



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

8975th meeting

Thursday, 24 February 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Nebenzia/Ms. Evstigneeva	(Russian Federation)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mrs. Hackman
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Mr. Kelly
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-third report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2022/100)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2022/103)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

22-26727 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Thirty-third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2022/100)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2022/103)

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

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/100, which contains the thirty-third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), and to document S/2022/103, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2021).

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

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert: Allow me to begin today's briefing with an overview of recent developments concerning political appointments and Government formation.

Following the ratification of electoral results, the parliamentary Speaker and his two deputies were elected on 9 January. While that was initially contested, the Federal Supreme Court ruled on 25 January that the inaugural parliamentary session, during which the Speaker and his two deputies were elected, had been held in accordance with the Constitution.

The next step is the election of a President of the Republic, according to the Constitution, within 30 days of the election of the Speaker. However, following an initial nomination period, on 7 February the parliamentary quorum for a session to elect a President was not met. Parliament decided to reopen the nomination period for another three days; the Federal Supreme Court has not yet ruled on whether that reopening was constitutional but did rule one candidate ineligible.

Once the President is elected, he or she will, within 15 days, according to the Constitution, charge the nominee of the largest parliamentary bloc, that is, the Prime Minister-designate, with the formation of a council of ministers, to be endorsed by Parliament. Clearly, the current situation suggests that we are not there yet.

While political consultations continue, or, perhaps more accurately, the political impasse continues, time is just passing by — precious time.

Behind the headline debate of a majority versus a consensus Government, many Iraqis are increasingly wondering whether the national interest is actually front and centre in the ongoing negotiations, rather than access to resources and power, or how the pie of political appointments and ministries will be carved this time around.

Needless to say, the priority should be to urgently agree on a programme of action that immediately and meaningfully tackles Iraq's long list of outstanding domestic business. What I am saying is that it is more than four months since the elections, and it is high time to return the spotlight to where it deserves to be: on the people of Iraq.

The people of Iraq, who continue to wait for gainful, productive employment opportunities, safety, security, adequate public service delivery, the full protection of their rights and freedoms, justice, accountability and meaningful participation of women and young people, to name but a few.

Of course, one could be forgiven for being patient with a prolonged Government formation phase if we were witnessing vibrant exchanges on policy orientations, development pathways and economic reform plans. If that was animating the negotiations, patience would indeed be a virtue. However, so far, we are observing

quite the opposite — hampering the change and reforms that the country so desperately needs.

Moreover, as I have pointed out countless times, a weak home front creates vulnerabilities for instance to Da'esh, which is ready to take advantage of any political and security vacuum, but also to continued external interference. In the case of Iraq, that is not a hypothetical point.

In the meantime, the patience of the Iraqi people is being tested. In October 2019, that patience found its limits and very many Iraqis took the streets, protesting a lack of social, economic and political prospects. We know how that ended — with hundreds killed and thousands injured. The very least that Iraqis may now expect is a sense of urgency from their elected representatives to overcome internal divisions, agree on a programme informing Iraqis of what they can expect in the next four years, manage public expectations and rise to the challenge of meeting the aspirations of the 40 million people who call Iraq home.

I will say a few words on the Baghdad-Erbil relationship. As the Council knows, I have consistently emphasized the importance of a regular, structured and institutionalized Baghdad-Erbil dialogue, with specific timelines, to address the long-outstanding issues. As I have said before, that is a mutual responsibility.

The fact is that the inability to overcome differences, or even the unwillingness to find agreement, comes at a cost sooner or later. It is also true that, if a political vacuum exists for too long, the judicialization of what are otherwise legislative or executive domains can suddenly be a fact of life.

With a caretaker Government in office and political parties engaged in negotiations on the formation of a new Government, a Federal Supreme Court case pending for 10 years was very recently adjudicated. Hence, the recent Court ruling on the unconstitutionality of the Kurdistan Regional Government oil and gas law prompted questions by many, such as “Why now?”.

The fact is that it happened. Consequently, the importance of that institutionalized dialogue has only increased. Not only that — the country needs its Parliament to act. More broadly, what I am saying is that letting things slide is a risky business, with potentially far-reaching consequences undermining Iraq's stability in the short and long run.

I therefore once again call on all stakeholders to focus on what really matters and to unite instead of competing. Like it or not, the parties need each other to be their best. Hence, all efforts should centre on resolving outstanding issues not by way of a power grab, but in a spirit of partnership and cooperation.

Turning briefly to the economy, between a sharp rise in oil prices and a currency devaluation, the deficit has been reduced and foreign currency reserves have grown. The safety net has been expanded, notably due to increased spending on social services in response to the pandemic.

At first glance, that can sound encouraging. However, there is no denying that, with important Government proposals and efforts actively being undermined, delayed or halted, such results cannot be considered a direct consequence of sustainable strategies. Fundamentally, today Iraq is no less vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations; Iraq suffers no less from poverty or underemployment; and Iraq is witnessing no less corruption than it did last year or the year before.

I repeat myself again, but durable, structural solutions can come about only through meaningful reform. I realize that that is easier said than done. However, Iraq is running out of time. As an Iraqi official put it to me some time ago, even if we had started implementing the most urgent reforms the day before yesterday, it will take superhuman efforts to sufficiently address today's financial, economic and environmental challenges. While I would like to think in terms of the glass being half full, his remarks are not to be taken lightly.

Also, with regard to environmental challenges, they present a looming threat that is far too often considered less urgent, but it is ultimately one of the greatest global challenges that we collectively face.

A few weeks ago, I visited Iraq's marshlands in southern Iraq — a dramatic, beautiful landscape, whose biodiversity is equalled only by its cultural significance. However, water scarcity in that region is not just a threat on the horizon, but it is a present danger. As is the case for other parts of the country, the salinization of water and soils, desertification and the disappearance of arable lands are nothing less than existential environmental concerns. Moreover, as we all know, water scarcity is a threat multiplier. With it come

heightened risks of poverty, displacement, instability and conflict.

Much, but not all, of that scarcity can be explained by climate change. Water flows are also actively being reduced by neighbouring countries. Furthermore, potable water and irrigation infrastructure and maintenance are significantly lagging behind. Iraq's water resources have been managed ineffectively for too long.

In other words, Iraq is acutely vulnerable to the effects of water scarcity due to climate change and reduced inflows from its rivers. While I know that this is a priority for the current caretaker Government, I would like to emphasize that shared ownership of this crucial file across the political spectrum will prove essential.

Another issue is the camps and prisons across the border, hosting many Iraqis, in north-eastern Syria, to be precise. All of us will have closely followed recent events that have yet again made the risks associated with that slow-moving catastrophe clear. The situation in those camps and prisons presents unprecedented challenges, with implications for the region and far beyond. They are ticking time bombs.

Over the past three years, the Council has heard me repeat that the legacy of yesterday's fight against Da'esh could very easily turn into tomorrow's war and that we should not wait for young children to come of age in a camp such as Al-Hol. Those children, living in dire circumstances, never asked to be part of that mess. However, they find themselves deprived of their rights and at risk of forced recruitment and exposure to violent extremism.

Of course, I recognize that a number of States have upheld their responsibilities by taking back children and, in some cases, limited numbers of women. I can only hope that other States will soon follow suit. As a growing number of countries have shown, that can be done successfully.

The fact is that the current situation is not sustainable. Keeping people indefinitely in the restricted and poor conditions of those camps ultimately creates greater protection and security risks than taking them back in a controlled manner.

Meanwhile, Iraq has demonstrated courage. So far, around 450 families, or some 1,800 persons, have been repatriated to Iraq. As thousands of Iraqis are still

out there, the Iraqi authorities realize that they cannot stop there.

Turning from the Al-Hol camp to the suspected Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant combatants currently in custody in north-eastern Syria, which again is an unsustainable situation, moreover, as is the case for a camp such as Al-Hol, such facilities fuel resentment, as well as inspiring terrorists, from breakout operations to large-scale attacks, as we have seen. In addition, the fact that some fighters and associated family members have been able to make their way out suggests that it would be better to control the situation and manage returns rather than take the chance of missing them as they slip back undetected into any country.

Here, too, Iraq deserves to be commended. Not only has the Iraqi Government made a start with the repatriation of Iraqi families in Al-Hol, but it has also begun repatriating Iraqi combatants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Essentially, what I am saying is that in the interest of everyone, the ultimate security argument, as opposed to the short-term political one, is to recognize that a continued status quo is the riskiest option. To appease festering grievances, prevent the emergence of new conflicts and defuse ticking time bombs, it is important to anticipate and mitigate. It is important to step up and get things done.

Turning now to the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, on 16 February the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq facilitated the return, from Kuwait back to Iraq, the last six sets of human remains that were determined not to be part of the Kuwait or Saudi Arabia lists of missing persons. With that transfer, the identification process of all human remains discovered in Samawah, in Muthanna governorate, in 2019 and 2020 has been concluded. As I have stressed before, it is imperative for the Government of Iraq not to lose that momentum, but instead to take advantage of the experience gained so far and move towards the overall conclusion of this important humanitarian file.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the importance of a sense of urgency. It is urgent for Iraq's political leaders to overcome divisions, set aside partisanship and bury personal vendettas. Iraq truly has immense potential. If only that potential were fulfilled, how bright Iraq's future could be.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and ongoing leadership on this critical file. We truly appreciate the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to Iraq's peace and stability.

I welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to today's meeting.

The United States again congratulates the Iraqi people on successfully holding free and fair parliamentary elections in October that were largely peaceful. That is a testament to the Iraqi people and their desire for transparent and good governance. We remain hopeful that those elections will yield a Government that reflects the will of the Iraqi people and responds to their urgent needs.

Before and after polling, the Iraqi people rejected violence intended to coerce and intimidate politicians, election authorities, journalists, women and activists. They rebuffed attempts by some to restore old power structures. They stayed strong in solidarity for democracy.

The attack on the residence of Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi in November was the most visible attempt to thwart the democratic process and nullify the election results amid repeated threats of violence directed against Iraqi citizens working to safeguard Iraq's democracy. Despite all those threats, the Independent High Electoral Commission, with assistance from UNAMI, implemented a secure, technically sound voting and counting process, monitored by international observers. After electoral and judicial authorities confirmed the vote tallies and adjudicated challenges, the Federal Supreme Court in December ratified the election results, thereby paving the way for Iraq to proceed with forming a new Government. As a result of those polls, an historic number of women and members of religious and ethnic minority groups won seats. Reformist newcomers have established themselves as a new force in Iraqi politics. Democracy has gained a stronger foothold in Iraq.

Now it is time for Iraq's leaders to come together and form an inclusive Government — one capable of

and committed to addressing the aspirations of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people need a Government of that kind because they need security. We have seen that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) remains bent on using violence to wreak havoc. In the meantime, we commend Iraqi security forces for their brave fight against ISIS and will continue to support Iraq in that effort, in line with our strategic framework agreement. The United States looks forward to working with the new Government, once it has formed, to strengthen our strategic partnership on our many shared interests, including economic reform and anti-corruption measures.

Inclusive and transparent institutions and systems, including the judiciary, are critical to the next Government's formation and to Iraq's future. I was proud to see Iraq participate in the Summit for Democracy in December. Now it is time for Iraq's leaders to meet those commitments and set an example for the world.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Let me begin by thanking Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and welcoming the Iraqi representative to today's meeting.

We express our appreciation for the work that has been done to address the questions surrounding missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. Very important progress has been made on this file and we recognize its significance.

The certification of the election results by the Federal Supreme Court in December last year represents a critical step towards the consolidation of democracy in Iraq. It has set in motion the constitutional process, which should be followed by the election of a new Speaker of the Parliament and a new Government. We regret to see that the constitutional process has been put on hold, especially after the postponement of the vote on the election of the new President by the Parliament on 7 February.

The largest political parties should take responsibility and move the country forward by allowing for the formation of a new and able Government to meet the immediate challenges that the Iraqi people face. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of the full and meaningful participation of women in that process, as the best guarantors of an all-inclusive and representative Government.

Equally, we see a need for the major forces to look beyond sectarian lines and unite their forces to serve the common good of all Iraqis. Dialogue among the relevant parties and at all levels is the only way to achieve that common goal.

We remain concerned about the high levels of political violence. Such attacks on the democratic future of Iraq must be condemned. All parties must avoid the use of threats or violence to resolve political disputes. Dialogue, not violence, must be the way to form a Government that can address economic, climate and humanitarian challenges, while also fighting the pandemic.

I represent a young democracy that has had immense achievements. We have experienced firsthand how democratic processes can be slow. They cannot be taken for granted and do not come easily. Respecting constitutional principles and deadlines is critical to ensuring democratic rule, especially in a country that faces so many challenges. It is in the spirit of friendship and sincere desire to see Iraq flourish that we call on all parties to redouble their efforts, respect the constitutional process and resolve all outstanding issues through dialogue and negotiation.

Mr. Biang (Gabon): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African States members of the Security Council (A3): Gabon, Ghana and Kenya. We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her informative briefing on developments in Iraq and the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which we are following closely. We also welcome the participation of our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Iraq, in this meeting.

Our intervention will focus on the political, security and human rights issues.

It is apparent from the Special Representative's briefing that Iraq remains in the grip of a post-electoral stalemate, which owing to the persistence of political dissension has resulted in an institutional crisis, with the indefinite postponement of the election of the president of the Republic by Parliament, initially scheduled for 7 February 2022. The announcement in May 2020 of the holding of early parliamentary elections offered a source of hope for the Iraqi people, especially young people who, through their demonstrations, essentially demanded the establishment of the rule of law, the end

of external interference and fairer and more effective economic and social policies.

With the support of UNAMI, the legislative elections of 10 October 2021 were held peacefully, although the announcement of the results was marred by tensions that led to electoral disputes. The willingness of all political actors to remain within the framework of the Constitution demonstrated their commitment to peace and stability in Iraq, which gave rise to optimism. However, the post-electoral stalemate and the inability of political parties to reach an agreement do not serve the Iraqi people, who exercised their constitutional right to choose their leadership and enjoy prosperity.

We call on the various political parties represented in Parliament to engage in dialogue and compromise to achieve the formation of a consensus Government. We similarly call for refraining from all forms of violence and the need for the peaceful and expeditious formation of a Government that is capable of addressing the challenges facing Iraq. The future of the country is at stake.

We recall with satisfaction the significant participation of women in the recent elections, winning 195 seats and exceeding the 25 per cent quota provided for in the Constitution, which was a clear illustration of the inclusive nature of the elections. The outcome should result in the significant representation of women in the formation of the Government and Iraqi society in general, which we urge the Government of Iraq to prioritize. We also take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the law against domestic violence, which seeks to protect women.

With regard to the security situation, the A3 remains deeply concerned about the continued attacks being perpetrated by Da'esh in several governorates of Iraq against civilians and Iraqi security forces and the persistent threat they pose to security and stability in the country. Ensuring the safety and security of Iraqis is fundamental to the overall stability, reconciliation and prosperity that we would like to see in Iraq. In that context, we reaffirm our support for the security of Iraq and the fight against terrorism, and join in the call to address the underlying factors conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.

Concerning the recent violent attacks carried out on 21 January by Da'esh in the district of Al-Azim, in which 11 soldiers were killed, we must hold the perpetrators of such crimes, whose activities affect

the entire region, to account. In addition, mines and unexploded bombs are among the greatest challenges facing the Iraqi authorities in enabling the displaced to return to their homes in the liberated areas in the north of the country, particularly in the governorates of Ninawa and Kirkuk. As an illustration of the latter, another child was killed on 19 February in an explosion caused by a live mine in Dhi Qar governorate. We call on the international community to support Iraq in its fight against that scourge.

With regard to the human rights situation in Iraq, we note the activities being undertaken by UNAMI, together with other stakeholders, to promote human rights and build capacity to address the areas of justice, accountability and the rule of law in Iraq. We reiterate the call on the Government of Iraq to take further measures to hold persons accountable for human rights violations and abuses against demonstrators and civil society actors. For example, during the period from 1 October to 31 December 2021, UNAMI documented 28 incidents involving nearly 115 civilians, including 50 deaths and 65 injuries, including among women and children. Those barbaric acts have been attributed both to Da'esh and to unidentified armed militias. In that vein, we welcome the publication of the joint report of UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, entitled "Human Rights and Freedom of Expression: Trials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq", which examines the criminal proceedings in four emblematic cases tried by the Erbil Criminal Court.

We acknowledge and commend the efforts of the Government of Iraq, with the support of the international community, in fulfilling its obligation to Kuwait with regard to the compensations called for by the United Nations and the United Nations Compensation Commission, in accordance with resolutions 687 (1991) and 692 (1991). The same applies to Iraq's accession to the Paris Agreement, which also sends a strong message that should be noted. We acknowledge UNAMI's continuous support for the efforts of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait on the subject of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals, as well as the work of the Tripartite Commission and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

We applaud the recent advances made in including new initiatives to provide information that could help identify the location of undiscovered burial sites and further encourage the Government of Iraq to continue

to build on the progress made in the search for missing Kuwaiti national archives.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for UNAMI and the relevant agencies of the United Nations system in their continued and multifaceted support alongside with the Government and the people of Iraq. Time is of the essence. We call on all political actors to secure a political deal that accommodates the interests of all the parties in order to overcome the ongoing impasse. That is the only path to the country's peaceful political transition that will safeguard the interests of the Iraqi people.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her informative and insightful briefing. I would also like to welcome our Iraqi colleague to this meeting.

Since this is the first briefing on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in which we are participating during our current term on the Security Council, we would like to reiterate Brazil's support for the historic work that the Mission has undertaken since 2003.

Throughout the past two decades, UNAMI has been essential to aiding Iraq in its efforts towards stability and development.

UNAMI's work also holds a very specific meaning for us as Brazilians, as its creation on 14 August 2003 preceded the Canal Hotel attack by five days. That attack took the lives of 22 people at the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, including that of Special Representative for Iraq and High Commissioner for Human Rights Sérgio Vieira de Mello. UNAMI's efforts since then honour their sacrifice and constitute a symbol of courage and determination in the pursuit of peace.

Since 2003, the Iraqi people have faced immense challenges — from post-war reconstruction to the building of democratic institutions to the fight against terrorism. None of these challenges has entirely gone away, but we have witnessed hard-earned and well-deserved progress on all of those fronts. Iraq must be commended, most recently, for the holding of safe, transparent and well-organized elections on 10 October 2021. We applaud the efforts of the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission and other institutions in that regard, and we recognize the essential work of

UNAMI in supporting the Iraqi State. The Council's decision to reinforce UNAMI's capabilities before the election was an opportune and fruitful one.

The announcement of the final election results on 30 November and the ratification of those results by the Supreme Court on 27 December were important milestones, and we count on Iraqi political actors to capitalize on the moment and complete the Government formation process as soon as possible in order to respond to the legitimate and urgent aspirations of the Iraqi people.

This year has seen important developments and achievements for Iraq, some of which have been recently discussed in this Chamber. On Tuesday, we adopted resolution 2621 (2022), recognizing that Iraq had fulfilled its obligations established under Article VII of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the payment of compensation related to the events of 1990-1991. That was a momentous achievement. Accordingly, the resolution determined the forthcoming termination of the United Nations Compensation Commission after three decades of activity.

As Iraq turns yet another page of its recent past, it also endeavours to fulfil its true vocation as a source of regional stability and as a bridge between different cultures, political outlooks and religious perspectives. The Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership, held in August, is a promising example of that. The burgeoning ties of friendship and cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait are another.

UNAMI's activities are essential for supporting positive trends in Iraq and for aiding the Iraqi Government and people as they face the current challenges. Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert can count on our continued support.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to this meeting.

It has been four months since the Iraqi people came together to vote in parliamentary elections. We look forward to the formation of a new Government that will meet the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people, in particular women, youth, and marginalized communities. It is vital that all Iraqi political actors take the steps necessary to form a Government expeditiously.

Let me also underline that the historic participation of women as candidates and voters — indeed surpassing the 25 per cent constitutional quota — should be reflected in their meaningful leadership in the next Government and Cabinet.

We also commend the intention of the Independent High Electoral Commission to conduct a post-election review. Such a lessons-learned process is important for strengthening the capacities of Iraq's electoral institutions.

The security situation in Iraq continues to be fragile and volatile. We are concerned about the continued terrorist activity by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and the spread of violent extremism. In that regard, we underline the importance of strengthening capacities on human rights compliance and adhering to the principle of proportionality during counter-terrorism operations, while carefully considering the role of marginalization, exclusion and injustice. We applaud the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to the Iraqi authorities to strengthen their compliance.

Furthermore, we are encouraged by the recent Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Iraq (S/2021/437), which detailed the significant decrease in grave violations against children between 2019 and 2021.

We are, however, deeply concerned about the sharp increase of children detained on security-related charges. Children should be treated primarily as victims. Alternatives to detention, such as long-term and sustainable reintegration, should be actively sought.

It is clear that accountability, justice, rule of law and human rights are at the centre of addressing the long-term drivers of conflict and instability in Iraq. Norway would like to again raise the issue of strengthening accountability mechanisms for human rights violations and abuses and, in particular, for violence perpetrated against demonstrators and political and civil society actors, as well as sexual and gender-based violence.

In that regard, we commend the Special Representative for holding multiple round-table meetings with Government and civil society representatives, advancing support for the adoption and enactment of the draft anti-domestic violence law.

Norway welcomes the ongoing implementation of climate change adaptation activities in Iraq — a critical

area of importance for furthering long-term stability in both Iraq and the region. We welcome the increased reporting on this issue in the most recent UNAMI report (S/2022/103), as those efforts should be an inspiration for greater international and regional support for both Iraq and for other countries facing such challenges.

Finally, let me turn to the relations between Baghdad and Erbil. We welcome their willingness to cooperate on security. We urge the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to continue their dialogue to resolve outstanding issues and to promote increased cooperation.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing. She and her colleagues from United Nations missions and agencies on the ground have our full support, and I welcome our Iraqi to the meeting as well.

We meet at an important moment for Iraq's democracy. Following October's elections, we look forward to the timely formation of a Government that meets the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people. The first session of the Council of Representatives, held last month, and the election of a speaker were important steps in that process.

I want to commend the valuable work of the Independent High Electoral Commission and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), including in the post-elections phase. Following its own electoral-observer mission, the European Union will present a comprehensive final report with recommendations to the Iraqi authorities later this month.

Women won a historic 95 seats in October's election, exceeding the 25 per cent quota. As Ms. Amal Kabashi told the Council in November (see S/PV.8910), women must now also be full participants in negotiations on Government formation. She also reminded us that significant barriers to women's participation have yet to be addressed. We echo her calls for the swift adoption and enactment of the draft anti-domestic violence law and for the necessary resources and structures to be put in place for the full implementation of the milestone Yazidi Female Survivors Law.

Regrettably, the security situation in Iraq remains volatile. I strongly condemn the recent attacks carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, including on 21 January. Those attacks are a stark reminder to us

all of the group's malevolent intentions and capabilities. There has also been an alarming uptick in rocket and drone attacks, including directly into Baghdad's Green Zone. We call on all actors to exercise restraint, and we echo UNAMI's message of 2 February calling for full respect for Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity at all times.

Tragically, children are often the most vulnerable to the precarious security situation — and to explosive remnants of war in particular. In the past year, over 100 children were killed or maimed by explosive remnants and improvised explosive devices in Iraq. More concerted efforts in demining and mine risk education are required. The safety of Iraq's children must be ensured, and their futures must be safeguarded.

We welcome two further rounds of returns from Al-Hol camp in December and January. We recall the obligation of the Iraqi authorities to ensure safe, voluntary and dignified returns, as well as to address issues such as a lack of basic services and the stigmatization of returnees.

I welcome and commend Iraq's accession to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In the face of significant water scarcity, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned, the implications of climate change for Iraq are myriad. Climate change threatens food security, people's livelihoods and progress on gender equality, as well as contributing to internal displacement. Joint action to mitigate and adapt to the challenges posed by climate change will be crucial.

Finally, we once again welcome the fulfilment of the mandate of the United Nations Compensation Commission and commend the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait for their cooperation with the Commission. We look forward to further positive developments in Iraq-Kuwait relations, and in particular in the search for missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing property.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing and for the exceptional commitment she has shown to Iraq since the beginning of her tenure. I also wish to welcome the presence of the representative of Iraq here today.

France shares the conclusions of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/103) on the October

elections. We welcome in particular the significant increase in the number of women elected as members of Parliament. That development is an important step towards greater participation by Iraqi women in the political life of their country.

As the Special Representative said, putting an end to the current political vacuum is essential for the stability of Iraq and the region as a whole. France fully supports the democratic process in Iraq. The time has now come to agree on the appointment of a President and to form a Government capable of responding to the challenges of the country and meeting the expectations of the population. We reject any attempts to destabilize the country or of external interference.

I emphasize the urgency of forming a Government because the Iraqi people have legitimate expectations of their representatives. During the 2019 demonstrations, they clearly expressed their aspirations for democratic change, economic reforms, social justice and greater transparency. Those demands must be met.

France also wishes to recall the importance of cooperation between the federal authorities and the autonomous region of Kurdistan on issues of common interest, in particular security and oil resources. We therefore call on them to resume the dialogue established in recent months, as it is in the interests of both federal Iraq and the autonomous region.

The threat posed by Da'esh remains strong, despite the efforts of the international community. We must collectively pursue our efforts to fight terrorism, wherever it is found, with constancy and determination. France reiterates its full support for Iraq in its fight against Da'esh and will continue its commitment in that regard as part of its contribution to the Global Coalition against Da'esh.

In that context, the protection of diplomatic compounds, as well as of the bases hosting Coalition forces, is essential. Similarly, coordination between Baghdad and Erbil on security matters is a key factor in an effective and sustainable fight against Da'esh.

Finally, I would like to welcome the unanimous adoption by the Council of resolution 2621 (2022) on 22 February, which puts an end to Iraq's financial obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. That constitutes a success for Iraq, Kuwait and the United Nations, as well as a reminder that only through respect for international law can the

foundations for lasting reconciliation and stability be laid. I also welcome the excellent cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals and the progress made on the return of Kuwaiti property. We encourage both States to continue their cooperation in that regard.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom commends the continued work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the work of Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert. I also welcome our Iraqi colleagues to the Chamber today. I wish to make four points.

First, we welcome the successful ratification of Iraq's election results and the steps taken towards Government formation. We condemn the recent rise in attacks against political parties. We echo the Special Representative's call for all Iraqi political actors to work towards a peaceful and constructive post-election environment and, most important, towards a Government that can deliver for the Iraqi people. We commend UNAMI's continued support to the Independent High Electoral Commission and to the Electoral Commission's post-election review.

Secondly, we commend the increased participation by women as both candidates and as voters in Iraq's elections. We call for the meaningful representation of women in Iraq's next Government. We urge the swift adoption of the draft anti-domestic violence law as a crucial form of protection for women.

Thirdly, our collective efforts to secure the lasting defeat of Da'esh remain essential. The Global Coalition against Da'esh continues to stand alongside the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to tackle the Da'esh threat. The United Kingdom welcomes the commitment of the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to enhance their security cooperation to eradicate the Da'esh threat.

Finally, we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her update on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. The progress made on the identification of the remains of missing persons represents an important step forward. We commend the commitment of Iraq and Kuwait to continued cooperation on that important matter.

In conclusion, we call on all Iraqi political actors to intensify their efforts to support the peaceful formation of a Government that can deliver for all Iraqis. We call on the international community to be ready to support that Government in tackling the pressing challenges it will face in providing security, delivering services, reforming the economy and moving away from dependence on hydrocarbons.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and welcomes the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mr. Hussein, to today's meeting.

At the end of last year, Iraq successfully concluded the elections to the National Assembly, and the domestic political process entered a new stage. We commend the Iraqi Government and people on their tremendous efforts and sincerely look forward to the Iraqi factions taking this opportunity to further strengthen their unity and build consensus on the way forward for political arrangements through dialogue and concertation under the constitutional and legal framework, thus laying a solid political foundation for the realization of long-term peace, stability and prosperity in the country.

We view positively the electoral support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in accordance with the Council's mandate. At the conclusion of the elections in Iraq, we hope that UNAMI will complete the finalization of electoral support as soon as possible and devote more resources and energy to supporting the Iraqi national development priorities.

When conducting human rights and humanitarian work, there is a need to follow the mandate strictly, pay attention to communication and coordination with the Iraqi Government and strengthen the screening and verification of information.

Iraq continues to face complex security challenges. Since last December, the Security Council has issued two press statements condemning the terrorist attacks in Iraq (SC/14725 and SC/14774). The international community should stand firm in its support for Iraq to eliminate extremist terrorist forces such as the Islamic State and consolidate the hard-won achievements in the area of counter-terrorism.

China appreciates Iraq's recent repatriation of a large number of its own citizens from Al-Hol camp in Syria. We also call on the countries concerned to

demonstrate their sense of responsibility, as Iraq has done, and to advance the identification and repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters and their families who are in Iraq as soon as possible. Iraq has repeatedly protested against foreign unilateral military operations in Iraq, and we urge the parties concerned to respect in earnest Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

China appreciates Iraq's efforts to develop good-neighbourly and friendly relations with the countries of the region while welcoming the close cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing persons and properties and supports the Council's press statement on the positive progress made in that respect.

Two days ago, the Council adopted resolution 2621 (2022) declaring that the United Nations Compensation Commission had completed its mandate and deciding to terminate that mandate. That is a significant milestone in regional peace and post-conflict reconciliation. We sincerely hope that Iraq and Kuwait will take this opportunity to continue to deepen their partnership, actively respond to common challenges and inject positive energy into the stable development of the region.

Over the past 30 years, the situation in Iraq has been characterized by upheaval, and people have endured great hardship. At this new historical starting point, the international community should firmly support Iraq in independently choosing a development path that suits its own national conditions and actively help Iraq rebuild its infrastructure, accelerate economic and social development and improve people's livelihoods and well-being.

China is a sincere friend of the Iraqi people. During the most difficult period in Iraq's security situation, Chinese enterprises remained in Iraq, providing the necessary guarantee for people's livelihoods and the economic operations of Iraq. After the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, China dispatched anti-pandemic expert teams to Iraq and provided multiple batches of anti-pandemic materials and vaccines.

China will continue to work with the international community in support of Iraq's efforts to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing today. I welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to this meeting.

At the outset, I express my heartfelt condolences to all the families that lost loved ones in the terrorist attacks in Iraq, including the recent cowardly terrorist attack in Diyala governorate, which resulted in the deaths of 11 Iraqi security personnel. We strongly condemn all such acts of terrorism.

The people of Iraq, despite facing economic and security challenges, expressed their will through the ballot during the recently ratified parliamentary election. We welcome the increased participation of women in the election and their success in winning more than 25 per cent of the seats. The critical situation facing Iraq now requires all parties to assume greater responsibility to overcome the current political stalemate. I reiterate India's support for the democratic process in Iraq. We encourage all political parties to work together for the early formation of a new Government.

Meanwhile, we are witnessing politically motivated attacks on leaders, party offices and other institutions. Violence and intimidation should not be the tools for redressing political grievances. We urge all parties to reject violence and resolve their political differences through dialogue and legal avenues.

In that context, the continued possession of arms and weapons in large quantities outside of State control poses a serious challenge to stability in Iraq. There is also an urgent need for all regional actors to stop using Iraqi territory as a launch pad for targeted attacks on other countries in the region. A strong, stable and sovereign Iraq would lead to greater security and stability in the region.

The Secretary-General's report dated 10 February 2022 on the implementation of resolution 2576 (2021) (S/2022/103) states that between 23 November 2021 and 5 January 2022 there were 123 attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) on security forces, in addition to the continued targeting of community leaders and civilians. That staggering statistic is cause for serious concern. The signs of a re-emergence of ISIS in Iraq are a matter of grave concern and call for urgent action by the international community.

Despite the success of the Iraqi security forces in combating that group, ISIS remains active in the country and the region, with its affiliates functioning independently in many places around the world. We reiterate our firm conviction that terrorism in one part of the world is a grave threat to peace and security in the entire world.

The people of Iraq recently celebrated the fourth anniversary of the victory over ISIS. Many brave Iraqi men and women sacrificed their lives to ensure the defeat of ISIS. As a country that has long borne the brunt of terrorism, India is acutely aware of its human cost. We are confident that people of Iraq will continue to be vigilant against a resurgence of ISIS or its affiliates.

It is also critical that the international community and Iraq's partners continue their support and assistance to enable the Iraqi security forces in the fight against terrorism and build their capacity to address future threats. Such support and assistance should ensure the irreversible defeat of ISIS.

The violations of Iraq's sovereignty on the pretext of counter-terrorism operations in northern Iraq must end. Iraq's neighbours should work with the Iraqi authorities to address all security challenges that they face.

We welcome the cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait to achieve an amicable solution to the issue of missing persons and the return of Kuwaiti properties. It serves as a model of how countries can come together and achieve post-conflict reconciliation through constructive engagement. We recognize the significant support provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross to facilitate progress on that issue. We hope that all parties will continue to strengthen their cooperation until the matter is resolved to the mutual satisfaction of Iraq and Kuwait.

India and Iraq have historically enjoyed strong people-to-people ties. India has always responded to the urgent needs of Iraq. For example, recently more than 30 Iraqi children with congenital heart disease whose surgeries had been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic were operated on at an Indian hospital in collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Health.

As a steadfast supporter of a democratic, pluralistic, federal, unified and economically strong Iraq, India will remain a willing partner of Iraq's economic recovery, reconciliation and reconstruction. India will continue to provide its full support to efforts for peace, security and development in Iraq.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert,

for her briefing, and we echo previous speakers in welcoming the delegation of Iraq to this meeting.

I will focus my statement on three points: first, the political transition; secondly, security issues; and, thirdly, humanitarian assistance.

The ratification of the election results by the Federal Supreme Court on 27 December ushered in a new chapter in Iraq's political life. The incoming Government will be faced not only with the challenge of implementing structural reforms, but also with rebuilding public confidence in the institutions. We trust that the political forces will reach an agreement on the formation of an inclusive Government that addresses the legitimate aspirations of the entire population. We note with satisfaction that 95 of the 329 seats will be held by women, representing 29 per cent of the total. We urge that such participation by women also be reflected in the next ministerial Cabinet.

The numerous incidents of violence attributed to the activities of terrorist groups, including Da'esh, are of concern. We urge the Iraqi Federal Government and the Kurdish Regional Government to deepen security cooperation and to resolutely promote the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement. We also urge regional and international partners to continue to support Iraq's efforts in such areas, particularly the capacity-building of the security forces. However, Mexico reiterates its concern about wrongly invoking Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations in the context of combating terrorism.

We have noted the fact that some 1.2 million people are still displaced and that humanitarian organizations report poor housing and health conditions given the funding shortfalls. The activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization in dealing with the coronavirus disease remain of paramount importance.

My delegation commends Iraq's efforts to promote the voluntary return and integration of Iraqi families, including 245 minors, from the Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria, and we encourage other States to follow such steps.

Finally, we acknowledge the particular programmes of the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to address the major environmental challenges, which need to be comprehensively tackled, especially with

regard to food security. In that regard, we congratulate Iraq on its recent accession to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her comprehensive briefing. We express our full support for the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Today we are participating in a briefing on UNAMI for the first time since we were elected to the Security Council. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Iraqi people on several recent positive developments, in particular the holding of successful and generally peaceful parliamentary elections last October. In that regard, we commend the tireless efforts of the Independent High Electoral Commission, with the support of UNAMI, to organize and conduct the elections.

Following the appointment of the Speaker of Parliament last month, the next stage, which is crucial, will be the formation of a new Iraqi Government in order to complete the reconstruction and stabilization process and continue the positive engagement with Arab and regional partners based on the principle of good-neighbourliness. In that regard, we commend the role of Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi and his efforts to strengthen Iraq's unity in the face of the various challenges to be overcome.

Iraq continues to be subject to attempts to weaken its security and stability and undermine its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. In that regard, we reiterate our categorical rejection of continued foreign interference in Iraq's internal affairs under any pretext. We also stress the importance of a commitment to and respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Such a commitment is necessary to spare the region further tension and violence and prevent threats to regional and international peace and security.

In addition, we condemn the recent escalation of terrorist attacks against officials, civilians and vital infrastructure in Iraq, including the attack carried out by Da'esh in Diyala governorate last January, which killed 11 Iraqi soldiers. We express our sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Iraq and stress the importance of the international

community's continued support for Iraq so that it can achieve security and implement the rule of law across its territory. The international community should also support Iraq's efforts to combat the remnants of Da'esh and other militias and terrorist groups, in accordance with international law. Accordingly, we support Iraq's refusal to have its territory used as a foothold for any terrorist act, whether in Iraq, the region or elsewhere.

Iraq is in dire need of international support so that it can continue to implement development and reconstruction programmes, promote peaceful coexistence and consolidate the gains that it has made to date. For its part, my country reiterates its commitment to supporting Iraq's efforts to rebuild areas liberated from Da'esh and places that promote religious coexistence, including by providing more than \$50 million to fund the joint project between UNESCO and the United Arab Emirates to rebuild a mosque and two churches in Mosul. The foundation stone of that important project will soon be laid.

In parallel with those efforts, we stress the importance of meeting the needs of Iraqi women, especially given the horrific crimes to which they have been subjected at the hands of Da'esh. Such efforts will help to strengthen women's participation in building safe and stable societies. We also share the Iraqi people's aspiration for the full, meaningful and equal participation of Iraqi women across all sectors.

On another note, we welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2621 (2022) two days ago, commending Iraq's successful repayment of all compensation related to its invasion of Kuwait. We also hail the progress made on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals, including Kuwait's announcement last December that it had completed DNA testing and analysis on all remains received from Iraq in August 2019 and September 2020. We recognize the need to continue making progress on this important file and the issue of missing Kuwaiti property.

Finally, we reiterate the importance of respecting Iraq's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. We also reiterate our commitment to supporting Iraq and the aspirations of its brotherly people.

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

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her comprehensive briefing on the situation in Iraq. We note the role and the contribution of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in ensuring stabilization in the country.

We welcome the fact that the Government of Iraq has implemented its international obligations to compensate all claimants for the losses and damage suffered as a result of the events of 1990. In that regard, we welcome the final report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission for Iraq (see S/2022/104, annex) and the adoption of resolution 2621 (2022), which concluded its mandate.

We are concerned about the ongoing instability in Iraq, which is exacerbated by the complex socioeconomic situation, along with the spread of the coronavirus disease. We hope that Iraq's spare resources, which it will have now that all compensation payments have been made, will have a positive impact on the well-being of the Iraqi society. In turn, the international community must support Baghdad as it drafts a package of comprehensive measures aimed at rebuilding the country's socioeconomic and humanitarian sectors.

We welcome the endorsement late last year of the results of elections to the Iraqi Council of Representatives, held in October 2021. We trust that the parties elected to the Parliament will agree, in a timely manner, on a candidate for President and on the composition of a new Government that should enjoy the support of all major political factions and ethnic and faith-based groups. We support the stabilization of Iraq, including through the maintenance of security and legal order. In that regard, we note with concern the ongoing heightened terrorist threat. Despite Iraq's success in the area of counter-terrorism, the security situation remains fragile due to, inter alia, the increase in clandestine terrorist activity. We are convinced that the only way to effectively counter the threat is through the broadest-based coordination of counter-terrorism efforts.

In that context, we commend the work of the Baghdad Quadripartite Information Centre, involving the militaries of Russia, Iraq, Iran and Syria. We believe that the mechanism plays an important role in coordinating counter-terrorism measures in Iraq and Syria. We will continue to support Iraq in building the capacity of its law enforcement bodies, first and

foremost by promoting bilateral military and technical cooperation. Nonetheless, we believe that it is crucial for all parties involved in combating terrorism in Iraq to respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi State and coordinate their actions with the authorities in Baghdad. We reiterate that any illegitimate military presence in Iraq is unacceptable. Foreign military formations can be deployed only upon the consent of local authorities or based on a relevant Security Council resolution.

We note the progress in rebuilding trust and settling existing disputes between Baghdad and Erbil. Further improvement in their relations will help Iraq to strengthen its security. Resolving current ethnic and sectarian issues will enable the country's economic potential to be effectively harnessed for the benefit of the entire Iraqi population.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that Iraq must not become an arena for regional confrontation. For our part, we highly appreciate Baghdad's commitment to building good-neighbourly relations, as well as the diplomatic potential for regional de-escalation, on the basis of resolution 598 (1987) and the Russian concept of collective security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating His Excellency the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation on the Russian presidency of the Security Council during the month of February.

I thank Her Excellency Ms. Mona Juul, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway, for the efforts she made during her presidency of the Council in January.

I also express my thanks and gratitude to Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for her briefing.

The Federal Supreme Court certified the final results of the parliamentary elections for 2021. The Court also confirmed the decision of the Independent High Electoral Commission. The decision was declared to be in line with the Iraqi Constitution. The first session of the Iraqi Parliament took place on 9 January and resulted in the election of the Speaker of the House

and his two deputies. The Federal Supreme Court is now assessing the eligibility of candidates for the presidency of the Republic of Iraq, in accordance with the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution. For its part, the Government is considering ways to implement the binding decisions issued recently by the Federal Supreme Court.

Allow me to briefly mention the most important developments in the post-election situation in Iraq. With regard to the security situation, the Iraqi Government would like to thank the Security Council for its significant solidarity and support to the Iraqi Government and people, demonstrated in two press statements (SC/14725 and SC/14774) in which the terrorist acts perpetrated in Iraq between November 2021 and February 2022 were condemned. We will never allow terrorism to remain a hindrance to the Government's plans and efforts in various fields, foremost of which are development, strengthening security, stability and social peace.

Iraq reiterates its call for its territories not to be used as an arena for settling scores or for advancing political interests on the pretext of combating terrorism. That would jeopardize its security and stability. We stress respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular for the sovereignty of Member States, good-neighbourly relations and the promotion of cooperation. Iraq calls on the Security Council to give serious consideration to those issues. All member States must be totally committed to respecting the aforementioned principles.

Iraq has demonstrated that it honours its commitments, in particular the repatriation of Iraqis detained in the Al-Hol camp in Syria. Over the past three months, the Iraqi Government has repatriated approximately 1,000 civilians in two stages. They have returned to Jada'a-l camp in Nineveh governorate and have been provided with psychosocial and social rehabilitation. Some 1,796 Iraqis have returned to Iraq since May 2021. Similarly, Iraq repatriated 1,900 terrorists from Syrian camps.

We are extremely concerned about the recent attacks perpetrated by Da'esh terrorist gangs on detention prisons in Syria, which led to the escape of a number of terrorist leaders who had been detained there. Iraq therefore calls on the various regional and international bodies to strengthen cooperation and redouble efforts to more effectively combat the terrorist threat, in

particular through the repatriation by Member States of their citizens who are currently in Iraq and Syria.

While the international coalition's combat role in Iraq has come to an end, we continue to cooperate with it in the context of providing support, advice and training for Iraqi forces, in particular the Iraqi army, in order to build capacity to protect our territories and democratic institutions.

I would like now to refer to violations committed by Turkey. The Turkish Parliament extended for two further years the mandate to deploy military troops to Iraq and Syria, as of 31 October 2021. This decision violates Iraq's sovereignty and demonstrates Turkey's indifference to Iraq's efforts to foster dialogue on wise measures and alternative options to address the situation on the ground. In particular, Iraq stresses its rejection of the use of its territories for settling accounts or other political purposes under the pretext of fighting terrorism and jeopardizing its security and stability.

With regard to the liberated areas, the secretariat of the Council of Ministers continues to cooperate with the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) in Iraq in implementing programmes and projects in liberated areas and restoring stability there. It also helps displaced persons who are returning voluntarily to their liberated regions by implementing critical projects in the areas of education, health and infrastructure. The Iraqi Government is well known for not returning displaced persons coercively. The Government has statistics and an official database pertaining to the number of returned people.

The Government has also been working on an e-governance programme and a digital exchange mechanism, in addition to a joint programme on combating violent extremism. We have given priority to societal reconciliation and organized training workshops to improve skills, especially after extending the UNDP programme in Iraq until 2023. We have also made the second payment designated by the Iraqi Government to support the programme with a view to rehabilitating the liberated regions.

The Iraqi authorities have adopted administrative regulations to facilitate cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Iraq in the area of providing humanitarian aid. We approved 419 out of 419 requests in December 2021 and January 2022.

With regard to basic services, we have worked to provide such services in the areas of health, agriculture, housing and education, including projects pertaining to water, roads and bridges, in addition to Internet coverage.

With regard to women's empowerment, we continue to work towards empowering Iraqi women and to provide them with social support, including economic support for women by establishing a road map and identifying priorities and needs, taking into account federal budgets. We also identify expenses and make sure to organize training sessions on preparing the correct budgets.

Concerning the fight against the coronavirus disease pandemic, the Ministry of Health has launched an awareness campaign on protection from and symptoms of the pandemic. We encourage citizens to take the vaccines. Those over the age of 65 and all those with health problems, in addition to health workers, are authorized to take the booster vaccine. Moreover, the Ministry of Health continues to undertake field surveys for early identification of pandemic patients by using rapid tests and vaccination campaigns at health institutions, governmental institutions and universities. So far, more than 8 million Iraqi citizens have received at least one vaccine dose.

With regard to the relationships between Baghdad and Erbil and between the Federal Government of Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, talks are being held at the highest levels, in particular to resolve the outstanding issues, including those related to the federal budget and coordination between the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga forces, in order to address security gaps and fight Da'esh. Moreover, the Ministry of Finance recently approved a transfer of 200 billion Iraqi dinars to the Kurdistan Regional Government. That is the fifth such transfer to pay the salaries of Kurdistan civil servants for November.

Concerning the fight against desertification and climate change, projects are under way in the governorate of Najaf to irrigate 100,000 acres and combat desertification, spearheaded by the Ministry of Water Resources.

With regard to the relationship with the sisterly State of Kuwait, we are working to strengthen ties with the State of Kuwait, which is a priority for Iraq, in particular to ensure that the reparations dossier of \$52.4 billion is closed. Iraq is committed to honouring

our commitments in that regard, notwithstanding the challenges we had faced and our significant spending on fighting terrorism. Furthermore, on 22 February, the Security Council convened a historic meeting (see S/PV.8972) at which the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Fuad Hussein, listened to the briefing by the President of the United Nations Commission on Compensation for Damage Resulting from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The Commission presented its final report and confirmed that Iraq has fulfilled all its obligations upon paying \$52.4 billion in reparations for more than 1.5 million claims all over the world. Accordingly, resolution 2621 (2022) was adopted and confirmed that the Iraqi Government has met all its international commitments related to the losses caused by the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990.

Iraq is firmly committed to turning the page on the past with our neighbour sisterly Kuwait, and we continue to give special priority to the missing-persons and missing property dossiers under Chapter VI of the Charter and in accordance with resolution 2107 (2013). During the most recent period, we provided the Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad with information, books and microfilms.

Concerning the missing-persons dossier, Kuwait recently identified the remains of a number of Kuwaiti citizens, which were exhumed in Samawah in Iraq and moved to the State of Kuwait in 2019 and 2020. The remains of 59 Kuwaiti and third-country nationals were identified. Iraq welcomed the return by the State of Kuwait of 6 unidentified remains to Iraq under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross and with UNAMI's support.

The Technical Subcommittee and the Tripartite Commission recently held a meeting at which it was decided that the search for missing Iraqi and Kuwaiti persons would be expedited. Iraq is launching a humanitarian appeal in Arabic and English to Iraqi citizens or any person who has any information to provide concerning the burial sites of Iraqi, Kuwaiti or third-country human remains during the second Gulf War or Kuwaiti property, including the Kuwaiti national archives.

The Ministry of Defence continues to contact potential witnesses in that regard. On 1 November 2021, it met with a witness who claimed that he had information on a site in Babel governorate. On 17 November 2021, an exploratory mission took place in that region with the International Committee of the Red Cross and in the presence of the witness. On 24 November, the Ministry of Defence also received a call from another potential witness.

The Iraqi Ministry of Defence confirmed that it was following up on the burial site with the relevant authorities in the city of Salman Pak, based on the information available. There are two other sites in the city of Samawah believed to contain 151 human remains in one of them. Eighty-nine of them were exhumed while the other site contains 100 human remains.

With regard to the Khamisiyah site, it could contain up to 180 human remains. A request was submitted to the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to obtain satellite imagery of that site. That request was also submitted to one of the members of the Technical Subcommittee in November 2021. However, searches for remains have not been decisive with one of the witnesses until now. We have continued training Iraqi personnel on a Greek device from 7 to 18 November 2021 in order to allow the exhumation of other deeply buried human remains.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his firm stance in supporting Iraq through insisting on respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country. I also value the continued support of the international community for Iraq and its people to achieve prosperity and stability. I also value in the name of the Republic of Iraq the efforts made by the Head and staff of UNAMI. They have supported Iraq in various fields, in particular at the humanitarian and development levels during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names on the list. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.