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Seventy-eighth year

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New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Moretti (Brazil)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon	Mrs. Koumba Pambo
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique	Mr. Bambissa
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Phipps
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-eighth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2023/698)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2682 (2023) (S/2023/700)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-eighth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2023/698)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2682 (2023) (S/2023/700)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite 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. Dhefah Al-Jarahi, Country Manager, Iraq Foundation.

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/2023/698, which contains the thirty-eighth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), and document S/2023/700, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2682 (2023).

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

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: Today we are roughly one year on from the formation of Iraq's current Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani. Since its inception, several important steps and promising initiatives have emerged. To name but a few, long-awaited reforms in the banking and finance sectors are now under way. One example is the launch of an electronic platform for foreign currency sales, which demonstrates the Government's commitment to both transparency and efficiency. A new Iraq Development Fund has been established. This, coupled with the change ushered in by the recently adopted federal budget, has the potential

to spur private sector investment. The passing of a new law on social security means that, for the first time, all Iraqi workers can benefit from public entitlements such as health insurance, and maternity and unemployment benefits. As most members will know, a trailblazing initiative for regional infrastructure, known as the Development Road project, was launched some months ago. Meanwhile, Iraq is taking further steps towards leveraging its own natural resources more effectively and responsibly, thereby aiming to reduce energy waste and shore up its energy independence. Also, and importantly, to address the concerning issue of rapid drug proliferation, the Government has developed a national strategy for the prevention of narcotics and psychotropic substances, among other measures.

I already briefly mentioned the recently adopted federal budget. It charts an ambitious course for the country until the end of 2025 and includes allocations with the potential to address critical needs, such as infrastructure development and reconstruction. Notably, this budget represents the highest proportionate allocation to the delivery of social services yet, and will hopefully expand access to health care, education and a number of other essential public services.

To cut a long story short, with last year's gains in political stability and an ambitious federal budget in hand, Iraq is well-positioned to seize the many opportunities in front of it. That said, and as we all know, the country's complex and at times fast-evolving environment also means that this is not an easy feat, let alone a given.

Corruption is still pervasive, and combatting it, as the Prime Minister recently said, is something the Government has been working on, is still working on and will continue to work on. He rightly added that, without fighting corruption, the Government will not be able to implement its economic vision and development programmes. It is true that the Government has made admirable commitments, from efforts to, for instance, increase transparency around custom revenue collection to pursuing the extradition of individuals implicated in the theft of federal resources. A new campaign, called "Where did you get this?", has seen the Federal Integrity Commission audit the financial records of electoral candidates. At the same time, it is clear that the intricate web of graft and vested interests, built up in Iraq over decades, will not be dismantled overnight, especially when those who stand to lose can draw from myriad financial, political and security resources,

creating the community of collusion I have referred to in previous briefings.

Also, and as spelled out numerous times, Iraq's economic structure is in a precarious place, heavily reliant on oil and a public sector so big that it is simply unsustainable. Although steps taken thus far surely signal positive momentum, further structural reforms are going to be critical. Otherwise, a thriving private sector with high levels of employment will remain elusive.

All of that must be understood alongside Iraq's rapidly growing population, with predictions that it could double over the next three to four decades. Why am I saying this? Because with more Iraqis coming of age without corresponding job opportunities or advances in quality of life, it is not difficult to see where this trend may go: the embers of discontent could flare up easily again and again.

Climate change and water scarcity are, of course, other obvious threat multipliers. This past summer, again, temperatures in Iraq exceeded 50 degrees Celsius. Last June, the International Organization for Migration recorded almost 14,000 families as internally displaced because of drought conditions across 10 of Iraq's governorates. Needless to say, if left unaddressed, this is only the beginning of a rather nightmarish situation. Hence, it is for good reasons that the Government has made the issue of water security one of its top priorities.

Another issue that should not be underestimated are the feelings of exclusion, marginalization and stigmatization. Why does that matter for stability in Iraq? It matters because if those sentiments are left to simmer, among other spillover effects, people will again become vulnerable to extremist propaganda. I am, of course, aware of the ongoing efforts by the Government to end displacement, but further progress on enabling people to return to their areas of origin, including Jurf Al-Sakhar and Sinjar, remains critical. Equally important is much-needed momentum to enact legislation on enforced disappearances, as well as the amendment to the amnesty law.

A further topic that cannot be overlooked is the influence of non-State armed actors in certain areas, which not only undermines confidence in the State, but also creates an environment of fear and anger.

The Government continues to proactively engage with countries throughout the region on issues related to energy, water, economic cooperation and security. That is important, as regional partnerships and integration are obvious catalysts for stability in Iraq and beyond. Now, within that context, I wish to highlight the implementation of the Iraq-Iran security agreement. Great efforts have been made by Iraq, including the Kurdistan region, to secure its borders, and further work to sustain those achievements is ongoing. All sides consider long-term security as essential, and we can only emphasize Iraq's genuine commitment to the agreement.

As I said on many occasions, this is the way to go about addressing security concerns: through dialogue, joint committees and the actual implementation of agreements — all, of course, in accordance with international law. With that in mind, I wish to express hope that Iraq and Türkiye will also embark on a sustainable way forward. Türkiye's security concerns are well understood. And on that note, I would like to echo the Secretary-General's condemnation of the recent attack in Ankara. In saying that, constant cross-border attacks are a risky way to advance interests and one with numerous adverse effects. We therefore welcome ongoing efforts on the activation of bilateral committees between Iraq and Türkiye aimed at addressing border security concerns.

And, of course, I cannot talk about stability in the region without mentioning the unprecedented and horrendous developments in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, which have already had a catastrophic human toll and could impact the entire region.

Still focusing on the Middle East, I would also like to flag a recent decision of Iraq's federal Supreme Court regarding the 2012 agreement between Iraq and Kuwait regulating navigation in the Khor Abdullah waterway. Taking into account the separation of powers, Iraq's Government has meanwhile made its commitment to the principles of international law and its respect for bilateral agreements and United Nations resolutions crystal clear. Legitimate concerns have been addressed by Kuwait and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Given the priority attached by the Iraqi Government to dialogue as a means to finding solutions, as well as its commitment to maintaining positive relations with its neighbours, we hope and expect that cooperation and good neighbourliness will

prevail. Bearing in mind the risks of miscalculation and escalation, it is essential to resolve the matter expeditiously, and also important is the continuation of talks to demarcate the rest of the maritime border.

With regard to Baghdad-Erbil relations, to discuss the Kurdistan region's financial challenges, a high-level delegation from the Kurdistan Regional Government, headed by its Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, visited Baghdad on 14 September. Soon after, Iraq's Council of Ministers agreed to provide financial relief in the form of loans for the next three months. That enables the Kurdistan Regional Government to pay, for the time being, the salaries of its public servants — a positive development and, frankly speaking, one that was overdue. That said, the agreement is temporary in nature and therefore not enough. Hence, more and urgent work lies ahead so as to avoid a new period of uncertainty for the region's public servants. I said this in past years and will repeat it now: civil servant salaries should be shielded from political disagreements. Similar to any other Iraqi civil servant, those working in the Kurdistan region have families to look after and obligations to fulfil.

In August 2020, I highlighted in my briefing to the Council (see S/2020/845, annex I) that the lack of specificity in Iraq's 2005 Constitution continued to shape the debate between Baghdad and Erbil. With the situation persisting today, what does that mean? It means that 18 years have gone by without an agreement on the gradual enhancement of the federal system; 18 years without a sustainable framework for natural resource distribution or disputed territories; 18 years without laws delineating rights and obligations. Instead, we continue to witness constant ad hoc crisis management. What I am essentially saying is that, 18 years on from the Constitution's adoption, it is imperative to move to comprehensive and solid solutions.

As for the Sinjar Agreement, I regret to inform the Council that no progress has been made. Sadly, instead, we continue to witness different power competitions in which non-State armed actors have the upper hand.

Recent events in Kirkuk, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries, are also of concern. While the situation has calmed down for now, the precariousness of that context cannot be overlooked. As Council members know, in past years, UNAMI has facilitated dialogue sessions among the representatives of Kirkuk's components. And we are still convinced that

an agreement can be reached. But for that to happen, it is imperative that the needs of people be prioritized over political gain. Of course, the provincial council elections on 18 December are of great importance as well, especially because Kirkuk has not seen local elections since 2005.

There is something else. Previously Council members heard me say that the Kurdistan region's parliamentary elections are long overdue. Initially scheduled for October 2022, they were postponed to November this year and recently further delayed to 25 February 2024. To state the obvious, we expect all parties to ensure that this new election date will not again fall victim to internal political strife. With the current administration in a caretaker capacity, the region's democratic process must prevail. There is so much at stake.

On a different note, as any other Member State, Iraq has committed, through its Constitution and international human rights treaties, to protect the fundamental rights of all its citizens, without discrimination. That point bears repeating in the light of recent debates on the use of universally accepted terms.

Turning to the issue of Al-Hol returnees, in the past month, a further 173 households returned to Iraq. In other words, Iraq continues to serve as an example for other States with nationals in Al-Hol.

There is no denying it, challenges on the ground abound. The accessibility of core civil and identity documents, in particular their timely issuance, must be addressed as a matter of priority. And, as Iraq grapples with the vast needs of returnees and host communities, the criticality of continued international support cannot be overemphasized.

I will zoom in on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. The adoption of innovative DNA technology by the Government of Kuwait has led to the identification of one more missing person. I extend my deepest condolences to the family involved. I further welcome the long-anticipated handover by Iraq to Kuwait of 22 genetic profiles that were discovered in March 2022 in Najaf. The regular exchange of genetic data is much needed to shed light on the fate of those still missing. And of course, we continue to engage the Government of Iraq on the retrieval of missing Kuwaiti property, including

the national archives. Swift and decisive action is now needed.

I can only emphasize the importance of Iraq's upcoming provincial council elections. For many reasons, including the stepping up of service delivery, they represent a critical imperative for all Iraqis. As a former politician, I know how tempting it is to go all-out in an election campaign, but things can get ugly and even risky if campaigns turn into platforms for whipping up rage or fear about others. I therefore call on all actors, be they at the national or regional levels, to play their part in maintaining stability in the run-up to the December elections — and that should include efforts to counter misinformation and disinformation.

With the Government now one full year into its tenure, driving forward the many good plans Iraq has committed to implementing remains a collective responsibility.

I cannot conclude without acknowledging the devastating fire that occurred in Al-Hamdaniya last month, which claimed the lives of more than 100 people. We again convey our sincere condolences to all those affected.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Al-Jarahi.

Ms. Al-Jarahi (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured today to represent civil society organizations in Iraq, in particular those that have supported the file of women's political participation, as my organization was among the first to work on that file and has done so from 2004 until the present day. Since the theme of today's meeting is political participation, I will focus my statement on the efforts that civil society organizations have made to support the political participation of women.

The Iraq Foundation and the organizations under its umbrella have worked tirelessly to support women, especially in areas affected by terrorist organizations. We have also been active in southern Iraq and the central Euphrates region, which to this day have witnessed major security challenges and threats facing women.

Although Iraq is considered a pioneer in developing policies and plans that support women's participation in society compared to countries in the region, gender-based discrimination against women by men remains an obstacle to women's formal participation in the

decision-making process and their participation through investing in material and political resources. Women have still not achieved equality with men in political status or in the power of their political influence.

Despite that, we cannot compare the current situation of women in Iraq with what it was before. The past two decades have witnessed remarkable progress in the political participation of women in Iraq, and the number of women's organizations, networks and movements has increased, as reflected in the strength of their influence in local, national and international policies. A number of women have been able to hold important political positions, and there has been an increase in women's political participation in terms of the percentage of women in the House of Representatives and their membership in political parties, as well as their participation in decision-making positions and in the protest movements that Iraq has witnessed in recent years. We look forward to increasing women's representation in senior and leadership ranks, which influence the decision-making process.

Iraqi civil society organizations have done an outstanding job in supporting women's participation and have conducted many studies that have shown the extent of the challenges and threats facing women, as well as ways to confront and overcome those challenges. We have also trained hundreds of young women leaders, while urging them to participate in the political process. I am confident that civil society organizations have exerted an exceptional moral influence in urging the Government to adopt comprehensive policies and plans to advance women's rights.

In the context of the ongoing efforts to promote women's rights and participation in political life, we reiterate our call to the international community to provide the necessary support to Iraq. We must all come together to provide continued support to enhance women's political participation. We all know that international support plays a vital role in providing the resources and expertise that promote progress. That is why we urge international stakeholders to provide full support for the projects and programmes that promote women's rights and to support women's participation in the political arena.

We also call on the Iraqi Government to complete the plans and policies it is working on, including the National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023–2030, in cooperation with the United Nations, and to support all

actors working on the women's file, regardless of their official governmental designations, and strengthen their role and involve them fully in formulating public policies and implementing relevant programmes. Therefore, the Government must ensure the provision of sufficient financial and human resources and support to enable those actors to perform their roles effectively and efficiently.

In conclusion, the goal of achieving equality and supporting women's participation in political life must be a joint and cooperative undertaking by the international community and the Iraqi Government, especially since Iraq is approaching an electoral process in the coming months. We look forward to the Iraqi Government providing the full and necessary protection for the women who participate in those elections, thereby contributing to Iraq's stability and progress towards a brighter and more just future.

The President: I thank Ms. Al-Jarahi for her important briefing.

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

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert and Ms. Al-Jarahi for their briefings.

We appreciate the Special Representative's steadfast leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in Baghdad and her support for other United Nations missions in Iraq. Her briefing and the most recent report of the Secretary-General on this topic (S/2023/700) are testament to Iraq's progress in reconstruction and reconciliation.

As President Biden has said, a strong Iraq capable of self-defence is essential for achieving stability in the region. We encourage the Government of Iraq to maintain its commitment to essential economic reforms, combating corruption and improving public services to meet the demands and aspirations of the Iraqi people. UNAMI has played an important role in that regard. We welcome its completion of the project to rehabilitate the Tigris riverfront in Baghdad and its partnership with other United Nations agencies to upgrade wastewater treatment plants in Iraq. UNAMI is well-positioned to provide assistance in other areas of reform consistent with its mandate, including on elections, promoting the protection of human rights and combating impunity for

violations, and facilitating cooperation with respect to the adverse effects of climate change.

The United States welcomes the Government of Iraq's ongoing preparations to hold provincial council elections on 18 December, as well as the preparations of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission to support the holding of parliamentary elections in the Iraqi Kurdistan region next February. To further that progress, we also encourage the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resolve all outstanding issues through mutually agreeable and durable solutions.

Iraq and UNAMI have achieved considerable progress in recent years. We commend UNAMI's efforts to promote women's political participation by holding consultations across Iraq this past summer. We also laud the partnership between Iraq and UNAMI to support religious and ethnic minority communities, including the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement. Iraq's progress towards the full implementation of and funding for the Yazidi female survivors law, which provides much-needed support and rehabilitation for survivors of atrocities perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), should also be recognized.

Those welcome developments have taken on particular importance in the wake of Qur'an burnings earlier this year. We took note of the Secretary-General's condemnation of such acts of Islamophobia and citation of Human Rights Council resolution 53/1, on countering religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. At the same time, following the attack on the Swedish embassy in Baghdad, we welcomed the Iraqi Government's reaffirmation of its commitment to protecting diplomatic missions in the country.

An essential element of our shared campaign to ensure the defeat of ISIS is our collective efforts to help bring ISIS perpetrators of genocide and other atrocities to justice, wherever they reside. Repatriating individuals from north-eastern Syria is also a critical line of effort and we commend the Iraqi Government for its continued leadership on the issue.

We fully support Iraq's desire to further integrate into the region and foster good relations with its neighbours. We welcome recent statements by Prime Minister Al Sudani and other senior Iraqi officials affirming Iraq's full respect for Kuwait's sovereignty and its continued commitment to bilateral agreements

and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 833 (1993), which finalized the work of the Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission. We appreciate both Governments' efforts to hold a dialogue on resolving all outstanding issues.

We look forward to seeing UNAMI's independent strategic review team start work. The team's assessment will ensure that UNAMI can continue to provide Iraq with meaningful support as the country builds momentum in its transition from conflict to peace and prosperity. We would like to see the review take a forward-looking focus on how UNAMI can most effectively support Iraq's political stability and economic development.

In conclusion, the United States stands strongly in support of UNAMI's mandate and looks forward to seeing how much more progress the Mission and the Iraqi Government can achieve in the coming year.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Ms. Al-Jarahi for their briefings. I also welcome the representative of Iraq to today's meeting. I would first like to affirm France's solidarity with Iraq following the tragic fire in Qaraqosh on 26 September. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims.

France reaffirms its full support for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which continues to provide welcome assistance to Iraq in full respect for its sovereignty. I also thank the Special Representative for the remarkable commitment she has demonstrated. France stands ready to contribute to the independent strategic review of UNAMI, which should make it possible to take into account Iraq's requests regarding the future of the Mission.

France reiterates its commitment to Iraq's sovereignty and the stability of the region as a whole. We strongly condemn all violations of Iraqi sovereignty, including attacks targeting the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan. We call on the actors involved to cease all interference in Iraq's internal affairs. In conjunction with its partners in the Global Coalition against Da'esh, France will continue to stand alongside Iraq in its fight against terrorism, with full respect for Iraqi sovereignty and for as long as necessary. In that regard, we acknowledge the work done by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq

and the Levant since its establishment, which has been contributing effectively to the fight against impunity.

France also reiterates its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait. We welcome the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the Prime Minister of Iraq to provide the necessary assurances to his country's Kuwaiti neighbour and partner. France stands ready to provide assistance in achieving a lasting solution to the border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait and emphasizes the importance of their close cooperation on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals. Regional dialogue efforts are more necessary than ever. The aim of the Baghdad Conference is to set the conditions for diplomatic, regional and economic dialogue in the face of shared challenges, with the economic integration of the region and the response to climate and environmental challenges being priorities.

In my final point, France welcomes the Iraqi Government's efforts to carry out the reforms that the population is expecting, and we urge that they continue. We particularly welcomed the country's adoption of a budget in June, and we encourage it to continue with reforms aimed at diversifying the Iraqi economy and combating corruption and impunity. We also welcome the initiatives that Iraq has taken to combat the effects of climate change, and we should continue to assist it in that regard based on the Paris Agreement. Concerning relations between Baghdad and Erbil, France continues to encourage the federal and regional authorities to hold a constructive dialogue, particularly regarding the sharing of revenue from oil resources and security issues, and we believe that UNAMI can facilitate that cooperation.

Lastly, France underlines the importance of holding transparent and inclusive elections that involve women, young people and of course civil society. We welcome the role of UNAMI in supporting the Independent High Electoral Commission in preparing for the elections.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I join others in thanking Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and Ms. Dhefah Al-Jarahi for their briefings. I too welcome the representative of Iraq and express our deepest condolences to the people of Iraq in the wake of the tragic fire on 26 September.

Malta is encouraged by the Government of Iraq's commitment to building a peaceful, stable and prosperous country. We continue to support the reform

agenda that seeks to tackle corruption, improve public services and develop the private sector. We hope that the passage of a federal budget law will enable the Government to transform those long-standing commitments into tangible improvements for all Iraqis. We welcome the federal Government's intention of holding provincial council elections in December. It will be essential to ensure that the Independent High Electoral Commission is provided with the necessary resources to conduct them in an effective, orderly and timely manner.

Inclusive political and electoral processes are vital elements for a peaceful and stable democratic environment. We therefore welcomed the Government's decision in May to establish a committee to support women's participation in the provincial council elections and its inclusion of measures to boost women's safe political participation. In addition, along with commemorating the genocide of the Yazidi on 3 August, we want to highlight the importance of the 2021 Yazidi Survivors Law. We call for speeding up its implementation and eliminating unnecessary obstacles to that. We reaffirm our support for the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in ensuring accountability for atrocities committed by Da'esh in Iraq, which include crimes of sexual and gender-based violence. We also feel compelled to express our concern about the ongoing failure to enact a law against domestic violence.

On the political front, we welcome the constructive steps taken by the federal Government and the Kurdistan regional Government to address several outstanding issues, including Kurdistan's commitment to holding regional parliamentary elections in February 2024. We commend the positive role played by Iraq in the region and particularly note its diplomatic efforts to advance stability, including through its engagement and facilitation of dialogue with regional partners. We call on all States, particularly Iraq's neighbours, to refrain from unilateral military actions. Respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic political process is essential to enhancing regional stability. Malta also stresses the importance of respecting democratic principles and the human rights of all persons in all their diversity. In that vein, we welcomed the constructive discussions between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Iraq during the High

Commissioner's visit last month. We are nevertheless deeply concerned about the 59 civilian casualties documented by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the 23 grave violations committed against children and the high incidence of casualties caused by explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. In that regard, we welcomed the decision of the Government of Iraq in June to allocate budgetary funding to operational demining, which is crucial to ensuring sustained survey and clearance efforts.

Malta welcomes the Government of Iraq's public commitment to addressing the challenges of climate change and water scarcity as a priority. We echo the Secretary-General's call for the need to foster regional cooperation to collectively tackle those challenges. If left unaddressed, such climate security challenges can exacerbate existing insecurities. Urgent assistance from the international community is therefore imperative.

In conclusion, while welcoming an improvement in the overall humanitarian situation, we note that as of August, approximately 1.5 million people remained internally displaced. Regrettably, funding shortfalls remain a challenge. We therefore urge the international community to remain committed to supporting the humanitarian and development priorities of Iraq and its people.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and Ms. Dhefah Al-Jarahi, Country Manager of the Iraq Foundation, for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representative of Iraq.

Once again, we recognize the work carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in particular the support it provides the Iraqi Government in the latter's efforts to consolidate political alliances with neighbouring countries and carry out reforms in order to foster trust, energize the economy and normalize the provision of basic services in the country. The results of the internal negotiation process to conduct the provincial elections and the Kurdistan Regional Government elections are encouraging. We congratulate the Supreme Committee for the Support of Women's Participation in Provincial Council Elections on its workplan, which includes measures to prevent hate speech against women candidates and advocates a code of conduct for political actors.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/76) on the persistent threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other non-State armed groups to peace and security in the region continues to elicit concern. Ecuador hopes that bilateral, regional and multilateral strategies will contribute to addressing the root causes of violence, terrorism and violent extremism and to preventing and mitigating their consequences, above all to protect the lives and security of the civilian population.

We deplore the humanitarian situation of internally displaced persons, migrants and refugees, including women, children, persons with disabilities and ethnic or religious minorities, who are extremely vulnerable. The international community's support in seeking a sustainable solution will be crucial to promoting their return and reintegration and to preventing their recruitment by terrorist groups.

We acknowledge the progress made by local technical teams and the International Committee of the Red Cross in the search and repatriation of the remains of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and in the process of identification of bodies in mass graves.

The results of the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, to Iraq last August call for work to be done to ensure the expansion of civic space and to assess the effects that drought and other phenomena may have on the already fragile humanitarian situation. It is necessary to return to the path of national reconciliation and to push forward processes that will allow Iraqis to enjoy security and well-being. Ecuador rejects actions that exacerbate discrimination and radicalization, such as extrajudicial executions. It also opposes the institutionalization of the death penalty and restrictions on freedom of expression.

To conclude, I encourage UNAMI to continue supporting the Iraqi Government in ensuring transparency in electoral processes, raising awareness of the impact of hate speech and disinformation, formulating a demining plan and building capacity to combat impunity and establish a culture of accountability, non-recurrence and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all social groups.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her valuable briefing. We also appreciate the statement

delivered by Ms. Dhefaf Al-Jarahi. I welcome the participation of the representative of Iraq in our meeting today.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate the Government and people of Iraq on the occasion of their National Day a few days ago, wishing them continued prosperity and progress.

As we heard, Iraq has achieved remarkable progress since the formation of its Government last year, particularly in the reform of public services, the economic sector and the private sector. It has also approved a federal budget law spanning a three-year period. Nevertheless, the upcoming period requires firm measures to be taken to finish carrying out those reforms and strengthen long-term security and stability, especially in the light of the challenges facing Iraq.

On the political front, we look forward to the provincial elections in Iraq at the end of this year and to the postponed parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, to be held in February 2024. We stress that they should take place on the scheduled dates. We appreciate the support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for the holding of elections, in line with its mandate. We also urge concerted efforts to promote the meaningful participation of Iraqi women in the upcoming elections and to ensure their effective and equal representation in the Government and in decision-making processes. In the same vein, we continue to stress the need to empower Iraqi youth and provide them with more opportunities to play active roles in development, especially as this group accounts for more than half of Iraq's population. We believe that the decision to establish the Higher Council for Youth in Iraq is a positive step in that direction, in line with the important efforts made in our region to involve young people in governmental programmes.

On the economic front, we hope that the necessary internal consensus can be reached concerning the enactment of the federal law on oil and gas, in support of the country's economy. We also call for all other outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil to be resolved.

With regard to the efforts to address the repercussions of climate change in Iraq, that issue must remain a top priority, with a focus on building Iraq's capabilities in that domain. We hope that UNAMI will play a greater role in support of the

governmental efforts in that regard, given that Iraq is one of the countries most affected by the phenomenon of climate change. As the water crisis in Iraq persists, my country urges all concerned parties in the region to engage in constructive efforts to reach agreements that will facilitate the optimal and equitable use of shared water resources.

The security situation in Iraq continues to face several challenges that must be addressed through a comprehensive approach. Despite the gradual decline in the frequency of Da'esh attacks, developments in recent months have highlighted the urgent need to ensure that the possession of weapons is restricted to the Government, strengthen law enforcement and consolidate government control over all Iraqi territories. Such actions would help to foster security in Iraq and the region.

In that connection, we stress the importance of resolving existing issues between Iraq and neighbouring countries. The persistence of those issues over a long time and the absence of any prospects for resolving them undermines trust between the countries of the region and threatens to exacerbate tensions. We continue to call for bridge-building in the region and for a reduction of escalation, especially during this period, in which the region is witnessing acute crises. We stress that any regional dialogue must be built on respect for the principle of good neighbourliness. We also stress the need to refrain from any steps that may undermine such efforts.

We are concerned about the recent growing hostilities between Türkiye and Iraq. We reaffirm the need to adhere to the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

We reaffirm once again the position of the Gulf Cooperation Council calling on Iraq to seriously address the implications of the recent decision of its federal Supreme Court regarding the agreement with Kuwait on the regulation of navigation in Khor Abdullah. We stress the importance of completing the demarcation of the maritime borders between those two countries beyond point 162 and adhering to Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 833 (1993), and to bilateral agreements in a way that supports the two countries in moving forward towards consolidating bilateral relations and opening broad horizons.

Regarding the issue of the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, we call for further progress on this file. We commend the efforts of the Tripartite Commission, led by the International Committee of the Red Cross, to determine the fate of the remaining missing persons, the efforts of which recently resulted in determining the fate of one of the Kuwaiti missing persons. We express our sincere condolences to his family.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its support for the Iraqi people in their endeavours to turn the page on the past and live in prosperity. We look forward to the outcomes of UNAMI's ongoing strategic assessment. We hope the assessment will contribute to shaping the features of UNAMI's support for Iraq in the upcoming years, in accordance with current needs, leading to the complete handover of the Mission's tasks to the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Ms. Al-Jarahi for their briefings. Switzerland commends the work of the Special Representative and all UNAMI staff. We also welcome the presence of the representative of Iraq among us.

Like others before me, I would like to express our heartfelt condolences to Iraq and to the families and friends of the victims of the recent tragic fire at a wedding celebration.

Iraq has a young, dynamic and rapidly growing population, which represents a promising future for the country. We note the Government's commitment to giving them opportunities to realize their aspirations and, more broadly, to build a peaceful, secure and prosperous future. However, as we have just heard, significant challenges remain.

I would like to focus on four points.

First, Switzerland welcomes the Government's efforts to implement reforms. We hope that the adoption of the budget and the envisaged diversification of the Iraqi economy will enable them to yield tangible improvements. Progress is important on the economic front, including in the fight against corruption. The effects of climate change and water scarcity have become major risk multipliers for Iraq's stability.

Proactive governance that takes those factors into account in the implementation of reforms is essential.

Secondly, on a political level, it is encouraging that dates have been set for provincial council elections and for elections in the Kurdistan region. We hope that those elections can be held on schedule. Many women are active in politics in Iraq, as evidenced by their participation in the federal Parliament, as well as in the Government. The two forthcoming elections provide another opportunity for women candidates. Hate speech and violence against women must be prevented. We welcome the creation of the High Committee to Support Women's Political Participation in Provincial Council Elections, which will address those issues. In addition to ensuring inclusive elections, intensifying dialogue on outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil is also important for the country's stability and progress.

Thirdly, the rule of law and respect for human rights are essential to prevent recurring cycles of crisis. It is important for the stability of the country that civic space be protected, thus allowing a multitude of voices to be heard.

Furthermore, for national reconciliation to succeed, the perpetrators of human rights violations must be held accountable for their actions, including the violence unleashed against demonstrators four years ago. And it is obviously very important that the atrocities committed by Da'esh do not go unpunished.

Before concluding, on a regional level, we welcome the ongoing efforts on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. We also renew our commitment to Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In recent years, Iraq has made great efforts to become a force for dialogue and cooperation in the region. We encourage Iraq to continue to play that role and to maintain good relations with its neighbours. Dialogue and the respect for international law and relevant Security Council resolutions are essential for the stability of the region as a whole.

In conclusion, we underline that UNAMI is well placed to provide support on all the issues raised. We also welcome the fact that the independent strategic review of UNAMI is about to begin. The results will analyse current and future threats to Iraq's peace and security. They will enable UNAMI to support Iraq as it continues its journey towards a stable and prosperous future for all its people.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert and the representative of the civil society organization for their briefings and welcome the representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

Last month, a devastating accidental fire in Nineveh, Iraq, led to heavy casualties. I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere condolences to the representative of Iraq and, through him, to the bereaved families and the injured.

Since the beginning of the year, the Iraqi Government has been promoting economic reform, creating job opportunities, cracking down on corruption and actively improving public services. It has successfully adopted its national budget and made remarkable progress in all its efforts, which China commends. Strengthening unity, reconciliation and development among all Iraqi parties is in the fundamental interests of the Iraqi people. We support the continued efforts of the Iraqi federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to enhance dialogue and consultation on outstanding issues, with a view to finding sustainable solutions.

With the ongoing grave security situation in Iraq, the international community should continue to firmly support Iraq in eliminating the remaining terrorist forces and consolidating its hard-won counter-terrorism gains. The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant should fully implement the relevant Council resolutions in a timely and comprehensive manner, transfer the gathered evidence to Iraq, finish strong in the last mile of its mandate and complete its historic mission of supporting Iraq in holding terrorists accountable.

Peace in Iraq cannot be achieved without a stable regional environment. In recent times, Iraq has protested, on many occasions, against unilateral military operations conducted by foreign countries in its territory. We urge the relevant countries to truly respect Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

China has taken note of the issue of the Khor Abdullah waterway just now mentioned by Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert. The development of good-neighbourly and friendly relations between Iraq and Kuwait is in the common interest of both countries. We hope that the two countries will resolve the issues

through dialogue and consultation on the basis of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. China supports Iraq and Kuwait in continuing their joint work towards further progress in the search for missing Kuwaiti nationals and property.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We support the Secretary-General's request in accordance with resolution 2682 (2023) for an independent strategic assessment of UNAMI and for recommendations on streamlining and optimizing UNAMI's mandate and rationalizing its allocation of personnel and resources. On that basis, the Council should also carefully study the medium- and long-term prospects of UNAMI so as to better adapt to the developments on the ground and respond to the needs of the country concerned.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), and Ms. Dhefah Al-Jarahi of the Iraqi Foundation for their briefings.

Today I would like to highlight the following three areas concerning the situation in Iraq.

First, Japan is encouraged by the steady progress made by the Government of Iraq in tackling pressing domestic issues, including in fighting corruption and pushing forward with economic and fiscal reforms. The Security Council should encourage the Iraqi Government to make the utmost effort to ensure that those initiatives will benefit all people in Iraq, including women and young people, as well as internally displaced persons. Looking ahead on the political front, we urge that the provincial council elections and the Kurdistan region's parliamentary elections be held in an orderly manner in accordance with the specified timeline.

Secondly, in the sphere of regional and international relations, the Iraqi Government continues its active engagement in building confidence among neighbouring countries through regional dialogues, including by convening the third Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, which we commend. Good-neighbourly relations are a cornerstone of Iraqi and regional stability, and we expect to see them further advanced. A prerequisite for peace and stability in Iraq is full respect for both sovereignty and territorial integrity. Any attack that threatens the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of Iraq, including in the Kurdistan region, is contrary to international law and must cease. Japan welcomes the steady cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, and takes note of the progress made towards a mutually agreeable conclusion. As shown by Iraq's strong commitment, any damage from a war should be compensated. Regarding the Kuwait-Iraq agreement on the regulation of maritime navigation in the Khawr Abdullah waterway, we stress the importance of resolving issues through dialogue, in accordance with international law and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, on the humanitarian and development front, we emphasize the continued importance of collective efforts to find durable solutions for internally displaced persons and returnees, and to repatriate people from Al-Hol camp. That is an irreplaceable foundation for stability and further development in Iraq. Timely humanitarian assistance remains critical, while investments also need to be directed at strengthening basic public services that can facilitate social reintegration for returnees. The need for appropriate resource allocation is becoming increasingly important.

In conclusion, we highlight our steadfast support for UNAMI's work. With Iraq at a critical juncture in its transition towards peace and prosperity, we trust that UNAMI will continue its indispensable role in providing support to the Government of Iraq by mobilizing various actors, including United Nations funds, agencies and programmes and international donors, in line with their respective strengths, the changing needs on the ground and the wishes of the people of Iraq.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): Let me start by thanking Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her factual briefing on the current situation in Iraq. I also appreciate the insights shared by Ms. Al-Jarahi and welcome the representative of Iraq to this meeting.

On behalf of Albania, I would like to offer our deepest condolences to the people of Al-Hamdaniya in the light of the tragic fire incident that occurred on 27 September. Our thoughts and prayers are with the affected families, and we stand in solidarity with Iraq, wishing all those injured a swift recovery.

Albania commends the Government of Iraq for its continued commitment to the reform agenda and its shift from a security focus to an economic one.

We encourage the Government to move swiftly in the key priority areas of the fight against corruption, the diversification of the economy, confidence-building for the private sector and the green transition.

We applaud the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission for their determination to hold provincial council elections, scheduled for 18 December 2023, and parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, scheduled for 25 February 2024. Albania also welcomes the workplan initiated by the relevant Supreme Committee, which includes various measures, such as addressing hate speech against women candidates and advocating for an electoral code of conduct among political parties.

A democratic nation embraces diversity and offers equal opportunities, regardless of gender. The contribution of all components of society, including women and young people, is essential for genuine progress and prosperity. In that context, we echo the High Commissioner's emphasis that gender and women's empowerment are universal values that should not conflict with culture, religion or tradition. The protection of human rights must also be integral to the Government's reform initiatives. In that regard, we are encouraged by its efforts to compensate survivors eligible under the Yazidi female survivors law, as well as to care for the most vulnerable, especially returning Iraqis and internally displaced persons.

We cannot but express concern about acts targeting religious symbols, such as Qur'an burnings, as they contribute to tensions and radicalization and may result in violence. Albania stands firmly for religious freedom and peaceful dialogue and emphasizes the role of political and religious leaders in countering hate speech, discrimination and religious hatred.

Turning to Iraq's security situation, Albania remains concerned about the ongoing attacks, particularly by Da'esh, and supports the Government's endeavours to establish State control over armed militias. We firmly support Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty and oppose any attempts to undermine its political independence and stability.

Iraq's engagement with its neighbours to enhance regional cooperation is commendable. In that vein, we commend the Government's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation with regional and international partners, with a focus on reinforcing

economic connections and addressing climate change, water scarcity, terrorism and drug trafficking.

We welcome the update on the handover of Kuwaiti property, which marks a positive development, and we call on the Government of Iraq to build on that momentum and intensify efforts to locate the remaining missing property.

In conclusion, we commend the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq for its role in assisting Iraq in finding sustainable solutions, and we reiterate our appreciation and support for the valuable work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her team.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Gabon, Mozambique and my own country, Ghana (A3).

We thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Ms. Dhefah Al-Jarahi of the Iraq Foundation for their briefings. We also welcome the participation of the representative of Iraq in today's meeting.

We would like to start by addressing our deep condolences to the Government and the people of Iraq, as well as to their representative, following the tragic fire that occurred on 26 September during a wedding, resulting in the deaths of at least 100 people and injuring more than 150 others. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families and the injured.

Today we will focus on three main points — the political situation, the security situation and the impact of climate change. On the political front, the A3 is encouraged by the commitment of the Government of Iraq to improving public services, carrying out economic reforms and building confidence in the private sector. We hope that the enactment of a budget law will enhance the Government's ability to address the challenges facing the country in order to meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

We also take note of the efforts of the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission to move forward with provincial council elections in December, the first since 2013. We reiterate that the measure is a significant indication of the continued maturity and resilience of Iraq's democratic journey, and we welcome UNAMI's continued electoral assistance

activities in support of the Commission's preparations for the elections. An inclusive electoral process is essential to Iraq's democracy. We note from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/700) that the number of women registered as candidates for the upcoming provincial council elections constitutes 27 per cent of the total number of candidates. Such efforts should be greatly encouraged. The launch in July of the workplan of the committee to support women's participation in the elections, with measures designed to boost women's participation in political processes, was an important step towards ensuring greater participation by Iraqi women in the country's political life. Similarly, we commend the decision to hold the delayed parliamentary elections of Iraq's Kurdistan region on 25 February 2024, giving the people of the region the opportunity to choose their representatives in the regional Parliament, duly elected in a fair, credible and transparent manner.

Ensuring a continued path to Iraq's stability also depends on constructive relations between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The A3 echoes the Secretary-General's call for both sides to engage in an institutionalized and structured dialogue to address remaining issues, especially economic development and political stability in Iraq.

The security situation in Iraq remains fragile. Notwithstanding the overall decline in attacks attributed to Da'esh in the first half of 2023 compared to the first half of 2022, Da'esh continues to carry out asymmetric attacks in Iraq and poses a serious threat to its sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, as well as to international peace and security. It is therefore important for Iraqi security forces to sustain their efforts to counter the threat posed by Da'esh in order to improve the overall security situation, including by strengthening regional and international cooperation. At the regional level, we welcomed the holding on 19 May of a meeting of the Iraqi-Saudi political, security and military committee, with a particular focus on countering illegal narcotics. Illicit drug trafficking contributes to the financing of terrorist groups and to the destabilization of the region, which particularly affects the security environment.

The A3 is concerned about acts targeting religious symbols, such as the recent burning of the Qur'an. Such acts contribute to discrimination and radicalization, and exacerbate tensions. We therefore hope that all parties can respect the right to freedom of religion and avoid any provocative acts that could foment violence.

We also note with concern the grave violations that have occurred against children in situations of armed conflict during the reported period, including killing, abduction and sexual violence. The activities being undertaken by the country task force in support of the action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children and to institutionalize child protection in Iraq are essential and will go a long way to helping to reduce human rights violations and abuses against Iraqi children.

We reiterate the importance of addressing Iraq's growing vulnerability to climate change. The increased frequency of climate-related crises constitutes a serious threat multiplier, as it heightens the risk of poverty, food insecurity, biodiversity loss, displacement, forced migration and related instability. This relates to the arguments being put forward by the A3 in favour of raising the Council's profile on climate, peace and security. In relating to strategies targeting Iraq, consideration must therefore be given to the climate-security nexus and its humanitarian impact. We acknowledge the active engagement and efforts of the Iraqi authorities in mitigating the challenges posed by climate change and water scarcity, and we welcome the assistance that UNAMI is providing to the Government of Iraq on climate change, which remains essential to Iraq's quest for sustainable solutions to that complex issue. Addressing climate change in Iraq also requires the cooperation of other States. Once again, the A3 echoes the Secretary-General's call to the international community to increase its technical support with a view to enhancing Iraq's endeavours in mitigating and adapting to such challenges.

Concerning the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, we acknowledge the significant progress being made with the continued cooperation of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities, and we look forward to seeing further advances on this important issue.

To conclude, the A3 reiterates its strong support for UNAMI's efforts in the implementation of its mandate, including the commitment to supporting the Government and the people of Iraq.

Mr. Phipps (United Kingdom): Let me begin by extending the United Kingdom's condolences to the families of all who were killed and injured in the tragic fire at Qaraqosh on 26 September. I would also like to express thanks to Special Representative Hennis-

Plasschaert and Ms. Al-Jarahi for their briefings today, and in particular to Ms. Al-Jarahi for highlighting the vital issues of women's rights and meaningful participation. And I want to thank all the staff at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) for their important work. The positive partnership between UNAMI and the Iraqi Government, the Iraqi people and civil society on issues from regional stability to women's rights and participation is playing a vital role in its success.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting the Government of Iraq and the implementation of its ambitious reform agenda. In particular, we welcomed the adoption of the budget in June — a crucial step in delivering the Government's priorities, including on economic reform and energy diversification.

We share the concerns of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General about the Kurdistan region, and we urge the Kurdistan Regional Government to take all necessary steps to ensure that the planned elections take place on 25 February next year without further postponement. It is incumbent on all political parties to exercise unity, to compromise and to engage in constructive dialogue to ensure an electoral process that adheres to international standards and upholds the right of all citizens, including women and minorities, to participate in the democratic process.

We also welcome Iraq's commitment to tackling climate change, including through ending gas flaring by 2030. Iraq's exposure to multiple climate hazards, including floods, droughts and sandstorms, climate-related epidemics and earthquakes, makes this an important shared priority. Progress here will bolster Iraq's security, and we stand ready to support it.

We welcome the update from the Special Representative today on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals as well as missing Kuwaiti property. Regarding Khor Abdullah, we would like to wholeheartedly echo the point made by the Special Representative. We welcomed Prime Minister Al Sudani's renewed commitment expressed during the high-level week to international law and to the resolutions of the Security Council, and like others we would particularly like to recall the importance of resolution 833 (1993). We look forward to seeing outstanding issues between Iraq and the Government of Kuwait resolved through dialogue.

Finally, following the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) last month, we are committed to ensuring that UNITAD's legacy is preserved and that international efforts to deliver justice for Da'esh atrocities continue. Noting Iraq's recent request, we will work closely with the Government of Iraq, the United Nations and the Council to improve evidence-sharing arrangements in accordance with UNITAD's terms of reference, as well as options for the future of UNITAD's work.

Once again, I would like to conclude by renewing the United Kingdom's commitment to the stability and security of Iraq and to the essential role that the Mission plays in support.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her briefing on the situation in Iraq and confirm our unwavering support for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We listened carefully to civil society representative Ms. Dhefah Al-Jarahi.

We regret to note that Iraq is continuing to face complex internal political and socioeconomic challenges against the backdrop of ongoing region-wide instability and terrorist threats. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Council of Ministers, headed by Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, to improve the situation in the country, to ensure stability and security and to combat international terrorism. Furthermore, we note the commitment of the Iraqi Government to implement economic reforms in order to, among other objectives, improve the quality of State services and build the trust of the population in the authorities. We hope that the implementation of that programme will help to find solutions to issues that are pressing for the Iraqi people, such as tackling unemployment and providing support to vulnerable groups.

We consistently and unwaveringly support the Government of Iraq. That was confirmed again during the visit of Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani to Moscow, which is currently under way. During his meeting with President Putin, a whole range of pressing issues for the Middle East were discussed, including the recent escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which can be overcome only if the deep-rooted interests of

the Palestinian people are addressed and the relevant Security Council resolutions are implemented.

We trust that all Iraqi political forces will continue to take a responsible approach and seek to settle the existing disputes solely through dialogue, for the benefit of all with all ethnic and faith-based communities and social groups of the country. We are convinced that an inclusive dialogue is necessary to facilitate the smooth holding of elections in the Iraqi governorates and the parliamentary elections to be held in the Kurdish Autonomous Region.

In that context, we commend the ongoing substantive dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil to settle existing disputes, first of foremost, in the oil and gas sector. We are convinced that further improvement of relations between them will benefit economic development and political stability throughout Iraq.

Despite Baghdad's achievements in the area of counter-terrorism, the security situation remains volatile owing to, among other factors, the increased activity of terrorist cells. According to the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/700), they regularly conduct attacks in various governorates in the country. We continue to believe that this challenge can be effectively addressed only through the broadest possible coordination of counter-terrorism efforts while respecting Iraq's sovereignty and with agreement with Baghdad on all actions.

We welcome Baghdad's efforts aimed at establishing good neighbourly relations and welcome the expanding role of the country in regional normalization efforts. Furthermore, we are convinced that the increase in Iraq's foreign policy initiatives and the establishment of constructive cooperation with partners in the region will promote peace, stability and security in the Middle East. We support a swift and lasting normalization of the situation both within and outside Iraq. In that regard, we underscore once again that attempts to turn Iraq's national territory into an arena for confrontation and settling scores by third countries are unacceptable.

In conclusion, we take this opportunity to once again express our support for the multifaceted efforts of UNAMI to improve the public and political life of the country and the functioning of the State. At the same time, we consistently oppose any attempts to refocus UNAMI's mandate on issues that are not characteristic of special political missions, such as climate change and cross-border environmental disputes.

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

I join others in thanking Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing. I also thank Ms. Dhefaf Al-Jarahi for sharing her experience and opinions with Council members on the promotion of women's rights. And I welcome the Iraqi delegation to this meeting.

I also add my voice to those who express their sentiments and sympathy to the people and the Government of Iraq for the tragic fire that broke out on 26 September and claimed more than 100 lives in Hamdaniya.

Brazil values the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in helping the Iraqi authorities to achieve their objectives as set out in Iraq's governmental programme. As a Chapter VI Mission, UNAMI's mandate responds to the request by the Iraqi Government to support domestic efforts and processes, in full respect of Iraqi sovereignty and ownership.

In line with the letter by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mr. Fuad Hussein, addressed to the Council in May, the latest renewal of UNAMI's mandate offers an opportunity for the Mission to prioritize and streamline the areas in which assistance is most requested by the Government of Iraq.

Brazil commends the progress achieved by Iraq on many domestic fronts since last May. That includes the passing of the federal budget, the scheduling of provincial and regional elections and the launching of a national plan to enhance women's political participation. We also highlight Iraq's accession to the Paris Agreement on climate change in December 2021.

I would like to highlight some points of the most recent report of the Secretary-General's on the implementation of resolution 2682 (2023) (S/2023/700).

The Secretary-General refers to the link between power shortages in Iraq and the effects of unilateral coercive measures. Iraq's impossibility to make payments for foreign gas does not contribute to the country's stability.

The Secretary-General's report also provides information on the repercussions in Iraq of deplorable episodes of Qur'an desecrations in other countries. They are a reminder of the importance of promoting religious tolerance to achieve a culture of peace. We welcome

Iraq's firm commitment to protecting diplomatic and consular premises in the country.

Counter-terrorism is another important aspect of the report. In their legitimate efforts to combat the threat posed by Da'esh or any other non-State actor, Member States must cooperate and abide by the prohibition on the use of force in their international relations, as per Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. Brazil acknowledges the willingness of Iraq to cooperate with the international community, including neighbouring countries, in its fight against terrorism.

The facilitation of regional dialogue is part of UNAMI's mandate. Brazil welcomes the Mission's offer to support negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait about their maritime border. We hope that the parties can engage in dialogue in good faith in order to reach mutually acceptable solutions. The collaboration between the two countries in other areas, as in the repatriation of Kuwaiti property and missing nationals, exemplifies that constructive and forward-looking diplomatic engagement can settle complex disputes.

Finally, Brazil commends the ongoing efforts by the Government of Iraq, supported by the United Nations, to facilitate the return of displaced persons and repatriate nationals from Al-Hol camp in Syria. We acknowledge the Special Representative's role in assisting Iraqi authorities in those efforts, including the reintegration of women and children within Iraq. That is an example of how to curb the threat that detention camps in the Middle East become breeding grounds for the radicalization of young generations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Fatlawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Sérgio França Danese, Permanent Representative of Brazil, on his assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like also to thank His Excellency Ambassador Ferit Hoxha, Permanent Representative of Albania, for presiding over the Council in September. I would like to thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) for her briefing, as well as Ms. Dhefah Al-Jarahi for her participation in this meeting.

I am very grateful to Council members for their condolences and sympathy regarding the Al-Hamdaniya fire accident, and I also thank them for their welcoming words regarding my participation in today's meeting.

During the year that has passed since its formation, the Government of the Republic of Iraq continues to focus on achieving the goals of its ambitious ministerial reform programme, which it presented in accordance with the principle of national partnership. The programme prioritizes issues that affect the lives of citizens and basic services, including focusing on projects to repair infrastructure, combat the scourge of drugs, corruption and oil smuggling networks and prosecute those involved, and strengthen law enforcement and support to the judiciary in that regard. We are also focusing on development and economic projects through engagement at the regional and international levels, concluding agreements with major companies in important countries and concluding strategic agreements with companies specializing in natural gas investments and upgrading electricity grids.

The Iraqi Government is cognizant of the importance of reforming and modernizing the work of public institutions, especially those providing public services. My Government has also achieved success on the diplomatic front by distancing itself from conflict and adopting the path of diplomatic mediation and approaches for resolving emerging issues in the region or affairs pertaining to the Arab and Islamic world, with a view to making Iraq a force for stability regionally and internationally.

Allow me to give a brief summary of the most important developments that have taken place in Iraq over the past four months. Regarding the relationship between the federal Government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, coordination continues between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government and is aimed at reaching understandings and agreements on fundamental issues, including those related to the implementation of the general budget law, the Kurdistan region's federal budget allocations from the federal budget and the protection of the constitutional rights of the region, in addition to continuing coordination with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Oil and the federal Board of Supreme Audit.

Iraq emphasizes the importance of working continuously to approve bills submitted to the Council

of Representatives, especially the draft law on transforming the city of Halabja into a governorate, the draft law on the establishment of a federation council and the oil and gas law, as well as the cancellation of the decisions of the dissolved Revolutionary Command Council.

Regarding the security file, Iraq believes that fighting terrorism is the collective responsibility of all countries. Iraq therefore pledges to continue our efforts to combat terrorism and achieve security and peace. On World Humanitarian Day, Iraq condemned the terrorist bombing that targeted the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, which killed the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Sérgio Vieira de Mello, and 22 other people and wounded many other United Nations personnel. They gave their lives out of their commitment to continue to help people around the world by upholding humanitarian values. Iraq also recalls and condemns the terrorist incident that occurred at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Baghdad on the same date in 2009, which led to the martyrdom of 45 Ministry employees in addition to the wounding of dozens of others. It is worth noting that that cowardly bombing was not the only attack against the Ministry or Iraqi institutions and cities, as it was preceded and followed by a number of bombings and assassinations targeting a number of Ministry employees and innocent citizens.

We take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for the efforts of the international coalition and the sacrifices it is making in partnership with the Iraqi forces. We express our sincere condolences for the killing of paratrooper Sergeant Nicolas Mazier in Iraq, whose unit was providing support to an Iraqi military unit in counter-terrorism operations. Iraq affirms its full commitment to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which regulates diplomatic relations among countries, and confirms to the permanent diplomatic missions that the Iraqi Government is responsible for the protection, responsibility and safety of diplomatic personnel in all those missions.

Concerning violations and assaults, Iraq denounces and categorically rejects all land and air military operations that violate or threaten the security and sovereignty of Iraq. Iraq renews its constitutional commitment not to issue any threats from its territories towards its neighbours.

As for supporting liberated areas and internally displaced people, the Government of the Republic of Iraq

continues its tireless efforts within the national measures and programmes established to return the displaced persons and integrate them into their communities. We confirm that closing the displacement file is one of our priorities. From this standpoint, the Iraqi Parliament voted on article 49 of the General Budget Law for Iraq, including the establishment of a fund called the Sinjar and Nineveh Plain Reconstruction Fund, with a capital of 50 billion Iraqi dinars. The Iraqi Council of Representatives also approved the proposal to add the Al Qahtaniyah and Zummar districts to the aforementioned Fund, especially since the majority of the residents of those two districts are Yazidi Kurds, and they will benefit from including their areas, which were damaged as a result of the war against Da'esh. In that regard, Iraq calls on the international community to support the Iraqi institutions concerned with this file, especially the Ministry of Immigration and Displacement, with an international effort for the rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

Concerning the Iraqi families living in the Al-Hol camp, the Government of the Republic of Iraq has been able to transfer 10 batches of Iraqi families coming from the camp to Iraq thus far, and the total number of families returning has reached 1,561, amounting to 6,204 people, including 840 families that have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into seven governorates, while the number of families under rehabilitation has reached 553.

Iraq urges countries to evacuate their nationals from Al-Hol camp in order to dismantle and close it permanently, as it represents a threat to international peace and security.

Iraq praises the ministerial meeting of the international counter-Da'esh coalition, which was held in Riyadh, in which it announced the accession of Togo, which became the eighty-sixth member. It also praises the announcement of the coalition ministers that they would launch a campaign called the stabilization pledge, with the aim of collecting \$601 million for the areas liberated from Da'esh and supporting the efforts of the coalition seeking to promote reconciliation and reintegration to create conditions conducive to achieving stability.

The Government of the Republic of Iraq stresses its commitment to follow up and prosecute all those accused of terrorism in coordination with friendly and brotherly countries, especially since Iraq has received more than 3,000 Iraqi terrorists who were formerly imprisoned in north-eastern Syria. They were transferred to the competent authorities to be presented to the Iraqi

judiciary and tried legally, in order to apply the principle of non-impunity.

Regarding government programmes, the Government of the Republic of Iraq launched its plan for a general restructuring of the transport sector in Iraq, in particular ports, airports, railways and land transport, and the exploitation and investment of Iraq's location as a crossing point between the Gulf, the Mediterranean, Asia and Europe, and the activation of all types of transit. The Development Road project is an extensive transport network of 1,200 kilometres of interconnected roads and railways. The project aims to transform Iraq into a regional transport hub, connecting Europe and the Gulf, with the participation of 10 regional countries, namely, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Iran. The project will contribute to the creation of job opportunities and will lay the foundation for a sustainable non-oil-dependent economy. The project will also promote opportunities for economic diversification, as well as efforts to combat climate change and strengthen regional cooperation.

The Iraqi Government has made investment projects in the gas, petrochemical and electricity sectors a top priority in order to meet national needs and participate in the global economy in terms of energy sources, especially since the Iraqi market is large and very promising. Iraq is about to sign a contract for the implementation, construction and purchase of an elevated train project in Baghdad with a consortium of the French company Alstom and the Korean company Hyundai. That is one of the most important projects the Government is trying to implement to help solve traffic congestion problems in the capital, Baghdad. Furthermore, the foundation stone has been laid for a railway connectivity project with Iran, the Basra-Shalamcheh line, to transport passengers and visitors between Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran. It will also transport travellers and visitors from Central Asian countries to Iraq.

Major Gulf companies are turning to the Iraqi market to invest and start projects in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, health and infrastructure. Iraq is also preparing to host the third iteration of the Bagdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership late next month with the participation of brotherly, friendly and partner countries. The Conference will be the starting point for major projects for Iraq and the region and will contribute greatly to strengthening solid ties among those countries and supporting regional stability and the desired economic development. Most recently, a

tripartite meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Iraq, Egypt and Jordan was held to discuss means of promoting cooperation, coordination and joint integration in the areas of economic cooperation and to consider updates on the progress made in the implementation of joint projects among the three countries in various areas, including civil and economic projects on the Jordanian-Iraqi borders and the electricity interconnectivity project, phase one of which is close to completion.

Turning to the empowerment of women, the national strategy for Iraqi women for the period 2023–2030 was launched and will contribute to strengthening participation in planning and aligning priorities with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals on the empowerment of women and girls. The strategy includes five main pillars, namely, participation, political, economic and social empowerment and the protection of women, including addressing violence against women and strengthening the role of women in managing the risks of climate change. The Committee to Support Women's Political Participation in the forthcoming provincial council elections was formed with the aim of providing support to women, ensuring their participation in local elections at the level of all governorates and enabling them through plans and programmes that contribute to protecting female candidates from all types of violence they may be exposed to or perpetrated against them. It also sets up and provides training and support to women in the context of their political participation. Women in Iraq hold the highest positions and are represented in three ministries of the Government, as well as in other leadership positions. Today women have exceeded the quota for women in Parliament, growing from one fourth to one third of the membership.

Iraqi Law No. 8 of 2021, the Yazidi Female Survivors Law, was implemented through the establishment of the Directorate of Female Survivors' Affairs in Nineveh governorate. It provides for the implementation of the provisions of the law, including reparation for damages and moral and financial compensation for female survivors, providing them with a decent life, preparing them with the means to integrate into society and preventing the recurrence of violations against them. On 7 August, the Supreme Judicial Council approved on the admissibility of online testimonies from those women.

Turning to the fight against desertification and climate change response, combating climate change and water scarcity is one of the Iraqi Government's top priorities. The Government is taking many comprehensive national

measures, especially since climate change has caused damage to more than 7 million Iraqi citizens, in addition to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis due to the loss of their livelihoods in the areas of agriculture and fishing. We should also mention the most depressing aspect, namely, water scarcity and severe drought, which have affected the marshes and increased desertification and dust storms.

In addressing climate change, Iraq is seeking to use more solar energy, restore damaged ecosystems, reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, invest in emission-reducing infrastructure and renewable power plants, recycle mor, fund green companies and start-ups working in renewable and green energy and agriculture, conserve water, modernize all irrigation methods, preserve the country's biodiversity and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Serious efforts are being made to establish the High Council for Water to find the necessary solutions, through coordination and cooperation with neighbouring countries, to ensure a fair and adequate share of Iraq's water needs and to conduct negotiations with upstream countries. The Iraqi Government has taken many decisions and measures to introduce modern agricultural and irrigation technologies, adopt good management and reduce water loss. The Government has launched an initiative to plant 5 million palm trees in various Iraqi governorates to address the decline in agriculture land relative to the growth of the population. Iraq calls on countries that are parties to international environmental agreements to strengthen international cooperation in the joint management of transboundary river basins and to preserve the rights of riparian countries. Upstream countries' sole control over water resources increases the vulnerability of countries to the effects of climate change and damage. Iraq will actively participate in the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held next month in the United Arab Emirates. The Conference is intended to discuss and adopt sustainable measures and solutions to address the negative effects of climate change.

As for relations with the brotherly State of Kuwait, Iraq is governed by a standing Constitution based on the principle of separation of powers, which rejects the methods used by the former regime in dealing with neighbouring countries. That has cost Iraq so much. Iraq also stresses the need for a peaceful resolution of all problems and the renunciation of violence in relations with neighbouring and other countries. We stress the need to use negotiation and dialogue as a means of

peaceful resolution. Iraq respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the sisterly State of Kuwait and is committed to all bilateral agreements with States and Security Council resolutions. That includes resolution 833 (1993), which was adopted on 27 May 1993 and approved and ratified by Iraq on 10 November 1994.

Iraq and Kuwait continue to cooperate in order to overcome all obstacles to joint work. That includes the holding of a joint Iraqi-Kuwaiti committee to discuss the memorandum of understanding on joint oil fields between the two countries, as well as mechanisms for investment in those fields, in favour of the two neighbouring countries, in particular after the extension of the memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries. Official visits between our two countries are ongoing at the highest levels, and discussions are taking place on many topics of common interest, including international issues of mutual interest, the development of relations in various aspects, the facilitation of visits, the strengthening of trade relations, the demarcation of borders and drug control through various technical committees.

Iraq and Kuwait continue to work together to resolve the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, which chairs the relevant Tripartite Commission. A missing Kuwaiti national was recently identified using genetic fingerprint analysis. The Iraqi Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Defence continue to extend a humanitarian appeal to anyone who may have potentially helpful information on possible sites where the remains of Kuwaiti or Iraqi nationals who went missing during or in the aftermath of the second Gulf War may be buried. They also appeal to anyone who may have other information on locations of missing property, including the Kuwaiti national archives, with a request to present the relevant information as soon as possible and to contact the two Iraqi Ministries or their agencies. A monetary reward has been allocated for payment to anyone who provides useful information leading to a positive outcome.

In conclusion, I thank Secretary-General Guterres for the unwavering stance of the United Nations in supporting Iraq and respecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity. I also note that the Government of the Republic of Iraq is grateful for the work of UNAMI and the continuing efforts of other United Nations entities and international organizations operating in Iraq.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.