyond its borders.

In that regard, we trust that the countries of the region will tap into the existing diplomatic potential for the collective advancement of peace and stability throughout the Middle East, including within the framework of Russia's updated collective security concept in the Persian Gulf

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and Ms. Kabashi for her insightful statement.

The parliamentary elections on 10 October marked an important commitment by the people of Iraq to democratic principles and a significant step on the path towards Iraq's stability. We commend the Iraqi people for that commitment, regardless of the various challenges facing the country. We also commend the Iraqi Government and the Independent High Electoral Commission for holding technically well-managed, largely peaceful and orderly elections and welcome the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in supporting the Iraqi authorities throughout that process.

Estonia welcomes the historic development of having the highest percentage of women elected to the Iraqi Parliament. That is an especially noteworthy feat when taking into consideration the election-related incidents of violence and defamatory rhetoric that female candidates, among others, were subjected to.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the assassination attempt against Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi on 7 November. We call on the Iraqi authorities to bring to justice the perpetrators of that attack.

It is essential that all political parties and other actors accept the election results and address any possible claims for irregularities through the relevant legal procedures. We look forward to a peaceful and constructive dialogue and the timely formation of an inclusive Government, while addressing the needs and aspirations of all Iraqis. We hope that the next Government will continue along the path of implementing economic reforms, fighting corruption and ensuring State control over all armed forces in order to respond to the legitimate calls of the Iraqi people for improving the socioeconomic situation, governance and the long-term stability of the country.

With regard to the reports of continued attacks against demonstrators, political activists and journalists, we once again call on the Iraqi authorities for increased efforts to ensure accountability for those responsible for the violations and to safeguard the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Concerning relations between Baghdad and Erbil, we encourage both Governments to fully implement the federal budget law and to intensify efforts to reach an agreement on other outstanding issues, as that would contribute to the stability of the whole country.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our appreciation to the Iraqi Government for its constructive engagement on the issue of the irregular crossing of migrants from Belarus to the European Union. Estonia strongly condemns the instrumentalization of migration and using vulnerable human beings to advance political goals.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative and Ms. Kabashi for their excellent briefings. The United Kingdom offers full support to the continued work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I would like to make four quick points supporting what others have said.

First, I would like to reiterate the United Kingdom's condemnation of the 7 November assassination attempt against Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi. The United Kingdom deplores the use of violence to settle election-related grievances. I echo what the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has said on this. We also condemn the repeated and coordinated efforts to discredit both the election results and the efforts of UNAMI, as well as threats of violence against the Mission and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Such threats are unacceptable. We stand with the Iraqi Government, security forces and people in their rejection of political violence and strongly support the Prime Minister's call for calm and restraint.

Secondly, we remain strongly committed to the democratic process of Iraq. The United Kingdom welcomes the positive assessment of the international UNAMI election monitors and congratulates the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission on the notable improvements in

transparency, electoral process and procedure. Early, credible elections were a key demand of the protest movement in 2019, and we welcome the fact that the Government of Iraq has been able to deliver a technically well-managed election. We also welcome and strongly support the focus of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Ms. Kabashi and of the Iraqi Women's Network on progressing women's participation in the political process.

Thirdly, we welcome the continued work to ensure that electoral appeals are fairly heard. We urge respect for the legally defined processes and the rule of law after the Federal Supreme Court has ratified the electoral results. The Security Council will continue to monitor any attempts to undermine the election process, and we call on all political parties, candidates and others to exercise patience and understanding in the post-electoral environment.

Finally, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her update on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. We welcome the commitment of Iraq and Kuwait to making progress on this important file.

The United Kingdom stands alongside the people of Iraq and looks forward to the peaceful formation of a Government that will deliver meaningful reforms to address the needs and concerns of all Iraqis.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and Ms. Amal Kabashi for their briefings.

We take note of the Secretary-General's reports on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/2021/946) and on the Iraqi elections (S/2021/932).

In the world over, including in established democracies, national election processes often heighten political tension and acrimony, uncertainty and even lead to violent confrontations. These can be more pronounced in newer democracies and countries emerging from conflict, such as Iraq. Kenya therefore applauds the people and the Government of Iraq for the successful holding of the parliamentary elections, which reaffirmed their strong commitment to the fundamental democratic principle that vests the authority of the Government in the will of the people as the best hope for political, economic and social progress.

We commend the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) for conducting the parliamentary elections on 10 October and laud UNAMI for its critical constructive advice and technical assistance. We further acknowledge the essential role played by the Iraqi security agencies, noting that the elections were held in a challenging security environment.

Kenya notes with satisfaction the significant rise in and promotion of the participation of women in the election process, exceeding the targeted 25 per cent quota. That is a demonstration of the appreciation by the Iraqi electorate of the paramount role that women play in the pursuit of security, political stability and the well-being of all.

We urge all political parties, candidates and other stakeholders to demonstrate political maturity by submitting any electoral grievances, including claims of electoral fraud, to the established legal frameworks, in accordance with the electoral code of conduct, for redress.

We further call on the parties to accept the election results once legal processes are completed and engage in constructive dialogue in order to build an inclusive governance system that delivers for all Iraqis regardless of their religious, ethnic, cultural or social backgrounds. The Government should remain conscious of the imperative to pay special attention to vulnerable groups, especially women, children, youth and marginalized groups, including minority ethnic and religious communities.

We urge the newly elected parliamentarians to be aware of the critical importance of ensuring that the laws that they now go on to pass and that shape the State embrace all Iraqis regardless of their ethnicity, religion or origin. A major test of whether the democratic culture that Iraq is nurturing will lead to peace or feed future violence is the extent to which it is inclusive of all Iraqis.

We believe that, in particular, its treatment of the Yazidi people will show the world the strength and quality of Iraq's democracy. In that regard, laws should create an administrative apparatus in Iraq that is inclusive of all minorities, including in the issuing of national identity cards and other administrative mechanisms of the State, in particular as they relate to the Yazidi minority and its female population, including the survivors of the atrocities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

On the security situation, Kenya condemns the continued attacks by ISIL in several governorates and against the Iraqi security forces. It is deeply alarming that there were 157 attacks carried out by that group between August and October. We call for coordinated regional and international support in a manner that promotes the security and stability of Iraq through cooperative bilateral and multilateral approaches.

We condemn in the strongest terms the assassination attempt on the Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, as well as the targeting of UNAMI and Independent High Electoral Commission officials.

On the positive regional developments, Kenya commends Iraq for successfully convening the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership in addressing common challenges faced by the region. It is our experience that the active, positive engagement of neighbouring and nearby countries, particularly acting in a coordinated manner, is key to resolving difficult political and security crises.

Kenya takes note of the commendable progress made in the further identification of Kuwaitis and two third-country nationals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whose families can now have closure. We encourage continued, dedicated cooperation and look forward to further progress on that file.

This leads me, finally, to the humanitarian situation. The facilitation of returns to areas of origin is a welcome development. We continue to encourage the continued repatriation of refugees from the Al-Hol camp to enable their return to normalcy.

In closing, Kenya reiterates its call for all actors to uphold the political independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and for all actions to be motivated by the interests of the Iraqi people. We further reaffirm our support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq in its assistance to the Government and the people of Iraq.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for her briefing. I would also like to thank Ms. Kabashi for her statement. I am delighted that the Iraqi Ambassador is participating in this meeting.

My delegation commends the people and the Government of Iraq for the successful convening of early legislative elections on 10 October. Those

were commended by all observers, despite the difficulties encountered. We also commend the role of the Independent High Electoral Commission and UNAMI throughout these historic and credible elections, which were conducted in a climate of integrity and transparency. We also commend the participation of women which went above and beyond the 25 per cent quota initially set.

These elections enabled the Iraqi people to exercise their constitutional right to make their voices heard. It is crucial that all parties respect the will expressed by the men and women of Iraq in order to strengthen and preserve democracy and ensure that Iraq finds its stability and security once again and as well as its economic well-being.

At a time when we are commending the smooth running of the elections, we hope that the next step of this process will be carried out pursuant to the country's laws and Constitution. We would call upon all parties to show restraint and form a new Government that meets the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people and establishes the rule of law and the principle of citizenship.

Tunisia welcomes the efforts by the Iraqi security forces to target terrorist groups that seek to undermine the security, stability and development of Iraq. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi. We therefore underscore Iraq's important role of Iraq in strengthening regional security and in using the peaceful settlement of differences to settle various regional disputes.

We urge respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq in line with the United Nations Charter and relevant international instruments. Accordingly, Iraq must not be the theatre for regional conflicts.

The Iraqi Government has conducted economic reforms and undertaken brave measures to combat corruption and poor management. It is taking a holistic approach to achieving a developed, prosperous economy. We hope that these efforts will continue.

With regard to relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi Government, reconciliation efforts are praiseworthy, and parties are called upon to tackle pending issues, thereby paving

the way for peaceful relations that would benefit the country.

With regard to the issue of missing Kuwaitis, we welcome the progress made in identifying 19 missing persons this month thanks to cooperation between the two Governments and the assistance of the tripartite and bilateral subcommittees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNAMI. We hope that this cooperation will continue until this issue is concluded once and for all.

Tunisia reiterates its support for the people of Iraq and urges the international community to do the same in order to ensure that the country strengthens its national sovereignty and security.

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

Just as other members of the Council have done, I thank the Special Representative and Ms. Kabashi, for the information they have given us and for their assessment of the situation in Iraq. I also welcome the presence among us of the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

I begin by echoing the recent Security Council press statement (SC/14692) that unequivocally condemned the attack against Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi. We also condemn the constant threats being made against the staffs of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).

At the same time, Mexico warmly congratulates the Government of Iraq for organizing the recent parliamentary elections. In this regard, we recognize the efforts of IHEC and the security forces, as well as the follow-up and technical assistance provided by UNAMI, among other actors, which were crucial in the organization and unfolding of election day. I would like to recall that one of Mexico's first international cooperation actions in electoral matters was actually in Iraq, in 2005, with the training of the first members of the Independent Election Commission of Iraq.

Unfortunately, and this is something we sincerely regret, we observed that the participation of the electorate on election day was limited. Accordingly, one of the challenges that the new Government must address will be to restore confidence in the country's

institutions, for which, as we have already said, it will be necessary to undertake a series of reforms.

We would like to highlight the participation of women candidates and women who went to the polls. It is now essential that the Iraqi political forces give them their rightful place in the formation of the next Government and at all levels of decision-making. Likewise, this new Government must include members of the various minorities that make up Iraq.

The holding of free and transparent elections is certainly one of the elements for the construction of a democratic State, but it is not the only one. In this regard, Mexico notes with concern the little progress that has been made in terms of accountability for human rights violations, especially those related to the repression of demonstrators and the mistreatment of detainees. Furthermore, we deplore the seven executions that took place in August, which brings the total number of executions in Iraq in 2021 to 19.

Mexico reiterates its categorical rejection under any circumstances of the imposition of the death penalty. Capital punishment is cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, with irreparable consequences. We urge the Iraqi Government to abolish or declare a moratorium on the application of the death penalty.

Furthermore, Mexico reiterates once again its deep concern over the abuse of the invocation of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations in the context of the fight against terrorism. This practice runs the risk of de facto broadening the exceptions to the general prohibition of the use of force, as enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter and in the unwavering jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice. This is an aberration that we cannot accept and one that undermines Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I would also like to applaud the recent cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait in moving forward with the handover of the remains of Kuwaiti and other nationals so that they may be returned to their homeland, as well as other property that disappeared during the conflict, including national archives, which are important for the recovery of memory for the Kuwaiti people. We urge both countries to continue this cooperation.

Finally, Mexico welcomes the fact that, in recent weeks, Iraq has shown great diplomatic activism in the region and, above all, has demonstrated the political will to rebuild bridges of cooperation with neighbouring

countries. We hope that the recent parliamentary election will be a turning point in democracy-building in Iraq and in the entire Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I did not intend to take the floor again, yet I cannot help expressing my surprise over the obsessive persistence that our Estonian colleagues demonstrate at almost every Security Council meeting, seizing on any pretext to present a deceptive interpretation of developments at the Belarusian-Polish and Belarusian-Lithuanian borders. In that, we see them striving to distort the causes of a migration crisis that was recently exacerbated along some sections of the European Union's external border and absolving the Western States of their responsibility for dismantling the statehood of some Middle Eastern countries.

Today we are discussing problems in Iraq that have gone unresolved for years — a vivid example of a practice that persuaded hundreds of thousand people to seek a better life in Europe. By the way, our Estonian friends, as part of the international coalition at the time, also bear direct responsibility for that situation.

My Estonian colleague forgot to mention that any refugee who goes to Belarus is free to leave the country at any moment. More than 400 people did so recently, having returned to Iraq with the help of Belarusian authorities. Therefore, if anything should be condemned or rejected today, it is the hypocritical and inhumane policy of the European Union, which, contrary to its proclaimed values, tries to ignore harsh treatment of immigrants by Polish and Lithuanian border officers who, in doing so, are in violation of every international convention one can think of and, for that matter, of any norm of civilized behaviour.

We hope that our Estonian friends, who are trying to project the image of human rights advocates, will have enough courage to condemn this inhumane practice, which affects women and children, inside the European Union.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to thank and congratulate the representative of Mexico on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also thank Ambassador Martin Kimani, Permanent Representative of Kenya, for his able leadership 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 efforts and her briefing. I also take this opportunity to welcome Ms. Amal Kabashi. I thank her for speaking to the concerns of Iraqi women, who have made tremendous progress, alongside Iraqi men, in the political process and in raising future generations of Iraqis. We stand with her and all women of Iraq.

In line with resolution 2576 (2021), adopted at the Council meeting held on 27 May (S/PV.8780), the Iraqi people participated in the elections to demonstrate their determination to build the foundations of a democratic system and to launch reforms. The Iraqi people are now looking forward to creating a national Government capable of carrying out its tasks and providing basic services.

The elections have seen technical, procedural and security improvements that have contributed to much smoother elections than before. We dedicated every effort to these elections, which succeeded thanks to the work of the security forces and the political, social and religious stakeholders.

I seize this opportunity to welcome the statement issued by the Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all members of the Security Council and to the international community for accepting Iraq's request to ensure the United Nations monitoring of the elections. I also thank UNAMI, the European Union, our allies, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, local organizations, Iraqi security forces and the Independent High Electoral Commission.

I also welcome the statement of the spokesperson of the Secretary-General, the press statements issued by the Security Council and UNAMI in that regard, and the statement issued by the members of the Council (SC/14701), welcoming the success of the elections, and the Secretary-General's report on the electoral process (S/2021/932).

The Independent High Electoral Commission in Iraq has taken up the task of conducting the elections and considering appeals made in that connection. The Commission accepted the request of certain political parties to recount and retabulate a number of polling stations prior to any adjudication by the competent judicial authorities. The Commission is currently finalizing the results before referring them to the Federal Supreme Court. I note that the Commission and the Court have the final say regarding the results of the elections, which we are eagerly awaiting.

With regard to the events following the elections, particularly the failed assassination attempt against the Prime Minister, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the countries that have condemned that cowardly act. I thank in particular the Secretary-General for his 7 November press release (SG/SM/21007) and the Security Council for its 8 November press statement (SC/14692) in that connection. I also thank all regional and international organizations that have issued statements of condemnation in that regard.

Allow me to make a number of observations regarding a few elements in the reports of the Secretary-General on the electoral process and on the situation in Iraq (S/2021/946).

First, the Government of Iraq thanks the Security Council for supporting the security of the country. Iraq remains committed to implementing the national counter-terrorism strategy and the strategy to combat the financing of terrorism, in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). Under that national strategy, the Government enacted Law No. 8 of 2021, the Yazidi Survivors Law, to address damages and the harmful effects of crimes perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant against Yazidis and other components of Iraqi society, including Christians, Turkmens and Shabaks.

Second, on 29 September, Iraq repatriated 441 Iraqis who had been stranded in the Al-Hol camp in Syria and transported them to the Jeddah 1 camp in Ninawa. Iraq will soon receive 202 children from Syria. In that regard, Iraq calls on the international community to urge countries that have nationals among the foreign terrorists in Iraq and Syria to repatriate them as soon as possible, in line with the relevant procedures.

Third, we once again condemn the use of Iraqi territory to settle political scores, achieve political

goals or under the pretext of fighting terrorism. We call for respect for State sovereignty and the principle of good neighbourliness. Iraq addressed two identical letters to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General on 4 November, contained in document S/2021/927, detailing violations committed against Iraqi territory and airspace, which amounted to 1,950 violations in the period from 1 June to 30 September.

Fourth, with regard to the provision of basic services, we have achieved the following: establishing 1,000 model schools across Iraq; finding solutions to the salinity of the Euphrates and the low water levels in the river; issuing loans for macro projects, to the tune of \$14 million; raising the capital of the Iraqi housing fund to \$1.4 billion; and continuing our efforts to develop State institutions, including digitalization and e-commerce, as well as establishing a specialized court to enact cybercrime laws and providing remote working opportunities for women at home.

Fifth, regarding the empowerment of women, my Government has made the following efforts: establishing a centre for the prevention of gender-based violence, which provides health, psychosocial and legal services to victims, as well as issuing a national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which ensures the protection of women in times of peace and war; drafting a code of conduct for the internal security forces to ensure that women are protected from abuse and violence in law enforcement operations; setting up investigative and misdemeanour courts specializing in trying domestic violence cases; drafting a law that amends Iraq's penal code to include provisions for the protection of women's rights; and enacting a law that allows women to join the security forces, as well as Law No. 47, on supporting and empowering women, and ratifying the anti-human trafficking law.

Sixth, regarding the Human Rights Commission in Iraq, since 10 November the current members of the Commission have resumed their functions until a new Parliament is formed and new members are nominated.

Seventh, regarding human rights and the rule of law in Iraq, I have a number of comments to make in relation to the reports of the Secretary-General. They are as follows.

The Government has taken a number of measures to protect demonstrators and prosecute offenders. We set up a number of investigative committees, in 2019, 2020

and 2021, which have issued penalties against members of the security forces who acted individually and in a manner inconsistent with Government regulations.

Regarding the joint report issued by UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), entitled "Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: legal conditions and procedural safeguards to prevent torture and ill-treatment", I would like to note that competent investigative committees are considering that issue. The Foreign Ministry of Iraq has clarified to the United Nations that the report included some inaccurate information. We sent a memorandum to the OHCHR office in Iraq on 6 October. In the memorandum, we note that we find it strange that the report refers to certain violations committed in 3 out of 16 facilities under the authority of the Ministry of Defence. That is strange, particularly since the Ministry of Defence has only one detention facility. To date, we have not received a response to our memorandum.

Regarding the execution of seven prisoners, we stress that the proceedings against those defendants were conducted in line with national laws and procedures. In that regard, I note General Assembly resolution 75/183, adopted on 16 December 2020 (2011), in which the General Assembly stresses the sovereign right of all countries to develop their own national legal systems, including determining appropriate legal penalties, in accordance with their international law obligations.

Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have claimed that there were certain interferences in their humanitarian work. We request a list of those NGOs and their legal status to ascertain if those activities were conducted in line with their legal status.

The Secretary-General's report mentions that the International Organization for Migration issued nine birth certificates. We find that strange, especially since issuing birth certificates is the exclusive right of the Iraqi Ministry of Health.

Regarding internally displaced persons, especially men and boys who were previously detained and have recently completed their sentences, the report states that those individuals could be rejected by their communities given the disparity in the application of counter-terrorism laws by the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. We do not understand the link between the possible rejection

of those individuals by their communities and the disparity in the application of the law.

Regarding the coronavirus disease, the Supreme Committee for Health and National Safety continues to implement treatment and preventive measures to contain the number of cases. It will soon expand the number of people eligible for vaccination to include those 12 years of age and older .

Regarding the relationship between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, relations have never been better. Meetings continue at the highest levels with a view to reaching a comprehensive agreement, especially on issues related to oil, the budget and the deployment of security forces

Regarding desertification and climate change, the Iraqi Government has adopted a plan on the use of the closed-loop irrigation system. Iraq has also adopted its nationally determined contribution, in line with our commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Government has also adopted and launched a project to modernize the management of the Tigris and the Euphrates to generate renewable energy.

Regarding relations with Kuwait, establishing strong and solid relations with the State of Kuwait remains a priority of our foreign policy. We attach particular importance to the issue of missing persons, compensation, maritime borders and property. In that respect, I note the following.

Regarding the issue of missing persons, we are pursuing our bilateral cooperation under the Tripartite Commission. Most recently, the State of Kuwait received the remains of 19 individuals and was able to

identify them through DNA testing. The authorities of Saudi Arabia also recently announced the identification of the remains of one individual. Given the difficulties in conducting research, investigation and identification, the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs of Iraq made a humanitarian appeal to Iraqis last August to provide any information they had on the remains of Kuwaitis and Iraqis who went missing during the war.

Regarding compensation, Iraq has fulfilled most of its commitments to paying \$52.4 billion in full, except for an amount of \$629 million, which we will disburse in early 2022.

Regarding Kuwaiti archives and property, so far Kuwait has received eight tons of property and archives. Iraq will soon hand over more archives, including books and video tapes, to Kuwait through the appropriate channels.

In closing, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his steadfast support to Iraq and its sovereignty and territorial integrity. I appreciate the continued support of the international community in our efforts to ensure the well-being and stability of Iraq. On behalf of my Government. I commend the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and its Head and their continued support to Iraq in all areas, especially humanitarian and development, during the period covered by the report.

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

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.