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Seventy-seventh year

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New York

President: Mr. Hunter (United States of America)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Boateng
India	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland	Mr. Gallagher
Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-fourth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2022/366)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2022/368)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-fourth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2022/366)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2022/368)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, and Ms. Hanaa Edwar, co-Founder and Chairperson of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association.

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/2022/366, which contains the thirty-fourth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), and to document S/2022/368, 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: Our briefing today will hit many all-too-familiar notes, as notorious aspects of Iraqi political life are repeating themselves in a seemingly incessant loop of zero-sum politics. But before delving into that, I would like to share some impressions of the recent and ongoing wave of massive dust- and sandstorms hitting Iraq.

While a dust- or sandstorm as such is not a new phenomenon for the country, the current wave far exceeds Iraq's experiences in recent years. Briefing the Security Council in February (see S/PV.8975), I spoke

about the dangers of climate change and its effects, with desertification as a central concern. Ever since, Iraq has been battered by intense dust- and sandstorms, which obscure the sky and send people running for shelter, even resulting in sickness and death. Such storms are expected only to become more frequent. In other words, continued inaction, also here, comes at enormous costs.

Having said that, those storms are not the only concern for the people in Iraq. Iraqis continue to wait for a political class that, instead of being content with stale power battles, will roll up its sleeves to make headway on Iraq's long list of outstanding domestic priorities. As the Council knows, national elections took place well over seven months ago, and multiple deadlines for the formation of a Government have been missed.

It is true that Iraq is not the only country facing a protracted Government formation process. But Iraq's political leaders would do well not to hide behind that argument. It distracts from what is at stake.

It excuses a political deadlock while non-State armed groups fire rockets with apparent freedom and impunity. It excuses a political stalemate while ordinary people suffer. It excuses a political impasse while simmering public anger can boil over at any moment. My question therefore is: what will it take to realize that this situation is completely untenable?

To date, political leaders subscribe to the notion of dialogue or another round of negotiations, but the necessary willingness to compromise is painfully absent. If one visits any market, Iraqis will say that the national interest is yet again taking a back seat to short-sighted considerations of control over resources and power play.

It is therefore high time — and, yes, I am repeating myself — to return the spotlight on where it must be, namely, the people of Iraq and a programme of action that provides adequate service delivery to all citizens; an end to pervasive corruption, factionalism and the pillaging of State institutions; the implementation of desperately needed reforms; the diversification of the economy; predictable governance instead of constant crisis management; an end to impunity, with accountability as a key feature of the State; and, of course, reining in non-State armed actors while asserting the State's authority.

Over the past three years, the Council has heard me make these points numerous times, and one thing remains clear: the neglect of the population's most basic needs has gone on for far too long. Iraqi political inaction once again comes at a huge price, not in the short term for those in power, but for those desperately trying to make ends meet on a daily basis.

I will make a few more specific observations, beginning with relations between Baghdad and Erbil. The sorry pattern of ad hoc negotiations continues to prevail instead of what is critically needed: an institutionalized, predictable mechanism for the comprehensive, holistic and durable resolution of all outstanding issues. While that is evidently necessary, such a mechanism continues to be plainly missing, and that deficiency is sadly coupled with internal rivalries on both sides as well.

As I said previously (see S/PV.8975), a spirit of partnership and cooperation can and must guide all stakeholders, including with regard to the recent Federal Supreme Court ruling on the Kurdistan Regional Government oil and gas law. Having engaged with both sides on the matter, I am convinced that there is a way out. However — and there is no denying it — events in the past have gravely eroded mutual trust. It will therefore prove essential to build confidence, including by pledging to refrain from politically motivated, unilateral actions in future.

I will now zoom in on the political situation within the Kurdistan Region. In May 2021, I participated in an event at the University of Kurdistan, a promising event with all Kurdistan Region political parties present. In my remarks, I outlined the toxicity of political infighting and factionalism. I emphasized the importance of unity, not to be confused with uniformity. I spoke candidly about the need to move away from the yellow and green divide and the responsibility of leaders to guide outreach and to bring together opposing interests to focus on solutions that represent the interests of all peoples living in the Kurdistan Region, be it Erbil, Dohuk or Sulaymaniyah.

However, one year later, that promising event seems to have gained zero traction. On the contrary, divisions have deepened, with adverse effects on the peoples of the Kurdistan Region. Without repeating my remarks of more than a year ago — but it must be clear — the Kurdistan Region has a choice. With the Kurdistan Region elections scheduled for 1 October

later this year, it is of the utmost importance to level the electoral playing field, with all political actors, big or small, enjoying equal opportunities, while promoting a conducive electoral environment.

Additionally, I can only underline that geography does not always play to the Kurdistan Region's advantage. In other words, its unique geopolitical circumstances alone should be enough to give its leaders pause. Of course, that goes for the whole of Iraq as well. As I have said on countless occasions, whether we like it or not, a weak domestic home front only creates a welcoming environment for continued external interference.

On a related note, let me also comment on incoming missiles and rockets, which are disturbing, disruptive and dangerous. With the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claiming responsibility for up to 12 short-range ballistic missiles launched in the early hours of Sunday, 13 March, another worrisome chapter was opened. While the IRGC described the targeted location in Erbil as “the strategic centre for conspiracy and evil acts of the Zionists”, no evidence for such claims was found. The targeted site is known as a civilian area and a private compound.

Although both sides — Iraq and Iran — are currently engaged in dialogue and do not wish to escalate the issue, Iraq rightfully rejects the notion that it can be treated as the region's backyard, with routine violations of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Another case in point is the ongoing Turkish and Iranian shelling activities in the north. What are we therefore looking at — cross-border shelling and missiles as the new normal for Iraq? That is a very risky way to advance interests, which further weakens the State of Iraq. Needless to say, any country or actor seeking to settle a dispute has established diplomatic instruments, including our good offices, at their disposal.

With regard to Iraq's very own armed actors operating outside State control, the reckless firing of rockets, including at an oil refinery in Erbil some two weeks ago, remains alarming and unjustifiable. Those attacks seek to undermine Iraq's security and stability within an already extremely volatile politically charged post-electoral environment. The fact is that messaging by rockets and missile diplomacy are reckless acts with potentially devastating consequences. Let me also emphasize that Iraq does not need self-proclaimed armed arbiters. I once again underline the great

importance of asserting the State's authority. If the perpetrators are known, call them out. That is essential to upholding the rule of law.

Concerning the ever-pressing question of Sinjar, as we know all too well, Sinjar's recent history has witnessed horrific ordeals culminating in the heinous crimes committed by Da'esh. Today, while locals urgently need to rebuild their lives, they continue to face unconscionable obstacles owing to discord on security arrangements, public service provisions and a unified Administration. The Sinjar Agreement, signed by Baghdad and Erbil in October 2020, was seen by many as a glimmer of hope — a very first but important step in the right direction.

At the time, I expressed hope that the agreement would lead to a new chapter for Sinjar in which the needs of the Sinjari people would come first; that it would help displaced people return to their homes; and that it would accelerate reconstruction and improve public service delivery. But for that to happen, stable governance and security structures are, of course, prerequisites. Ever since the agreement was signed, I have called for its speedy implementation. Well, clearly, the opposite is true. To date, there is no agreement on the selection of a new independent mayor, and funds for a new local security force remain blocked, possibly owing to interference into unclear recruitment procedures.

Concerning the recruitment procedures, I once again emphasize the importance of pragmatism and realism. Not all people who joined other forces in the past can simply be painted with the same brush. It must be understood that some of them, absent the authority of the State, simply opted for a safety net, an identity and an income to provide for their families.

We have also called on both Baghdad and Erbil to reach out to the people of Sinjar and open their arms to all Sinjaris. Meanwhile, critics of the Sinjar Agreement have continued emphasizing the lack of consultations with local communities. While no one dismisses good advice — and certainly not the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq — I have to say that local consultations have taken place and continue to take place.

At the same time, it is true that both Baghdad and Erbil could and should step up their outreach at the grass-roots level. The implementation of any agreement, in particular this one, in winning hearts and minds is hard work. A piece of paper alone will not do the job.

One needs to be on top of it 24/7, own it, constantly and proactively engage with the communities on the ground, provide explanations and clarify why a decision has been made and why it benefits the Sinjaris in the medium to long term.

With that being said, significant divides and the fragmentation of local communities are also a fact of life in Sinjar, making things even more challenging. And within that context, it is also important to note that Sinjar has increasingly turned into an arena for external and domestic spoilers.

While some of that can be traced back to 2014 as Da'esh kicked off its atrocities, eight years later, it is time to acknowledge that, yes, mistakes have been made in the past, but Sinjar is part of the State of Iraq. By giving room to external and domestic spoilers, the situation will not get any better. And by now, all stakeholders would do well to acknowledge that fact, notwithstanding their gratitude for the help and assistance received in the past.

As Council members know, nobody said that the establishment of stable security and governance structures would be an easy ride. But there is no denying it: the lack of clear-cut coordination and implementation mechanisms, the dominance of partisan interests and the ongoing presence of spoilers significantly hamper meaningful progress. I have to say international observers have been deployed for less.

Clashes have again erupted in recent weeks. That sadly made Sinjari families pack their belongings again and find their way back to the Kurdistan region to seek shelter. So let me reiterate: Sinjaris' safety and security should be front and centre at all times. They deserve peace under the authority of the State. Domestic and external spoilers have no place in Sinjar. Baghdad and Erbil must assume their responsibility and urgently work together with only one objective: to improve the lives of people on the ground and promote the voluntary, dignified return of displaced persons to their homes.

I would like to say a few words on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. In recent months, the Iraqi Ministry of Defence has stepped up efforts to reach new witnesses through broadcasts, the media and consular and diplomatic channels worldwide. As a result, at least two potential new witnesses have come forward during this period, confirming that broadcasts with a wide

geographic reach can be helpful in eliciting information. That demonstrates that investing efforts in obtaining new witness information and insisting on acquiring satellite-imagery analysis from relevant Member States are essential to bringing this crucial and sensitive file to a close.

I will conclude my remarks by underlining once more the importance of overcoming the political stalemate. Significant domestic vulnerabilities are being compounded by the ongoing effects of the pandemic and global geopolitical tensions. A sincere, collective and urgent will to resolve political differences must now prevail for the country to move forward and meet the needs of its citizens.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Edwar.

Ms. Edwar (*spoke in Arabic*): In my capacity as a human rights defender and civil society activist in Iraq for many years, I have worked tirelessly with my colleagues since 2003 to rebuild social awareness on the values and principles of human rights and gender justice. We, as a civil society movement, have accomplished tangible successes in advocacy campaigns with regard to legislation, policies and programmes, as well as enhancing the demands for rights among youth, women, minorities and vulnerable communities. These successes have been reflected in the peaceful protests since 2011 and reached their peak during the popular uprising from October 2019 to 2020.

We acknowledge that the process of change towards building a democratic system and good governance requires diligence, hard work and immense patience. Now, after nearly 20 years, the indicators circulated by United Nations agencies and international research centres show a dramatic decline in the economic, social, cultural, health and environmental sectors in Iraq under the current political system, which is based on sectarian and ethnic quotas and does not have any constitutional or legal foundations. It is controlled by political blocs that lack national vision to run the country. Moreover, these blocs have shown a lack of trust within their own parties and among the various parties and governing authorities and institutions. They have plundered the State's resources and budgets for their narrow and personal factional interests and spread corruption and decay throughout the State's institutions. Even their reform campaigns and their fight against corruption

have been marred with massive corruption. The country's sovereignty has been violated by continuous foreign military and security interventions.

In my country, the rule of law has been replaced by the proliferation of arms within the hands of tribes and armed groups. Impunity is a prominent feature of our justice system. Therefore, citizens resort to tribal councils to resolve their disputes, rather than the courts of law. We are also witnessing the politicization of the justice system, whereby harsh rulings are issued against human rights defenders, journalists and peaceful protesters on the basis of malicious claims, including the application of the death penalty. Moreover, no investigation results have been published with regard to the pattern of assassinations and violent attacks against them; these attacks have merely been attributed to unknown armed elements. The fate of many detained and kidnapped activists and journalists, not to mention thousands of victims of forced disappearances, remains unknown, and the justice system has not taken any steps towards resolving their cases or bringing justice to their families. Meanwhile, those accused of serious crimes related to drugs and corruption are given light sentences, declared innocent or even granted special pardons.

Democracy in Iraq has been reduced to five general elections that have developed non-democratic situations where there is ongoing harmony among the ruling political parties, but which has led to a political stagnation. The current Government is meant to facilitate daily life, but its institutions are not performing their services because of the lack of a budget. The Parliament is also not functioning despite the fact that the Federal Supreme Court ratified the results of the election five months ago. Unfortunately, even the Federal Supreme Court, whose role is to interpret the Constitution, has in its recent decisions only solidified the political standstill, rather than contributing to resolving it for the benefit of the public.

The crisis of the people's mistrust of the ruling class and public institutions has deepened. Even in the October 2021 elections, the turnout did not exceed 35 per cent at most. Calls for reform and change launched by political decision makers are met with the old Iraqi saying that says that he who has proven himself cannot be tested.

In the face of the bitter and precarious reality in which we are living, reform and change have become an

urgent need to achieve stability, security and peaceful coexistence among Iraqis, in accordance with a new social contract that guarantees equal citizenship and embraces diversity, social justice and a peaceful transfer of power within the framework of a civil State. I appeal to the international community, before it is too late, to take a well-considered initiative within a specific time frame to put pressure on the Iraqi authorities and political decision makers to work seriously towards ending the political standstill and the divisions among them, put the interests of the Iraqi people before their own narrow interests, and respect their commitment to international human rights conventions. It is also important to include civil society organizations in that initiative to activate their role in the defence of human rights, public freedoms and the rule of law, force an end to impunity and promote peaceful coexistence, transparency, accountability, good governance and sustainable development.

The President: I thank Ms. Edwar for her briefing.

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

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

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her valuable briefing and efforts. I also thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar for her briefing to the Council. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Iraq, Mr. Mohammed Bahr Aluloom, in today's meeting.

Seven months after the successful parliamentary elections in Iraq, the United Arab Emirates stresses the need for the completion of the process of forming the new Government in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution. That is an important step for Iraq to take in order to fulfil its duties to its citizens and manage its affairs of State. The necessary reforms should also be conducted in all vital sectors upon which the Iraqi people depend, as their interests must transcend all other considerations.

The United Arab Emirates looks forward to the new Iraqi Government, once formed, to build on the

achievements made by Iraq in the past few years in the fields of development, security, reconstruction, strengthening cooperation and regional dialogue. We also urge the upcoming Government to build on Iraq's recent efforts to promote its effective engagement with its Arab surroundings to which Iraq belongs, and to play a positive role in the region. Those efforts included Iraq's participation in the Aqaba summit, held in March with the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during which several regional issues of importance were discussed, including the mitigation of the impact of the global economic crisis on the region, especially in the sectors of energy and food security.

Among the most prominent challenges the upcoming Government will face is the continued activities by the remnants of the terrorist Da'esh organization and its attempts to regain influence. Da'esh carried out nearly 69 attacks during the reporting period covered by the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/368). The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns those terrorist acts and commends the achievements of the Iraqi forces in combating terrorism. We emphasize our continued support for those efforts to establish security and enforce the rule of law in all areas.

The United Arab Emirates also condemns Iran's attacks on Erbil, in the Kurdistan region, in March and, most recently, on 11 May. We reiterate our categorical rejection of regional interference in Iraq's internal affairs, under any pretext, and stress the importance of other countries respecting Iraq's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, as well as the need to abide by the principle of good-neighbourliness, in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. We warn that the recurrence of such attacks could inflame the situation and undermine regional and international peace and security.

Achieving long-term stability in Iraq requires further promoting economic development and rebuilding vital sectors, including the health, education and energy sectors. Despite the relative improvement in the humanitarian situation since 2017, Iraq still needs international support to meet the needs of its people. The United Arab Emirates has supported Iraq in various fields, including through facilitating the return of displaced persons to Mosul, providing medical equipment to address the coronavirus disease pandemic and rebuilding areas liberated from Da'esh. I would like to highlight the rebuilding of a mosque and

two churches in Mosul as part of a joint project that started in March between the United Arab Emirates and UNESCO in the framework of the “Revive the spirit of Mosul” initiative.

Regarding the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, we support the continued efforts to achieve further progress on that important dossier, as well as on the issue of missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

In conclusion, my country’s delegation looks forward to working with colleagues on the Council over the coming days with a view to renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq so that it can continue to perform its important duties, in close coordination with the Iraqi Government. I would also like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Deputy Special Representative, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, and to wish her every success in her future endeavours. We stress our continued support for the Iraqi Government and people and our solidarity with the Iraqi Government and the measures it takes to maintain the security and stability of this country.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and welcomes the Permanent Representative of Iraq to today’s meeting. I also listened carefully to the statement delivered by Ms. Edwar.

For a period of time, all parties in Iraq have maintained close communication on the formation of the Government. The Iraqi Government continues to effectively perform its duties, and we hope that all parties in Iraq will expedite consultations on its formation so that substantive progress can be made as soon as possible and lay a political foundation for the realization of long-term stability. The international community should create a favourable environment towards that end. We support dialogue between the Iraqi central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government on all standing issues in order to jointly find sustainable solutions and further improve relations.

The security situation in Iraq remains dire. According to the Secretary-General’s report (S/2022/368), remnants of terrorist groups are still carrying out asymmetric attacks. The international community should continue to support Iraq in its fight against terrorism, root out the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other extremist terrorist forces,

prevent the return and spread of terrorist activities and consolidate the hard-won results of counter-terrorism.

China commends Iraq for bringing back a large number of its own citizens from the Al-Hol camp in Syria, and calls on relevant countries to assume responsibility, as Iraq did, and move forward as soon as possible on the identification and repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters and their families in Iraq.

Peace in Iraq and stability in its neighbouring area are inextricably linked. China welcomes that Iraq has been fostering friendly relations with countries of the region. It is worth highlighting that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq should be respected.

Iraq faces multiple challenges, such as food insecurity, rising prices, shortages of basic services and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The country faces the heavy burden of rebuilding and improving its economy. The international community should continue to help Iraq develop its economy and improve people’s livelihoods and encourage the country to explore a development path suited to its national conditions.

Iraq also faces the important task of tackling climate change. China supports the efforts of the United Nations to provide assistance to Iraq, particularly with regard to the necessary clean-energy technologies. In that regard, the United Nations country team should play its full role on the basis of the existing division of labour among the United Nations agencies.

China has always closely followed the advancement of peace and development in Iraq and provided assistance to the country according to our capacity. During the period when the security situation in Iraq was most precarious, Chinese enterprises remained in the country, thus helping to ensure the recovery of the national economy and the security of people’s livelihoods.

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, China took the lead in dispatching a team of pandemic experts to Iraq and providing the country with multiple batches of supplies and equipment, as well as in supplying the country with COVID-19 vaccines, thus lending robust support to Iraqi people and the pandemic response. China will continue to work with the rest of the international community in order to help Iraq achieve lasting peace and sustainable development at an early date.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Special Representative and Ms. Edwar for their briefings.

The United Kingdom commends the continued work of the Special Representative and the whole mission in Iraq. They have our full support.

The United Kingdom urges Iraq's political leaders to work together swiftly and peacefully to form a Government that delivers in earnest for the Iraqi people, a Government that can address and tackle the considerable challenges that Iraq faces, including on security, climate change and economic reform.

On security, the United Kingdom reiterates in particular its condemnation of the Iranian ballistic missile attack on Erbil on 13 March. Our support for the security and stability of the State of Iraq remains steadfast.

On climate change, we welcome the efforts of the Government of Iraq to mitigate the worst effects of climate change as we have heard about today, including the recent creation of a committee to oversee the preparation of national strategies. We thank United Nations agencies for their continued support on climate change and urged regional neighbours to engage with the Government in Iraq on water security.

On economic reform, Iraq's economy faces significant structural risks. Urgent reform is necessary so that Iraq is able to provide livelihoods and essential services for the next generation of Iraqis. A new Government would be able to accelerate and implement Iraq's ambitious economic reform agenda and prioritize improving Iraq's business environment.

We also remain concerned at the continued displacement of approximately 1.2 million Iraqis. We urge a new Government to work closely with the Humanitarian Coordinator to prioritize the reintegration of Iraq's remaining internally displaced persons, including ensuring civil documentation for all displaced persons so that they can access their rights and services.

We welcome the first meeting between the federal Ministry of Oil and the Kurdistan Regional Government following the Federal Supreme Court's oil and gas ruling. We encourage continued dialogue on this issue to find a sustainable solution.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative for her update on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. That is an important issue, and we commend the Special Representative for maintaining a focus on it.

All the challenges that we have heard about today require the formation of a stable Government in Iraq, and so I would like to finish by reiterating the importance of rapid progress in this.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert and Ms. Edwar for their briefings. I should also like to welcome the delegation of Iraq to the Council.

This afternoon I will address three issues relating to the situation in Iraq: security, the strengthening of institutions and economic recovery, and the humanitarian dimension.

First, the almost 70 attacks recorded between February and April attributed to the Islamic State are a source of great concern. We acknowledge the efforts of the members of the global coalition against the Islamic State in support of Iraq and would recall that counter-terrorism activities must always be carried out in keeping with the norms of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Mexico would also note its concern at the misuse of the invocation of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations in the context of combating terrorism.

Echoing other speakers, my country condemns the 13 March attack on Erbil, and we await the early publication of the results of the investigations. Another cause for concern is the security situation in Sinjar. We call for the full implementation of the 2020 agreements. The people of that region have been the victims of numerous attacks, and it is therefore necessary to strengthen coordination between Baghdad and Erbil so as to put an end to the violence in that area and foster social and economic recovery.

Turning to the political track, it is regrettable that more than seven months after the elections there is still no Government in place. Mexico urges the political forces to come to an agreement that would make it possible to establish an inclusive Government. A united and responsible leadership is vital to making progress in strengthening institutional capacity and the

reforms that the country needs. We also take note of the participation of women in the elections, and we hope that that will also be reflected in the distribution of the ministerial portfolios.

We also commend the good offices of the Special Representative in post-electoral dialogues and between the federal and regional Governments of Kurdistan. Along those lines, we call on both Baghdad and Erbil to resolve, in the constitutional framework, their differences and address the dispute resulting from the legislation on oil and gas management.

My delegation recognizes the improvement in the humanitarian situation in Iraq; however, challenges remain. It is pivotal to increase the Government's investment in quality basic services, especially given the current circumstances, in which international financing is becoming scarce and the risk of food insecurity is increasing.

Turning to other matters, it is our hope that other States will follow Iraq's example in the repatriation and relocation of families from the Al-Hol camp. The assistance of United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations, working in coordination with the Iraqi Government, is key to finding long-term solutions for those families and for internally displaced persons, especially with regard to expediting identification documents.

Mexico commends Iraq's diplomatic activism aimed at tightening regional cooperation in water management. We also take note of the progress made in terms of cases of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals.

Finally, we reiterate our delegation's readiness to work constructively to renew the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing on the situation in Iraq. We also listened very carefully to Ms. Hanaa Edwar.

We remain concerned over the internal political situation in Iraq, which is compounded by the difficult socioeconomic situation.

We cannot fail to notice that the attempts by certain external actors seeking to derive benefit from Iraq's domestic disputes are preventing a lasting normalization

in Iraq. In that context, we call on the international community to support Baghdad's efforts to stabilize the situation in the country, including through ensuring the rule of law and working towards social, financial and humanitarian sector recovery in the country. We deem it unacceptable that the country be turned into an arena for settling scores and for regional confrontation.

Despite the fact that the results of the early elections to Iraq's Council of Representatives were endorsed in December last year and that the presidency of the Council was re-elected in January, we note with regret that members of Parliament still have not managed to finish forming the highest bodies of State authority. We hope that the parties in Parliament will soon be able to agree on the appointment of a president and the makeup of a new Government, one that enjoys the support of all major political, ethnic and sectarian groups in the country.

We welcome the resumption in April of the dialogue between the federal authorities in Baghdad and the Kurdish autonomous region on addressing existing areas of disagreement, first and foremost in the oil and gas sphere. We are convinced that further addressing this issue will also help address existing ethnic and sectarian problems and allow the economic potential to be more effectively leveraged for the benefit of the Iraqi people as a whole.

Despite Baghdad's achievements on the counter-terrorism front, the security situation in the country remains volatile, including as a result of the recent increased activity of clandestine terrorist groups. According to the most recent report of the Secretary-General (see S/2022/368), in various provinces of the country, attacks by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters, including suicide bombers, are continuing. They destabilize the already turbulent atmosphere in the area of regional security.

Once again, we would underscore that that challenge can be effectively tackled through the broadest possible coordination of counter-terrorism efforts. We believe it necessary to ensure that all parties involved in the fight against terrorism in Iraq respect its State sovereignty and coordinate their efforts with those of the country's official authorities.

In that context, we note the activities of the Baghdad Quadripartite Information Centre, with the participation of representatives of Russia, Iraq, Iran

and Syria. The Centre does important work in terms of coordinating counter-terrorism measures in the region.

For our part, we intend to continue to assist in building the capacity of Iraq's security forces, first and foremost by promoting bilateral military and technical

cooperation, particularly since Moscow and Baghdad have long cooperated closely in fighting ISIL and other terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq.

Mr. Gallagher (Ireland): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her, as always, informative updates on the situation in Iraq, as well as on the question of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. I would also like to thank Ms. Edwar for her important briefing and to acknowledge the presence of our Iraqi colleague.

It has been more than seven months since Iraqis cast their ballots in the October parliamentary elections. Yet, as we heard today, disagreements and division — the loop of zero-sum politics, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General called it — continue to obstruct the election of a President and the formation of a new Government.

In October 2019, Iraqis took to the streets to demand reforms. Their demands remain unanswered. We have recently seen fresh demonstrations against the ongoing political deadlock. We urge the relevant actors to resolve their differences and swiftly form a Government that responds to the legitimate needs and aspirations of all Iraqi people. That is all the more important at a time when Iraqis, like others, face the spectre of growing food insecurity. Iraqi women must be full participants in all aspects of Government formation, while the aspirations of Iraq's young people must also be addressed.

The security situation in Iraq continues to be a cause for concern. Ireland unequivocally condemns the 13 March missile attacks on Erbil, claimed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. There is no justification for such an act of violence against the territory of a sovereign country.

We are also concerned by a recent uptick in attacks attributed to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. Those attacks regrettably remind us of the enduring threat posed by the group to Iraq and elsewhere.

As we heard, the situation in Sinjar is deeply troubling. We call on Baghdad and Erbil to implement

security arrangements, in close consultation with Yazidis and other communities living in Sinjar, who have suffered for too long from a lack of security.

Reports of as many as 10,000 individuals fleeing violence in Sinjar in recent weeks are deeply concerning. We call on all actors to exercise restraint, engage in dialogue and respect Iraq's territorial integrity.

Iraqis have waited too long for accountability for human rights violations in their country, including those committed against demonstrators, activists, journalists, human rights defenders and women who are targeted for their participation in the public sphere. I again thank Ms. Edwar for her important testimony on behalf of civil society today.

Today is the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. I am extremely troubled by recent reports of killings, abductions, torture and sexual violence perpetrated against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons by armed groups in Iraq. Such persecution is intolerable and unacceptable. I call on the authorities to end the culture of impunity that emboldens perpetrators and denies victims and survivors their right to justice.

As the fifth most climate-vulnerable country in the world, Iraq faces myriad problems, including water scarcity, extreme temperatures, desertification, drought, a lack of clean energy sources and, as we heard from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General today, dust- and sandstorms.

Tensions within communities over water resources and migration from drought-ridden rural areas to ill-equipped urban ones are just two examples of the risks and challenges that can contribute to the humanitarian situation and instability in Iraq.

We welcome Iraq's pioneering of a green paper, and we encourage further efforts, including by the new Government, once formed, to enshrine climate mitigation and adaptation into policy and to prioritize a much-needed green transition.

Efforts to address such risks should consider the disproportionate impact that the fallout of climate change has on women and girls. We commend the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in that space, including the recent engagement with community-based initiatives aimed at raising awareness about gender equality and the

leadership role of women in addressing the adverse effects of climate change.

Finally, we note that Iraq continues to play a commendable and constructive role in regional cooperation and mediation at a critical time. We look forward to the renewal of UNAMI's mandate at the end of this month, and we offer our full support to the Mission and its leadership.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I thank Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her comprehensive briefing. We appreciate the close cooperation of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq with the Government of Iraq in providing the necessary assistance sought by it to tackle the multiple challenges being faced by Iraq. I thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar for her insights. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to this meeting.

We take note of the discussions among various political parties in Iraq towards the formation of a new Government. I reiterate India's support for the democratic process in Iraq and encourage all political parties to work together for the early formation of a new Government that can take measures to fulfil the aspirations of the Iraqi people, especially women and young people, and promote inclusiveness and reconciliation.

We also note with appreciation the positive steps taken by Iraq to implement the national counter-terrorism strategy. Only through such efforts can we eliminate the threats posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups in Iraq. We welcome the continued cooperation of Iraq with the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Despite the success of the ongoing counter-terrorism efforts by the Iraqi security forces, ISIL remains active in the country, as acknowledged by the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/63). ISIL's ability to launch attacks at a steady rate, including through hit-and-run operations and ambushes, is deeply concerning. The focus of the Security Council should be to eliminate every threat posed by ISIL and other terror groups in Iraq and elsewhere in the world. We support the continued international efforts to assist Iraq in combating terrorism, including through the training of Iraqi security forces.

Military actions inside Iraqi territory by Iraq's neighbours are a clear violation of Iraq's sovereignty.

Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected. Similarly, the continued possession of arms and weapons by non-State groups in Iraq outside State control is also a matter of great concern. Armed groups in Iraq should disarm and show commitment to democratic principles.

We applaud the Government of Iraq's concerted efforts to maintain friendly and cordial ties with all its neighbours and to facilitate dialogue between countries of the region. We also welcome the ongoing cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait to achieve an early amicable solution on the issue of missing Kuwaiti persons and third-country nationals, as well as the return of Kuwaiti property.

India's friendship with Iraq is steeped in history. Our people-to-people ties and multifaceted bilateral relations are very strong. India has always responded to the urgent needs of Iraq. There are more than 1,700 Iraqi students pursuing higher studies in educational institutions in India and around 15,000 Iraqi citizens visit India every year for medical treatment in various hospitals in India.

India remains steadfast in its support for Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We hope to continue our partnership with the new Government, as soon as it is formed, in furthering Iraq's endeavours towards peace, stability and prosperity for its people.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Ms. Edwar for their briefings. France commends the Special Representative's outstanding work in Iraq in a very difficult context. I would also like to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Iraq among us today.

In October 2021, Iraqis went to the polls to elect their parliamentary representatives. They have now been waiting seven months for the appointment of a prime minister and the formation of a Government. It is therefore urgent that the political actors make the compromises necessary for reaching an agreement. The same applies to the appointment of a president of the Republic. I take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of the participation of Iraqi women in the political life of their country, and, in that regard, I welcome the fact that there are more women parliamentary representatives than ever before.

Many issues await the next Government's attention. I am thinking in particular about issues concerning security. In that regard, we strongly condemn Iran's ballistic-missile attack of 13 March. It is an unacceptable attack against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Our concern about the threat posed by Da'esh remains undiminished. In that regard, I would like to express our gratitude for all the work carried out by the Iraqi security forces and the Global Coalition against Da'esh. Together with the Iraqis, France will remain committed to combating terrorism.

France also accords special attention to the Sinjar situation. The efforts of the Iraqi Government at the highest level to implement the Sinjar Agreement on the security, governance and reconstruction of the district enjoy our full support. The ceasefire between the Iraqi armed forces and certain armed groups must be sustainable and, above all, allow for the return of the more than 4,000 families that were forced to leave the district following the escalation that occurred between late April and early May. Moreover, we stand ready to fully provide assistance in attending to the needs caused by those internal displacements.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, constructive cooperation between the federal Government and the autonomous Kurdistan Region is imperative. Accordingly, we call on Baghdad and Erbil to institutionalize their dialogue on all relevant issues, including political, economic, energy and security issues. We are extremely grateful for the good offices of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in that regard.

I would also like to mention the regional context, which has direct consequences for the situation in Iraq. France welcomes the Prime Minister's commitment to promote regional security and stability. I also recall the importance of the dialogue between Iraq and Kuwait, with regard to the missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals. We welcome the progress mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/366) and encourage both States to pursue their cooperation.

As the Special Representative recalled at the beginning of her briefing, Iraq has experienced substantial sandstorms in recent days, resulting in numerous hospitalizations and the upheaval of daily life of the country. The frequency of such storms has only increased in recent years. That is a visible consequence

of global warming and desertification. In that regard, I would like to express France's full solidarity with Iraq, which joined the Paris Agreement last year.

As the negotiations to renew UNAMI's mandate approach, I would like to draw the attention of every member of the Security Council to the importance of environmental and climate issues in Iraq. Our support for the Iraqi authorities and people in the fight against climate change will be unconditional.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), Ghana, Kenya and my country, Gabon. We thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her informative briefing on the most recent developments in Iraq and on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We also thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar for her briefing. And, of course, we welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Iraq at this meeting.

On 27 May 2021, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2576 (2021), which extended the mandate of UNAMI to 27 May 2022. As we are only a few days from its expiration, now is the time to legitimately take stock of the Mission's implementation of its mandate and the situation in Iraq. To that end, we will structure our statement along three main lines: the political, security and humanitarian dimensions.

The peaceful holding of the 10 October 2021 parliamentary elections has been a source of hope for many Iraqis, although the announcement of the results was marred by tensions that resulted in an electoral dispute. The willingness of all political actors to abide by the provisions of the Constitution has demonstrated their commitment to the political stability of Iraq and given the Iraqi people a reason for optimism.

Unfortunately, the persistent disagreements have continued to have a negative impact on the political environment in Iraq. The inability of the Council of Representatives to reach a consensus on proceeding with presidential nominations has put the country at an impasse, with implications for the constitutional timeline that highlight the fragility of the political process under way. The persistent lack of unity among political actors is creating an additional obstacle to achieving the reforms that are imperative for the functioning of the country.

The rapid formation of a new Government is therefore crucial. It will meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people for stability and socioeconomic progress. In that regard, the A3 urges the various political parties to overcome their differences in a spirit of compromise and engage in an inclusive political dialogue, with a view to reaching a lasting agreement that will lead to the implementation of political and socioeconomic reforms and counter the adverse effects of climate change, characterized by extreme weather conditions.

The establishment of institutionalized and periodic dialogue between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government is also crucial. We therefore underscore the urgency of a structured and institutionalized dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil so that the Iraqi people can reap the dividends of peace, democracy and prosperity. In the light of that, we take note of the fact that the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq signed a decree establishing the holding of the sixth parliamentary elections for the Region on 1 October 2022.

The A3 welcomes the continued support of UNAMI for post-electoral activities, including its support for the Independent High Electoral Commission. In particular, we underscore post-electoral review activities that will enable the Commission to use the lessons learned from previous elections to strengthen institutions to ensure the soundness of future elections in Iraq. We also commend the Commission on its efforts to that end.

Iraqi women have demonstrated their readiness to become part of the political fabric in winning a number of parliamentary seats, exceeding the quota established by the Constitution, thereby showing that they are not only willing but also ready to play more important leadership roles, including in the political arena. We therefore urge the new Government to take into account those results, including with regard to the appointment of women to posts requiring leadership and responsibility.

The security situation remains volatile and worrisome. The large number of asymmetrical attacks carried out by Da'esh and unidentified armed groups targeting the Iraqi security forces and the use of explosive devices and ballistic missiles have continued to maim innocent civilians, including women and children. The escalation in violence is likely to hamper efforts to maintain the peace and stability that were hard won in Iraq.

We also note with concern the remaining tensions in relation to security between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. We call on all parties concerned to exercise restraint and avoid any action that could undermine the security and stability of the country and the region. We commend the commitment made by the Iraqi Government to continue dialogue with the international community on major issues, such as security and counter-terrorism, as well as its collaboration with the United Nations to provide them with the necessary security support for their operations, especially with regard to granting them access to areas that remain affected by restrictions related to countering the coronavirus disease.

The A3 condemns the military operations led by external actors and reaffirms that Iraq must not become an international arena where States and non-State actors can settle their disputes to the detriment of the security, political stability and socioeconomic progress of the people and the country. In that regard, we encourage Iraq to continue its initiatives aimed at strengthening its resilience and promoting regional stability.

Despite the improvement in the humanitarian situation in Iraq seen since the end of large-scale military operations against Da'esh in 2017, there are still considerable needs in that area, and the most vulnerable people are the main victims of the current situation. The A3 is pleased with the assistance that the United Nations, in coordination with the Iraqi Government, continues to provide to displaced and repatriated persons and refugees, despite the dramatic decrease in financing for humanitarian assistance. We welcome the continued commitment of the Iraqi Government in favour of the repatriation of Iraqi families from Al-Hol camp, in the Syrian Arab Republic. We encourage the repatriation of refugees in dignity in a secure environment and on a voluntary basis so that they can go back to a normal life.

We are especially pleased with the commitment undertaken by the United Nations, alongside the regional office of Kurdistan, to strengthen the implementation of mandatory reporting of gender-based violence in partnership with a local non-governmental organization and to inaugurate a one-stop service centre of assistance in Mosul for women who are victims of violence.

The climate crisis in Iraq is also a source of concern. The violent sandstorm of 5 May, which affected seven Iraqi governorates, including the capital, Baghdad,

demonstrate that. It caused the loss of one human life and the hospitalization of more than 5,000 other people for respiratory problems.

Water is also a significant challenge in Iraq. According to the Iraqi authorities, water reserves have been reduced by half, in comparison with 2021. Water scarcity, which is exacerbated by increasingly severe droughts and a decrease in rainfall, is a major challenge for the 40 million inhabitants of Iraq. That will have a direct impact on harvests and is a threat to food security for the whole country.

For that reason, the A3 is pleased that the Iraqi Government prioritized the development of climate resilience and fighting the continuing exacerbation of the effects of the climate crisis and its corollaries. We call on the Secretary-General to involve all regional actors to commit constructively to a constructive dialogue on water-sharing, the scarcity of which is often a source of conflict among neighbouring countries.

We cannot conclude without mentioning the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. The A3 recognizes the increased efforts of the Iraqi Government to find new witnesses who might provide relevant information with regard to the locations of potential burial sites. We hope that there will be other positive developments in the search for missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

We would like to reaffirm the full support of the A3 for UNAMI's efforts in implementing resolution 2576 (2021), including with regard to the assistance it provides to the Iraqi Government.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert for her useful briefing and Ms. Edwar for emphasizing the important issues of human rights defenders and women's roles and political participation.

I will address four core issues today: the formation of a new Government, security, climate and human rights.

First, seven months ago, the Iraqi people came together to vote in parliamentary elections. It is unfortunate that since then no progress has been made on the formation of a new Government. The political stalemate must end. An interim Government is not in a position to fully address the multiple challenges facing Iraq. It is vital that all Iraqi political actors take the steps necessary to form a Government expeditiously,

and work together towards a more peaceful and prosperous Iraq.

The elections saw historic participation by women — both as candidates and voters. We hope that participation is reflected in the new Government.

We also urge the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to further develop their dialogue and resolve outstanding issues to find long-term solutions for increased cooperation.

Secondly, with regard to security, we have heard again today that the security situation remains fragile. We call on all parties to exercise restraint and avoid escalation. We would like to commend the sustained diplomacy by Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi aimed at building regional dialogue. Yet we are alarmed by the recent escalation of tensions and clashes in Sinjar, which have deeply affected the local community, primarily the Yazidi community. Those clashes have resulted in the displacement of thousands of civilians, increased protection concerns and made the difficult work of reintegrating internally displaced persons and returnees harder. We welcome the increased effort by the Iraqi authorities in cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to reintegrate displaced Iraqi families in their home communities. That work is demanding, yet one of the most important for establishing lasting stability in Iraq.

Thirdly, Norway commends the Iraqi authorities for their prioritization of climate action. As President Salih said last week, Iraq's water scarcity is a matter of national security. We fully support the continued provision of technical assistance from UNAMI in supporting the Government's priorities on climate action, and we encourage sustained efforts towards regional cooperation on water management. Now is the time to invest in a renewable future. Such efforts will be strengthened by, and therefore should include, civil-society organizations.

Finally, sustained efforts to advance human rights, justice, accountability and the rule of law are needed to end the cycles of violence that drive conflict in Iraq. We are concerned by the limited progress in investigations related to the 2019 protests and the delays in the appointment of a board of commissioners for the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, and we recommend that sufficient budgets be allocated towards the full implementation of the Yazidi Female

Survivors Law, to ensure that survivors are able to access all relevant benefits.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing. I welcome the delegation of Iraq to the meeting. We listened carefully to Ms. Edwar.

Brazil acknowledges the importance of the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We commend once again UNAMI's assistance to the parliamentary elections held in Iraq last October, as well as UNAMI's efforts to build capacity and strengthen people's trust in Iraq's democracy. The Embassy of Brazil in Baghdad was among the observers, on election day and throughout, and bears witness to its success.

As we approach the expiration of UNAMI's mandate and consider its renewal, it is important to have clearly in mind a few of the Mission's overarching objectives. Those are, most notably, self-Government in Iraq, the restoration of the rule of law, political stability and the sustainability of the Iraqi democracy, as well as the strengthening of Iraqi institutions.

As reported to us by the Secretary-General periodically, despite improvements in the humanitarian situation on the ground, meeting the basic needs of the Iraqi population is still very much dependent on international assistance. We acknowledge that UNAMI and other United Nations agencies perform a critical role in responding to those humanitarian needs, in coordination with the Iraqi Government. In the reports of the Secretary-General, however, we read some warning signs. Humanitarian assistance should not become a long-term substitute for the delivery of public services by the Iraqi Government. We therefore stress the importance of increasing the Government's ownership with respect to the protection of its citizens.

The mandate of UNAMI extends far beyond humanitarian assistance. We should therefore also be watchful of any warning signs concerning the other activities of UNAMI's extensive portfolio. Let the Iraqi Government not miss the opportunities for increased ownership that the recovery of the Iraqi economy is now offering.

International support in the area of security should be strictly based on either Security Council resolutions or the consent of the Iraqi Government. The fight against terrorism — and any other threat — should not

come at the expense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Regrettably, some recent events in the region are at odds with the principles of good-neighbourliness, the Charter of the United Nations and the authority of the Security Council.

We express our satisfaction with the improvement of the situation of children in Iraq, as reported by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We commend the Iraqi Government for its ongoing commitment to the repatriation of Iraqi families from refugee camps. We hope that political differences in Iraq, within and between regions and the federal Government, can be settled through dialogue and in accordance with the rule of law. Most urgently, we hope that Iraq will very soon overcome the current political stalemate in the formation of the new Government. Far too long has passed.

Before I conclude, I would like to ask a question related to the link between climate change and sandstorms. Since the Special Representative mentioned this issue today, I would like to ask what specific, conceptual and scientific evidence there is to corroborate the information she provided about the link between sandstorms and climate change, as opposed to the former being merely localized climatological events.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing on recent developments in Iraq and for her efforts in that regard. We also appreciate the briefing by Ms. Hanaa Edwar and welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to this meeting.

Iraq has gone through enormous challenges in recent years and has still managed to make a lot of progress. However, there is need for more. We are concerned about the Government formation process in Iraq, which remains deadlocked in the aftermath of the 10 October parliamentary election. Although negotiations on the process have progressed, we see a division among Iraq's political parties, which, regrettably, have been unable to reach agreement regarding the next step in the process — the election of the president by Parliament, which was due to be completed by 8 February.

We see an urgent need for a new Iraqi Government to tackle the challenges ahead. We urge all parties to reach out to each other put the common interests of the

Iraqi people above all. A Government that is inclusive and united, with the meaningful participation of women, will be in a strong position to respond to the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

We are also worried about the security situation in Iraq, bearing in mind the latest attacks and the threat posed by Da'esh. We commend the achievements of the Iraqi forces in that regard and in trying to enforce the rule of law. We also welcome information about relations between Baghdad and Erbil after the 15 February judgment, and we hope that their differences will be addressed.

Iraq has many challenges ahead, but it can rely on the support of many countries and organizations like the United Nations. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has played a vital role in supporting Iraq's democratic transition. We commend its work and genuine cooperation with the Iraqi Government. We appreciate the work UNAMI is doing on the impact of climate change in Iraq, considering that Iraq is considered the fifth-most vulnerable country to the effects of climate change. We look forward to renewing and strengthening the mandate of UNAMI so that it can better adapt and respond to the needs of the Iraqi people, working in synergy with them.

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

I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and her leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which plays an important and respected role in Iraq. I also thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar for her informative and timely briefing, as well as for her relentless efforts to promote the rights of women in Iraq.

Today I want to highlight the need for Iraq's leaders to quickly form a Government that reflects the will of the voters, and then I will turn to the many challenges that the new Government will face.

First, Iraq deserves considerable credit for the well-managed and peaceful parliamentary elections held in October 2021 and certified by the Federal Supreme Court in December. However, seven months after those elections, Iraq remains without a new Government.

Let us not forget — the elections were called early in response to a groundswell of discontent among Iraqis over the dysfunction of their Government. We are therefore concerned that the stalled debate among Iraqi

politicians has focused on which political party gets what, rather than on forming a Government that respects human rights and aspires to improve governance and deliver services to the Iraqi people.

The next Government of Iraq will need to account for the impending wind-down of humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance from the international community. It will need to chart a course for development and will need to answer to calls from the people of Iraq to root out corruption and abandon the politicization of democratic institutions and administrative processes. These two roadblocks have hindered the pursuit of prosperity for all Iraqis.

The new Government will also need to hold accountable those who committed abuses against the protesters of the October 2019 Tishreen movement, leaving hundreds dead and thousands wounded. And the Government will need to better protect freedom of expression and improve the treatment and prosecution of detainees and prisoners. But the challenges ahead do not end there.

The next Government will also need to create and implement a plan to help the remaining displaced persons, including Iraqi families and orphans in the Al-Hol camp, in north-eastern Syria, acquire essential legal documents and rehabilitate and reintegrate into their communities — safely, voluntarily and with dignity.

It will also need to fully implement and provide a budget for the Yazidi Female Survivors Law to aid in the recovery of the Yazidi community in Sinjar, the dire situation of which was laid out clearly by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General today. And there are pressing economic and climate matters at hand as well. The Iraqi Government will need to bolster electricity delivery, promote entrepreneurship and private-sector development that supports job growth and empower all Iraqis economically. And let me be clear — a key piece of that agenda must be the removal of all legal and cultural barriers to women's full participation in the workforce.

Finally, the climate crisis is already impacting Iraq — just look at the disappearance of Sawa Lake and the increased number and intensity of dust storms, as was laid out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General today. This crisis disproportionately impacts women and girls and, if left unaddressed, will compound instability and lead to further insecurity.

We welcome Iraq becoming a party to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and Iraq's partnership with the United Nations system in mitigating and adapting to climate change through sustainable development, water management and the use of renewable energy. And we look forward to seeing UNAMI continue its critical assistance in strengthening Iraq's capacity to tackle climate change.

Let me conclude by making clear that, in all this work, UNAMI is a critical partner to the Iraqi people, and it is the duty of the Security Council to equip UNAMI with a strong mandate to continue to assist the Government and the people of Iraq as they take on these challenges.

As the UNAMI penholder, the United States looks forward to engaging with our Security Council colleagues towards the adoption and renewal of UNAMI's mandate later this month. The United States is eager to continue our partnership with Iraq and to work with the new Government once it is formed. For the sake of the prosperity and security of the Iraqi people, we hope that that day comes soon.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to congratulate the United States of America on its presidency of the Security Council for this month. I should also like to thank Dame Barbara Woodward, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, for her efforts at the helm of the Council last month, and Her Excellency Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for her briefing. In addition, I thank Ms. Hanaa Edwar for her briefing.

The political parties in Iraq are continuing their efforts to reach understandings and solutions to address the political deadlock in order to form a new Government that meets the needs of the Iraqi people within the constitutional time frame and the relevant laws, one that reflects the interests of the Iraqi people and guarantees a balanced representation thereof.

In addition, in line with resolution 2576 (2021) and following the successful holding of elections in October 2021 and the assistance provided to the Kurdistan Region during the parliamentary elections

held in September 2018, Iraq, in its letter addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 23 March, asked UNAMI to provide assistance to the Kurdistan Region. We asked for technical assistance and advice and support for the parliamentary elections planned for October in the Kurdistan Region.

Allow me also to provide the Council with a brief overview of the most important developments in Iraq following the elections.

On the security front, the Government and the people of Iraq would like to thank the Security Council for the solidarity and ongoing support that it has shown to Iraq in its fight against terrorism. In April, Iraqi forces launched a major offensive for hunting down the remnants of Da'esh in various provinces. Iraq is committed to repatriating Iraqi nationals detained in the Al-Hol camp in Syria. The Government has repatriated almost 1,900 foreign terrorist fighters and 550 families, that is, 2,249 people, mainly women and children.

Iraq attaches priority to repatriation efforts as well as to rehabilitation and accountability. We urge the Member States concerned to repatriate their nationals from Iraq and Syria. Iraq reiterates its commitment to continuing cooperation with the international community to fight terrorism. We reiterate our appeal to not use our territories for settling scores or for implementing political objectives under the pretext of fighting terrorism. We also underscore the importance of respecting the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Concerning violations involving Turkey and Iran, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered to the Ambassador of Turkey to Iraq a note of protestation strongly condemning the ongoing violations by the Turkish army in the north of Iraq. The Iraqi Government reiterated its appeal for the full withdrawal of Turkish forces from Iraqi territories, in a demonstration of binding respect for national sovereignty. Iraq also notes that the use of Article 51 of the Charter in the acts of aggression carried out by Turkish forces is without legal basis. That Article does not authorize undermining an independent country's sovereignty.

We would recall in that connection that the presence of the majority of the elements of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the north of Iraq is the result of an agreement between the Turkish Government and the PKK, which Iraq opposed.

The Iranian bombing of the city of Erbil with 12 ballistic missiles on 13 April led to great losses of civilian property. Iraq calls for solid relations and dialogue between the two countries in order to address pending issues by peaceful means and not through the use of force and unfounded allegations.

Concerning support for the liberated areas, ongoing efforts and coordination with the international community have contributed to re-establishing stability in the liberated areas and enabled us to implement infrastructure, health-care, electricity and bridge and road construction projects, which has allowed many people to return to their regions and for the camps to be closed. The Government, in cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Service, is continuing demining and awareness-raising efforts as regards the danger of mines.

In terms of the provision of basic services and the efforts made to that end through the relevant Government programme, we are continuing our efforts to provide emergency support in terms of food security and development and to implement urgent actions to address water scarcity. We are working with the United Nations Development Programme to strengthen the relevant bodies, ensure the socioeconomic well-being of remote communities, work for education, create job opportunities, promote strength and resilience, provide greater means for coexistence, improve orphans' standard of living, provide loans for small, medium-sized and large enterprises, and address strategic objectives relating to national economic growth.

Our Government is also continuing its efforts to establish a clear budget for a general transformation project in Iraq and for rehabilitating post offices to provide electronic services through a Government services portal.

On women's empowerment, the Government's efforts are ongoing as part of the follow-up plan for resolution 1325 (2000). We are assessing what has been done in the context of our second national plan for the implementation of that resolution in Iraq as well as the results achieved with international support. We have also set up a female mediators for peace committee, which is working to implement a national strategy to strengthen women's active participation in resolving conflict and peacemaking.

We have also modified our code of conduct for the internal security forces and the code of conduct

for the information and communication office to meet gender requirements. We have also created a tribunal of inquiry and a criminal tribunal to address cases of domestic violence in each province. The process for divorced women to receive alimonies from the Ministry of Justice has been automated for facilitating follow-ups. Further, we have implemented gender-focused performance-assessment programmes in all Government institutions, and we have modernized the curricula related to human rights by adding university courses pertaining to women's rights and peaceful coexistence. In addition, we launched a second national plan on women's economic empowerment for the 2022-2023 period to promote capacity-building and provide loans.

In terms of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq, my Government is very eager to honour its international and national commitments to prevent violations against children during the fight against terrorism. A meeting between our national commission for monitoring and reporting and the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting was held on the subject of banning the recruitment and use of children. We have already agreed on a draft work plan waiting to be signed pending a final response from the United Nations.

Through Iraqi media networks, we have also been discussing how to best disseminate human rights culture in such areas as women, children, people with special needs and minorities. We have also identified effective measures for managing prisons, strengthening and monitoring human rights in displaced persons camps and following up on social, familial, economic and electricity-related issues. Furthermore, a group of people injured during the October protests received foreign medical treatment in recognition of their sacrifice for reform.

In terms of the fight against the coronavirus disease, the Government is following the most recent developments and measures undertaken to fight the pandemic. It is also following up on the Governmental measures to promote control, prevention and awareness-raising to limit the spread of the virus and to take up a comprehensive national review of ways to address urgent health issues with a view to guaranteeing health coverage. In addition, we are continuing to raise awareness through the media and all public institutions while encouraging people to get vaccinated as early as possible at the nearest vaccination site.

Pertaining to the fight against desertification and climate change, on 7 February, Baghdad hosted the meetings of the thirty-sixth session of the Near East Regional Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Iraq raised the issues of water, agriculture and sustainable development. Furthermore, from 5 to 7 March, we hosted the second Baghdad Conference on Water, under the slogan “Water and Climate Change”.

For its part, the Ministry for the Environment continues to support clean energy and nature-based solutions and ecosystem services. The Ministry continues to protect biodiversity and is working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, so that we can shift to a green and sustainable economy. The Ministry for the Environment is also facilitating the use of eco-friendly cars, specifically, electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles that use mixed types of energy. We have obtained the necessary permits to exempt these vehicles of customs duties and registration costs, which is in line with Iraq’s commitments to the provisions of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Iraq has suffered from sandstorms because of desertification and water scarcity. We are therefore asking UNAMI and the international community to provide us with assistance to fight desertification and to facilitate discussions on this issue with neighbouring countries, in which we could address the equitable distribution of water.

As for Iraq’s relationship with the brotherly State of Kuwait, it has been getting stronger since the diplomatic relations between our two countries were resumed 18 years ago. Iraq’s foreign policy has managed to tighten this relationship. It has attached particular importance to the dossiers of missing people, maritime boundaries and property. Iraq has honoured its commitments, paid all compensation due and turned the page on these issues.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry continues to collect books, microfilms and other media in libraries and universities in Iraq to consolidate them and then officially return them through diplomatic channels. Through the media and diplomatic and consular missions around the world, Iraq is continuing to extend a humanitarian appeal in Arabic and in English for Iraqi citizens or anyone else who has information in relation to missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or anyone who has information on Kuwaiti property,

including Kuwaiti archives. Iraq is continuing its cooperation with Kuwait with respect to the information that was received by the Iraqi Embassy in Kuwait from a witness who claims to have information about two burial sites in Kuwait.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his firm support for Iraq. He has always focused on respect for its sovereignty and territorial unity. I very much appreciate the ongoing support from the international community to Iraq so that we are able to achieve prosperity and stability for the Iraqi people. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Iraq, I also very much appreciate the efforts made by UNAMI and its Head of Mission to support Iraq in different fields, particularly on the humanitarian and development levels, during the period covered by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/368).

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert to respond to the question raised.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: In addition to what has been clearly explained by the Permanent Representative of Iraq, I would just like to refer to my briefing in February (see S/PV.8975). In that briefing I spoke about water scarcity in the region, not just as a threat on the horizon, but as a present danger. In that briefing, I mentioned the immediate threats of the salinization of water and soils and desertification and disappearance of arable lands. In my briefing today I again underlined desertification as a central concern.

In February, I added that much of the scarcity of water can be explained by climate change, but not only climate change. I also explained that water flows are actively being reduced by neighbouring countries, and I added that potable water and irrigation infrastructure and maintenance are significantly lagging behind in Iraq. Once again, I underlined that desertification is a central concern, that dust and sandstorms are really massive, and what we will need to see in Iraq, as well as in the region, is a national regional programme of action to understand and tackle the root causes, monitor, protect, prepare, establish early warning, and so on.

But we cannot deny that there is desertification. It is a fact of life, and lately I have experienced it on a weekly basis.

The President: I thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for the clarification that she has provided.

The representative of Brazil has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): It is just to clarify one point I agree with everything that was said by the Special Representative. There was no denial of desertification as a problem.

The question, and I repeat it, is what is the specific conceptual and scientific evidence that she has that enables her to say that sandstorms are a consequence of climate change and not an isolated climatological event? That is to say, how does she separate climate change from a local event?

She also said that more storms are to come. How does she know that?

For the record, therefore, I would register my disappointment with the reply that was just given.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert to further respond to the question raised.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: It is not at all my intention to disappoint any member of the Security Council. I was trying to say that desertification is a central concern. Desertification is a consequence of climate change, but not only climate change. It is also a consequence of reduced water flows and insufficient infrastructure.

If I am now asked to give the footnotes on the scientific evidence, I will have to get back to the Council member, but I am also happy to invite him to Baghdad and to come with me to the Ministry, because it will be able to provide a very thorough presentation with all the evidence that there is.

The President: I thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for the clarifications she has provided and for the offer of further information, should it be needed.

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

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.