



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

*Provisional*

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Thursday, 18 May 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

*President:* Mrs. Baeriswyl . . . . . (Switzerland)

*Members:*

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Albania . . . . .  | Mr. Hoxha               |
| Brazil . . . . .   | Mr. De Almeida Filho    |
| China . . . . .  | Mr. Geng Shuang         |
| Ecuador . . . . .  | Mr. Montalvo Sosa       |
| France . . . . .   | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| Gabon . . . . .  | Ms. Bongo               |
| Ghana . . . . .  | Mr. Boateng             |
| Japan . . . . .  | Mrs. Shino              |
| Malta . . . . .  | Mr. Camilleri           |
| Mozambique . . . . .                                     | Mr. Afonso              |
| Russian Federation . . . . .                             | Ms. Evstigneeva         |
| United Arab Emirates . . . . .                           | Mr. Abushahab           |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Mr. Eckersley           |
| United States of America . . . . .                       | Mr. DeLaurentis         |

## Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2631 (2022) (S/2023/340)

Thirty-seventh report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2023/341)

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

### Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

### The situation concerning Iraq

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2631 (2022) (S/2023/340)**

#### **Thirty-seventh report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2023/341)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): 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. Khanim Latif, Founder and Director of Asuda for Combating Violence Against Women.

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/2023/340, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), and document S/2023/341, which contains the thirty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013).

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

**Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert:** With the next mandate renewal for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) around the corner, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect, just a bit, and more importantly, to look ahead.

In the past months, numerous people and entities have analysed the events that shook Iraq 20 years ago, as well as the developments since. Few would deny that it has been a very rough road, a road that has seen not only the compounding of existing fragilities, inherited

from previous decades, but also the exposure of new weaknesses. While many acknowledged that Iraq, throughout its history, has overcome some very dark times, they also argued that the drivers of instability in the country's more recent past remained, for the most part, the same — drivers such as corruption, weak governance, the presence of armed non-State actors, impunity, factional politics, poor service delivery, inequality, unemployment and an overreliance on oil. Having said that, Iraq's enormous potential was also widely highlighted, as was the view that the moment to act is now, thereby reaffirming that the confirmation of Iraq's Government last October opened a crucial window of opportunity. So the question is: where do things stand now?

As I mentioned in my most recent briefing to the Council in February (see S/PV.9253), the Government has shown its resolve to tackle a number of the pressing issues I just mentioned, and that still holds true. It is focusing on its core priorities and trying to avoid distractions that could threaten to upend prevailing political stability.

That said, of course, it is early days, and we do not have a crystal ball to predict the unknowns, which could include the rise of potential disrupters. As I keep on emphasizing: what we do know is that any government in this position needs time, and that, in itself, is already a challenge. Amid low or no tolerance for a return to the status quo that existed before October 2022, the harsh reality is that there is no time to lose. Hence, I can only emphasize the need for relentless commitment from a wide range of actors, the significance of placing the national interest over that of any individual or party, the critical role of independent State institutions and the need for an active, empowered and protected civic space.

The Government programme is leading the way, signed off on by all coalition parties united in the State administration alliance. That does not mean that there are no disagreements or quarrels, as is the case in other countries governed by a coalition. To bridge differences and to follow up on implementation in priority areas, regular meetings between government and coalition members take place. It is quite simple: the balancing of multiple differing opinions and interests requires constant compromise.

Does this mean that dynamics, trends, opinions and perceptions from outside the coalition are not relevant?

Of course not — they are very relevant, I would say. In other words, the healthy interplay of opposition and coalition must be allowed to function, including through public exchanges between decision-makers, political leaders, authority figures and broader civil society. Also, and given the delicate balance needed to succeed in tackling core priorities, it is important to take into account the potential wider impact of a new law, action or proposal, whether initiated in Parliament, by the Government or elsewhere. Will it consolidate or potentially conflict with key objectives? Will it bridge or widen divisions between groups and communities? Will it unite or rather estrange people? In other words, to break with the cycles of recurring crises, what must the priorities be? The fact is that Iraq has a full “to-do” list, and narrow or partisan actions will not help in checking it off.

The resources needed to turn certain government goals into realities, such as adequate public service delivery, should be unlocked with the passage of a federal budget. That has yet to happen and, these days, all eyes are on Iraq’s Council of Representatives. Needless to say, agreement on a functioning budget, sooner rather than later, is critical, including for the timely organization of the long-awaited provincial council elections, now announced for no later than 20 December this year.

Meanwhile, Iraq continues to rely on oil, and the public sector remains the biggest employer. Those phenomena are, of course, nothing new, but, as I have said so many times, neither can last indefinitely. Economic diversification and major structural reforms remain urgent. And yes, there is no denying it: this will prove to be challenging for various reasons, including public expectations. After all, rather than developing an employment-generating private sector, successive Governments opted for the easy way out — that is, the creation of public sector jobs to “hush” civil unrest. This has led to a wage bill no country could afford.

In saying that, let me also and once again emphasize that much-needed reforms will not take root if choked by the weeds of patronage and graft. Also, as I already mentioned, independent State institutions are critical. No training, capacity-building or technical assistance programme can combat the ill effects of political interference. The good news is that the Government has taken an express stance against the adverse effects of corruption, which have resulted from the system constructed over the past two decades. And yes, vested

interests will undoubtedly make the required systemic reform an uphill struggle, but it must be done. Speaking of reforms, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Government to push Iraq closer to a state of energy independence. Again, that will not happen overnight. But from the issuing of new licensing rounds to efforts to reduce energy waste, including a clampdown on gas-flaring, that ambitious goal is increasingly close to being reached.

Turning to Kurdistan, disagreements between the two ruling parties in recent months drove the region close to the brink. Many had good reason to describe the political situation as increasingly reckless and irresponsible. While it is our firm belief that the outstanding fiscal, administrative, security and electoral disagreements could have been addressed months ago, the will to compromise was glaringly absent for far too long. That said, the repeated efforts by the region’s President, as well as others, to get the parties to return to the negotiation table, and the recent meeting between the region’s Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, have at last led to some good news. After more than six months, the Kurdistan region’s Cabinet met in full on Sunday. At this stage, I can only express hope that the parties will now step up, bridge differences and work in the interests of all peoples. One glance at the history and geography of the Kurdistan region reinforces just how urgent the need is for sustainable solutions.

The region’s parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for October 2022, are also long overdue. After consultations with all the parties, the region’s President has now set an election day of 18 November of this year. Let me take this opportunity to remind the parties that time is of the essence. Ensuring agreement on the outstanding electoral issues is urgent. Another postponement would be detrimental to public trust.

With regard to the relations between Baghdad and Erbil, I note that the dynamics are still being described as good but complicated. The political infighting in the Kurdistan region has clearly not helped, as it has also affected the relationship with partners in Baghdad. On 4 April, following a ruling by the Paris-based International Court of Arbitration, and in the absence of the long-awaited hydrocarbon law, Baghdad and Erbil announced that they had reached a temporary agreement to enable a resumption of oil exports through the Turkish port of Ceyhan. On 10 May, the Government of Iraq asked Türkiye to restart the exports, but so far they have not been resumed. Since the taps were turned

off on 25 March, it is likely that hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue have been lost. Here I want to once again underline the importance of anticipatory governance with a view to achieving the structural institutionalization of relations between Baghdad and Erbil. Whether in the context of the budget, questions surrounding hydrocarbon resources, disputed territories, the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement or any other outstanding issue, it remains essential for both to move beyond ad hoc engagements.

Zooming in on Sinjar, we can only express disappointment that little to no progress has been made in the implementation of the 2020 Sinjar Agreement, despite the repeated declarations of commitment to it. To state the obvious, such stagnation creates further space for spoilers of various backgrounds and affiliations to exploit the situation for their own ends, and blocks thousands of displaced Sinjaris from returning to their areas of origin. Sadly, a recent rise in tensions between communities in Sinjar was in large part further fuelled by online disinformation targeting the Yazidi community. Local leaders on all sides have worked collectively to dispel that spike in tensions. But the challenges to reconciliation will persist until meaningful steps are taken, including towards a unified administration, stable security structures and reconstruction. Now, with the inclusion of the 2020 Sinjar Agreement as an explicit priority in the Government programme, it is high time to get things done.

Iraq's commendable commitment to ensuring the return of its citizens from north-eastern Syria continues to serve as an example. While new rounds of returns are expected, work is ongoing to reintegrate previous returnees into their areas of origin, or to pursue accountability aligned with the applicable laws, where relevant. As we all know, the Iraqi caseload is overwhelming, and I can only emphasize how critical it is to continue providing support to Iraq in that regard, as well as for every country with nationals in north-east Syria to follow suit by repatriating its citizens. More generally, finding durable solutions for returnees from north-east Syria and all other internally displaced persons remains essential, something particularly relevant following the sudden closure in April of a camp in Ninewa governorate. Secondary displacement is difficult to control and creates new risks.

I want to turn now to another issue, water, which represents the most critical climate emergency for Iraq. It is estimated that by 2035 Iraq will have the capacity

to meet only 15 per cent of its water demands. Ninety per cent of Iraq's rivers are polluted, and 7 million people are currently suffering from reduced access to water. That has become a significant multiplier of the threats to Iraq's stability, and the priority that the Government has placed on the issue of water security is therefore most welcome. Plans for extensively updating Iraq's water-management systems are said to be under way. That will be vital in meeting the demands driven by population growth and urbanization. And the fair sharing of resources among Iraq's neighbours is equally important. If water is a competition, everyone loses. Bold domestic action and close regional cooperation offer the only winning solution. On that note, I also want to draw attention to a simple fact, which is that regional security, economic and political developments are impacting Iraq and will continue to do so. I therefore cannot overstate the importance of the Government's efforts to scale up diplomacy with and among its neighbours in a number of areas, from border security and trade to water-sharing and climate issues. Of course, regional stability will also hinge on respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and good-neighbourliness.

I would now like to turn to the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. The Iraqi authorities, assisted by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Tripartite Commission, have continued their efforts to locate witnesses and possible burial sites for Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. It goes without saying that we welcome the Prime Minister's decision to establish a committee made up of members of security agencies, chaired by the Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Defence and mandated to support activities in that regard. We continue to await progress on the retrieval of missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

For my last point, let me revisit something I mentioned at the start of my briefing, which is the need for an active, empowered and protected civic space. Facilitating and allowing a plethora of different voices to be heard, including those that disagree with or critique prevailing decisions, is both healthy and essential. I would therefore like to express our sincere hope that Iraq's leaders and authorities will publicly embrace civic engagement, as well as freedom of expression, in order to prevent a resurgence of a sense of isolation and disillusion among Iraqis, particularly the younger

generation and women. To be clear, accountability, the rule of law and respect for human rights are equally essential to preventing recurring cycles of crises.

In conclusion, and as we have spelled out so often, Iraq has tremendous potential. And through the Government's ambitious plans — provided that they are fully implemented — many of the drivers of instability can be addressed. Of course, all of that can be easily spoiled, whether through unchecked corruption, interference from within, intrusion from the outside, a groundswell of disillusion or political horse-trading against the common good. What I am essentially saying is that now is not the time to be complacent or take it for granted that Iraq has turned a corner. I sincerely hope that all will remain committed.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Latif.

**Ms. Latif** (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Security Council this morning on the situation of women and civil society in Iraq.

I am Khanim Latif, representative of Asuda for Combating Violence against Women, an Iraqi non-profit organization that strives to achieve gender equality, eliminate gender-based discrimination and end all forms of violence against women. In 2002, our organization established the first independent shelter for survivors of gender-based violence in Iraq.

The current situation in Iraq is characterized by widespread violence against women in all fields, including the targeting of women human rights defenders. In recent months, we have witnessed campaigns against them in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq simply for having used the term “gender.” The precarious situation of Iraqi women, coupled with social and economic inequality and the alarming and inadequate representation of women in decision-making processes, means that the space for women to fully and freely exercise their rights is highly restricted.

The current situation of women and girls in Iraq should deeply concern us all. My statement today will focus on how the international community can effectively address four key issues: first, legal protection from violence against women; secondly, women's political participation; and thirdly, the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

With regard to legal protection from violence against women, discrimination and violence against women in Iraq are now widespread. Hardly a day does go by without reports of women being killed, maimed or targeted by their own family members, simply because of their gender. Gender-based violence has increased by 125 per cent to over 22,000 cases between 2020 and 2021, and more than 75 per cent of those at risk of such violence are women and girls. The crime rate is very high, and the brutal nature of these crimes is of grave concern. “Honour killings” of women for transgressing social norms, early and forced marriage and incest are also widespread across the country. This sharp increase in gender-based violence is occurring against a backdrop of impunity for perpetrators and lack of access to services, legal protection and justice for survivors of gender-based violence.

Without protection from violence and freedom from discrimination, women cannot engage fully or equally on a political, social or economic level. The prevalence of gender-based violence violates not only women's basic human rights, as guaranteed by international standards outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified by Iraq, but also Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, which, for more than 20 years, have emphasized the important linkages between protection and participation. For women to have their due status in all decision-making processes across the country, the violence must end.

I therefore urge the Security Council to call on the Iraqi Government to take all necessary measures to protect girls and women from all forms of gender-based violence and to support access to justice for survivors. That requires adopting the long-overdue draft anti-domestic-violence law, amending the penal code and preventing the interpretation of the personal status law on sectarian grounds. Adopting the anti-domestic-violence law could provide an important solution for the thousands of Iraqi girls and women who are increasingly exposed to gender-based violence on daily basis.

I also urge the Council to call on the Government of Iraq to provide gender-based violence survivors with robust access to shelters, including shelters operated by non-governmental organizations. That includes ensuring survivors' access to psychosocial support, justice and legal services, as well as economic empowerment and opportunities for a safe future.



Finally, we call on the Iraqi Government to implement the Yazidi female survivors law, approved in March 2021, and to allocate a budget for it.

As for women's political participation, today 29 per cent of the members of the Iraqi Parliament are women, and the Cabinet includes three women ministers, including the Minister of Finance. While that is a positive first step, political parties lack the genuine political will to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all processes. It is not enough to only increase the number of women in decision-making positions — they must also have meaningful influence over the outcomes of such processes and negotiations. Simply put, without women at the table, political decisions will remain the preserve of men and fail to meaningfully reflect women's rights and needs.

I therefore call on the Security Council to pressure the Iraqi Government to establish a national mechanism for women, whether it is a council or a ministry, with competent human resources, and to allocate a budget that can adequately implement the second national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

On the renewal of UNAMI's mandate, the United Nations has a vital role to play in supporting and advocating for the protection and advancement of women's human rights and gender equality and their full, safe, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes within Iraq.

As the mandate for UNAMI is renewed, it is essential to strengthen its role in advancing any issues related to the women and peace and security agenda. I strongly encourage the Security Council to be explicit in calling on the Mission to support women's participation in all political and decision-making processes by monitoring and reporting any violations or retaliation against women human rights defenders or other women leaders. UNAMI should also prioritize regularly engaging with Iraqi civil society so as to ensure that its views inform the Mission's work throughout the country. UNAMI must provide the necessary support to the Government of Iraq to enable it to carry out judicial and legal reforms, protect women's rights, support women's organizations and prevent all forms of gender-based violence, in line with all relevant Security Council resolutions. Finally, the Security Council should urge the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI to provide detailed analyses on women and peace and

security issues in all upcoming briefings and reports to the Security Council, pursuant to resolutions 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015).

In conclusion, I would like to say that Iraq is currently in the process of being built. I call on the Security Council, instead of sending troops, to assist Iraqis in rebuilding their homeland, to send experts and to train young Iraqi men and women to contribute to fighting corruption and building a sound State. The Security Council should urge Iraq to ensure women's participation in political decision-making and their place at the negotiation table.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Latif for her briefing.

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

**Mr. DeLaurentis** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her comprehensive briefing, and I thank Ms. Latif for her briefing on the situation of women and girls.

The United States welcomed Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani's participation in the March Summit for Democracy, where he declared that the Government of Iraq strives to meet the demands and aspirations of the Iraqi people and that combating corruption was at the top of the Government's list of priorities. We also took positive note of the Prime Minister's focus on promoting and safeguarding democracy, human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development and were particularly encouraged by his emphasis on empowering women politically and socially.

We encourage the Government of Iraq to maintain its commitment to those essential reforms. Since the formation of the Government, we have witnessed great strides in stability and prosperity. But the appetite for change is immense among Iraq's dynamic youth — men and women, who deserve economic opportunity and effective governance as a foundation for achieving their aspirations.

We encourage Iraq to work with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in securing these reforms. UNAMI is well positioned to provide assistance across the spectrum of social and economic challenges, including on elections, promoting and safeguarding human rights, combating climate change and governance reform.

We also encourage Iraq and UNAMI to continue collective efforts to support the members of Iraq's religious and ethnic minority communities. We are pleased to see Iraq take steps to implement the Yazidi female survivors law, and we encourage UNAMI and Iraq to support full implementation of the Sinjar Agreement as well as ensure that victims of ISIL brutality can access the compensation they deserve without burdensome evidentiary standards.

We encourage Iraq's neighbours to positively contribute to Iraq's stability and prosperity. The United States regards Iraq as a keystone in the arch of security and stability for the Middle East, and its sovereignty must be respected. Regional integration and cooperation on energy, water, the environment and trade will enhance security for all and will also create new opportunities for economic growth.

The United States will stand side by side with all Iraqis as they continue their effort, which has come at great sacrifice to ensuring an enduring defeat of ISIL. The United States and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL will continue to provide support for this critical effort at the invitation of the Iraqi Government.

An essential element of the defeat of ISIL is the dismantling of its networks for recruitment and radicalization to violence, particularly those that prey on children in displacement camps in Syria. We commend Iraq for its efforts to bring home Iraqis, overwhelmingly women and children from Al-Hol camp, and we call on all States Members of the United Nations to repatriate, rehabilitate, reintegrate and, where appropriate, prosecute their nationals in Iraq and Syria.

In conclusion, let me say that we are eager to see the UNAMI mandate renewed this month so that the Mission can continue to provide Iraq meaningful support as the country builds momentum in its transition from conflict to peace and prosperity. As the UNAMI penholder, we have circulated a first draft of the mandate and look forward to working with Council members in constructive negotiations.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Special Representative for her extremely comprehensive briefing and also thank Ms. Latif for her briefing. I welcome the presence of the representative of Iraq in the Chamber today.

I have three messages today. First of all, France welcomes the positive role played by Iraq at the regional level. Iraq's good offices have made it possible to facilitate rapprochement between two key States in the region, Saudi Arabia and Iran. France is in favour of any initiative that can contribute in a concrete way to the de-escalation of tensions and the strengthening of regional security and stability. The need to promote dialogue in the region is, in this respect, at the heart of the establishment of the Baghdad format.

As we know, a regional dialogue is an essential first step towards the implementation of joint projects that will promote the economic integration of the region and, in particular, make it possible to respond to the climate and environmental challenges facing the States of the region. France also reiterates the importance of close cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals. We encourage the two States to continue their dialogue on this subject.

France strongly condemns all violations of Iraqi sovereignty. Iraq is not a place for settling scores between the countries of the region. We call on the actors concerned to cease all interference in Iraq's internal affairs.

Secondly, France welcomes the efforts of the Iraqi Government to carry out the reforms expected by the Iraqi people and calls for them to be continued. These efforts are important in the economic arena, but also in the fight against corruption and impunity. Iraq's partners have a responsibility to support the country in implementing the necessary reforms. For this, the adoption of a federal budget is essential.

We also welcome the initiatives that have been taken by Iraq to combat the effects of climate change. The climate conference in Basra on 13 March illustrated Prime Minister Al Sudani's commitment to the magnitude of the climate challenges facing Iraq. On 24 March, Iraq became the first country in the Middle East to join the Helsinki Water Convention. We encourage the Iraqi authorities to continue these efforts. We call on the international community to support them. Given the impact of climate change on international peace and security, it is our collective responsibility to help Iraq anticipate the consequences of climate change.

France also encourages Iraq to pursue a constructive dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil, particularly with

regard to security and the sharing of oil revenues. The revival of cooperation between the federal authorities and the autonomous region is absolutely essential, and we are willing to facilitate these exchanges.

Thirdly, on behalf of France, I would like to express our solidarity and support on the occasion of the funerals that were recently held for dozens of victims of Da'esh, a terrorist organization against which Iraq continues to wage a courageous battle. In this regard, France would like to commend the work of United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) and recall that the fight against impunity for crimes committed by Da'esh requires effective cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi Government. In conjunction with the partners of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, France will continue to stand with Iraq in its fight against terrorism, while fully respecting the country's sovereignty, for as long as necessary and as long as Iraq requests it.

Finally, as the Security Council prepares to renew the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, I would like to express France's full support for the Mission's action and for the remarkable work of its Special Representative and her entire team.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and thank Ms. Latif for her briefing. We welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to today's meeting,

During the reporting period, the Iraqi Government has carried out active and effective governance, taking practical measures to fight corruption, create jobs and ensure governance and public services, thereby achieving positive results, which China commends. We support all Iraqi factions that are strengthening solidarity and cooperation, making continued efforts to improve people's livelihoods and well-being and maintaining peace stability. We hope that the federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government will keep stepping up dialogue and consultation on outstanding issues in pursuit of sustainable solutions.

For some period of time, the remnants of Da'esh have continued to make waves in Iraq. The international community should remain steadfast in its support for Iraq's counter-terrorism efforts.

Thanks to its strategic location and ethnic and religious diversity, Iraq is uniquely positioned in regional cooperation and has recently made considerable efforts to improve relations with countries in the region, enhance solidarity and cooperation and jointly respond to challenges. We appreciate this effort and hope that the international community will, on the basis of respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, continue to provide constructive assistance to the country.

Secretary-General Guterres visited Iraq in March this year and had extensive and in-depth exchanges with all parties in the country, demonstrating the unwavering support of the United Nations for the Iraqi people. China welcomes this and supports the continued assistance to the Iraqi people provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Meanwhile, given the steady improvement of the situation and the growing capacity of the Iraqi Government, it is our hope that there be carried out an independent strategic review of UNAMI that fully complies with the views of the Iraqi Government and accurately take the pulse of the situation on the ground, systematically assess the work of UNAMI and come up with recommendations on how to streamline and optimize the Mission's mandate and rationalize the allocation of resources so that it can better carry out its work and play its role on the basis of local dynamics and the needs of the Iraqi people.

**Mr. Afonso** (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and my own country, Mozambique. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for her briefing on developments in Iraq. We recognize Ms. Khanim Latif, Founder and Director of Asuda for Combating Violence Against Women, and we thank her for her important testimony. We also wish to recognize the participation of the Permanent Representative of Iraq in today's meeting.

The A3 is encouraged by the commitment of the Government of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani in implementing the reform agenda, including efforts to fight corruption, create jobs and improve the delivery of public services. We also take note of the approval by the Council of Ministers of a draft federal budget bill for the period from 2023 to 2025 and its ongoing consideration by the Council



of Representatives. We express optimism that the Council of Representatives will soon be able to agree on the budget, which will be instrumental for the implementation of the Government's priorities. In a similar vein, we commend the Government's decision to hold provincial council elections by December 2023. We consider that measure an important sign of the continued strength and resilience of Iraq's democratic journey.

In that context, we urge productive consultations between the Council of Ministers and the Independent High Electoral Commission. The A3 further encourages the active participation of all segments of Iraqi society, including women, young people and representatives of civil society and religious leaders. That is essential to build consensus and legitimize the electoral process and its outcome.

The continued path to Iraq's stability is also a function of addressing the outstanding issues between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The A3 therefore welcomes the progress made in the consultations between Baghdad and Erbil in resolving disputes related to revenue sharing and hydrocarbon management, which led to the temporary agreement on 4 April on the resumption of oil exports. We urge both parties to seize the positive atmosphere that is created to secure a more permanent accord. We applaud those political and economic developments as tangible and concrete benefits resulting from efforts by the Government of Iraq towards a stable political environment in which Iraqis can thrive, prosper and benefit from the peace dividend.

With regard to the security situation, Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique note the indication in the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/340) of an overall decline in attacks attributed to Da'esh in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022. However, we remain seriously concerned by the persistent threat from Da'esh and other terrorist and violent extremist groups in Iraq. Coupled with the proliferation of weapons in the region, Da'esh and other extremist outfits continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. The A3 therefore supports the Iraqi security forces' efforts to ensure the lasting defeat of Da'esh and emphasizes the importance of combating terrorism, while respecting the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

At the regional level, we welcome the Iraqi Government's diplomatic efforts to promote a foreign policy aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and promoting economic cooperation. We note with satisfaction the various visits and meetings held by the Government during the reporting period with neighbouring countries, regional and international actors, including the Secretary-General. That is, in our view, an unequivocal expression of willingness to advance a foreign policy agenda focused on achieving peace and stability in Iraq and in the entire region. The A3 joins the international public praise of Iraq's Government for its role in the conclusion of the Beijing agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, a diplomatic effort with important ramifications towards regional détente in the Middle East and beyond. While regional dialogue in itself cannot overcome the decades of polarization and antagonisms that led to conflict and destruction in Iraq, it is certainly an important starting point in lowering tensions and promoting an environment conducive to peace and tolerance to the benefit of the wider Middle East.

The A3 recognizes the vital role played by UNAMI in supporting Iraq in overcoming its myriad political, humanitarian and development challenges. We welcome the continued electoral assistance provided by UNAMI to Iraq's federal and regional authorities, officials from electoral institutions, representatives of political parties and civil society organizations on issues related to elections. That is an essential task for the long-term political stability and democratic viability of the Iraqi State.

On the humanitarian front, the A3 acknowledges the overall improvement in the humanitarian situation in Iraq, although returns to areas of origin remain, in our judgement, slow. While noting the continued challenges in the settlement of internally displaced persons in Iraq, we look forward to hearing more in future reports on the results of the integration and the relocation measures of the national plan of the Government of Iraq, as well as the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, of which Iraq is a pilot country.

The A3 joins other countries in expressing concerns over Iraq's growing vulnerability to climate change. The reporting period witnessed events of severe flooding affecting several parts of the country, including the Kurdistan region and the capital, Baghdad, as well as the worsening of desertification

and the rapid disappearance of arable land. In that context, the A3 encourages UNAMI and the United Nations country team to continue innovative experiments related to water resources. The increased frequency of climate-related crises constitutes a serious threat multiplier, as it increases the risk of poverty, food insecurity, biodiversity loss, displacement, forced migration and related instability. That is the argument put forward by the A3 in favour of raising the Council's profile in addressing climate, peace and security.

In conclusion, we, the A3, reiterate our strong support for UNAMI's efforts in the implementation of its mandate, including the commitment to support the Government and the people of Iraq.

**Mr. Camilleri (Malta):** I thank Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her detailed briefing and Ms. Latif for bringing her important perspectives and valuable insights to the table. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to this meeting.

Malta is encouraged by the Government of Iraq's commitment to building a peaceful, stable and prosperous country. We strongly support the Government's reform agenda, which seeks to tackle corruption, improve public services, diversify the economy and address the needs of vulnerable groups. In that regard, we reiterate our call for the expeditious adoption of the federal budget to ensure that the Government can implement its ambitious programme. Inclusive political oversight and electoral processes are vital elements for a peaceful and stable democratic environment. The efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of the judiciary, as well as in provincial council elections, are critical. In addition, while we commend the first payments made to Yazidi female survivors, we urge that the additional requirements imposed on survivors to submit criminal complaints be revoked. On the political front, we welcome the recent steps taken by the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to address several outstanding issues, including the Kurdistan Regional Government's commitment to holding regional parliamentary elections in November. We also welcome the federal Government's plans to hold provincial council elections before the end of 2023. It is essential to ensure that the Independent High Electoral Commission retains its

independence and is provided with an adequate budget and time frame to organize the elections.

We commend the positive role played by Iraq in the region. In particular, we welcome its diplomatic efforts to advance stability, including through its engagement and facilitation of dialogue with regional partners. We call on all States, particularly neighbouring countries, to respect and support Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic political process. Respect for those principles is essential to enhancing regional stability. We also stress the need to fight terrorism and recurring Da'esh attacks in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and we express our steadfast support for the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Malta emphasizes the importance of respecting human rights and democratic principles. We welcome the commencement of the selection process for a new Board of Commissioners for the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights Law. We also welcome the Government's signing of an action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned about the 22 grave violations committed against children, the 61 civilian casualties documented by UNAMI and the high incidence of those casualties that were caused by explosive remnants of war.

Malta stresses the importance of addressing climate change and security in Iraq — the country that is the fifth most-affected by climate change. We recognize the Government's efforts to mitigate its negative effects and echo the Secretary-General's call for increased international and regional efforts to address water scarcity and its gender dimensions. While we welcome the improvement of the overall humanitarian situation, we take note of the recent update on the activities of the United Nations humanitarian country team (see S/2023/340), which states that nearly 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees remain in acute need of humanitarian assistance. The voluntary return of IDPs to their areas of origin remains slow, owing to the lack of basic services, limited livelihood opportunities and safety concerns. Despite that, we continue to see the unilateral closure of IDP camps by the Government, which entails negative humanitarian consequences. We reiterate our call that the return of internally displaced persons must be safe, voluntary, dignified and consensual. We also note with concern

the challenges that food security poses in Iraq and urge regional and international partners to ensure that the World Food Programme remains equipped to continue its support in the country.

In conclusion, we highlight once again our steadfast support for the efforts of the Government of Iraq and UNAMI to promote stability, peace and prosperity for the future of all Iraqis. We look forward to engaging constructively in the coming days to ensure the smooth renewal of the UNAMI mandate.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and Ms. Latif for her insights on the situation of women in Iraq.

It has been seven months since the formation of the new Iraqi Government, and we acknowledge Iraq's steadfast commitment to ensuring a peaceful, secure and prosperous future for all its citizens. However, as we heard, challenges remain, and they require robust actions through inclusive leadership. We strongly support the Government's reform agenda in combating corruption, improving public services, diversifying the economy to reduce the heavy dependency on oil revenues and caring for the most vulnerable, especially returning Iraqis and internally displaced people. The successful implementation of those policies requires the resolve and cooperation of all political leaders and relevant stakeholders for the common good and overcoming factional interests and politics. The adoption of the draft budget is a welcome and vital step towards realizing those reforms, and we urge the Council of Representatives to reach a budget agreement as soon as possible, while fulfilling its oversight responsibilities.

Human rights must continue to be at the heart of the reform efforts, and we appreciate the Government's commitment to ensure the full, meaningful and equal participation of women in decision-making processes, in the workforce and across society. But commitments are not enough — they need to be fully implemented to be meaningful. The establishment of a dedicated women judges association in Iraq is a positive step towards establishing gender equality in the Iraqi judiciary. We encourage the Iraqi Government to continue its work on compensating survivors that are eligible for compensation under the Yazidi female survivors law. Iraq needs a meaningful and powerful civic space for a healthy democratic society.

We appreciate and support the ongoing dialogue between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to address outstanding issues, including the electoral framework for the elections to be held in November. As the Iraq experience has shown, we believe that regular, institutionalized and structured dialogue is the only path to reach lasting agreements in line with the Constitution. Close cooperation between Bagdad and Erbil is crucial to achieving political stability and security in Iraq. We remain concerned about the ongoing attacks, including those perpetrated by Da'esh. We commend and support the Prime Minister for taking a strong stance in reclaiming State authority over armed militias. Albania firmly supports Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and unequivocally condemns all attempts to destabilize its political independence and stability. We commend Iraq's engagement with its neighbours in pursuit of friendly relations in the region and beyond.

More than 1 million internally displaced persons require humanitarian assistance and dedicated efforts for their full reintegration within society. Climate change is no longer a looming threat. In Iraq, as in other places, its consequences have become a reality. The number of days with temperatures of more than 50°C is increasing and droughts are becoming longer and more intense, bringing severe water scarcity. We welcome the Government's new package of climate and biodiversity protection measures, announced in March. Its ratification of the United Nations Water Convention is an important positive step in the efforts to mitigate the consequences of climate change.

In conclusion, Albania reiterates its appreciation and support for the valuable work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and looks forward to constructive discussions on renewing and strengthening its mandate to address Iraq's needs.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her informative briefing. I welcome the Iraqi delegation to today's meeting and thank the representative of civil society for her briefing.

Twenty years ago, the Council convened at the request of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to discuss the situation in Iraq in the aftermath of the invasion. That was a meeting in which Brazil participated. On that occasion, the Brazilian delegation deplored the fact that a peaceful solution to the situation

in Iraq had not been given a chance (see S/PV.4726). We also warned about the risks to the Council's authority caused by a departure from the rules of our United Nations collective security system. We rightly pointed out that the situation had acquired a dimension that would go beyond the conflict itself and could have adverse and long-standing effects on the work of the United Nations. And so it has — with all its profound legal and political implications. It is worth noting that it happened at a time when the international community was filled with hope and trust in a new order, with a strong and vibrant United Nations. But in fact, 2003 will go down as a very low point in our collective history.

The situation in Iraq was such that the United Nations could not avoid going into the country to provide assistance to the population and help organize elections in the shortest possible time frame. Unfortunately, by doing that, the United Nations was perceived as supporting the military operation and itself became a target. A mere five months after the invasion, we lost Sérgio Vieira de Mello and 21 members of his team in a heinous bomb attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. For the past 20 years, to the best of its ability, the United Nations presence in Iraq has attempted to restore peace and stability there in the wake of the collapse of the country's institutions brought about in 2003. We believe it is now time for a realistic assessment of what still has to be accomplished.

In the negotiations on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), we should not lose sight of the fact that an indispensable condition for our ability to provide support to Iraq is a request from the host country. And on top of that, it provides the answers for the needs and priorities that the United Nations should be supporting, as identified by the requesting State. Ultimately, in keeping with the Council's authority under the Charter of the United Nations, the continuing presence of the United Nations in Iraq should be aimed at ensuring the complete devolution to Iraqis of control over all aspects of their country's life. That will bring Iraq closer to realizing its full potential as a sovereign and independent nation. In our view, that objective is better served by a focus on measures that can actively support political dialogue, national reconciliation and security-sector reform, as well as the Iraqi people's ownership of their political system and institutions. We take a positive view of the proposal for an assessment of the

current threats to Iraq's peace and security, which can provide recommendations for UNAMI's mandate.

Achieving stability and sustainable peace in Iraq will be possible only if the root causes of violence, including violent extremism, are addressed. The promotion of the economic development and welfare of the people in Iraq should be emphasized as a key instrument in countering terrorism. The threat posed by Da'esh in Iraq cannot be eradicated through sanctions and individual accountability mechanisms alone. Socioeconomic factors, including the sentiments of injustice felt by marginalized populations, must be taken into account. Countering terrorism in Iraq also requires cooperation among States. Brazil reiterates that there can be no legitimate right to self-defence exercised against the territory of any State unless it is in response to an actual armed attack attributable to that State.

Finally, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's most recent report on the implementation of resolution 2631 (2022) (S/2023/340), Brazil commends the governmental efforts to resolve outstanding issues in the relations between the federal Government and the Government of the Kurdistan region, including regarding the management of oil revenues. We underscore the importance of mutual understanding and cooperation among governmental entities, bearing in mind Iraq's right to development and the permanent sovereignty of the Iraqi people over their natural resources.

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her thorough briefing. We welcome the participation of the representative of Iraq in this meeting. We also listened closely to Ms. Khanim Latif's briefing.

I welcome the Secretary-General's visit to Iraq in March, which demonstrated the continued support of the United Nations for this country and its people. We stress the importance of the international community's continued engagement with Iraq, especially at this stage, when the Government is working to overcome the challenges of the past decades and making the reforms needed to meet the needs of the Iraqi people. In that context, we welcome the recent positive developments in Iraq, including the agreement between Baghdad and Erbil on resuming oil exports. We hope that the next stage will see progress made towards addressing all the unresolved and outstanding issues between the two



parties, including the adoption of a federal hydrocarbon law in a manner that will support the oil and economic sectors in Iraq. It will also be important to complete the necessary steps for approving the federal budget law, which is closely linked to the country's development.

Regarding the anticipated parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan region and the provincial elections, we urge that they be held in accordance with the specified timeline and promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.

With regard to the security situation, we commend the unwavering efforts to combat terrorism, which contributed to an unprecedented drop in the frequency of attacks by Da'esh in Iraq in the first quarter of this year. We emphasize the importance of continuing those efforts, especially as Da'esh has persisted in its attacks in several regions of Iraq and against Iraqi security forces.

Turning to the issue of climate change, its repercussions constitute a major challenge for Iraq, especially considering the threat it represents to the country's long-term security and stability, as well as to other aspects of life. We commend the Government's leading role in addressing the impact of climate change and the water crisis, in particular its initiative to host a climate conference and the recent third Baghdad International Water Conference. We call for intensifying the bilateral cooperation between Iraq and various States in that regard, as well as for continuing work with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to address environmental concerns in Iraq.

We believe that Iraq's continuing endeavours to restore its positive role in its Arab and wider regional environment through good-neighbourly relations are among the important efforts that will enhance engagement and dialogue and build bridges to support stability in the region. We also value Iraq's broad participation in several regional frameworks and mechanisms aimed at supporting the search for solutions to issues in the region.

Separately, we hope that progress will be made on the issue of the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, as well as the Kuwaiti archives. We welcome the decree issued by the Prime Minister of Iraq to establish a committee to support activities aimed at locating missing persons. We appreciate those ongoing efforts and stress the importance of maintaining the ongoing cooperation between the two countries on that

critical file until it is resolved in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council. In the context of the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, we affirm that the United Arab Emirates is eager to work with the members of the Council and to coordinate with Iraq to ensure that an agreed text is concluded that provides the adequate support necessary to respond to Iraq's current needs.

In conclusion, we renew our support for Iraq's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, as well as our rejection of any interference in the country's internal affairs. We reaffirm our solidarity with the brotherly Iraqi people in their quest for recovery and in their aspirations to build a better future filled with peace and prosperity.

**Mrs. Shino (Japan):** I thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and Ms. Khanim Latif for their briefings.

In Iraq, we have witnessed steady political progress and a significant improvement in the security situation since last October, when the current Government was formed. In particular, the Government of Iraq's expeditious planning and implementation of economic and fiscal reforms and anti-corruption commitments are commendable. The Security Council should encourage the Government of Iraq to make every effort to ensure that those initiatives benefit all people in Iraq, including women, young people and internally displaced people.

With regard to the provincial council elections, we join the Secretary-General in welcoming the Government's intent to hold them before the end of 2023, and we echo his view that transparency and inclusivity in the electoral process are critical. It is encouraging to see Iraq's proactive engagement with its neighbouring countries and the international community at all levels. Concerning the issue of climate-related water scarcity, for example, Iraq's hosting of the third Baghdad International Water Conference and its participation in the United Nations 2023 Water Conference are illustrations of its willingness to utilize dialogue in order to explore solutions on that critical and sensitive cross-regional challenge. That continued engagement should be backed up by the Security Council.

Japan also welcomes the close cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, as the Special

Representative mentioned in her update. Furthermore, Iraq's constructive role in building regional confidence continues to be an anchor for peace and stability in the region. In that regard, we recall with appreciation the mediation efforts by Iraq, along with other actors, that helped lay the groundwork for the agreement to normalize relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. No attack against the territory of Iraq, including in the Kurdistan region, should occur. A prerequisite for peace and stability in Iraq, as well as for good neighbourliness in the region, is to ensure full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Lastly, UNAMI has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to supporting Iraq over the past 20 years. UNAMI's efforts to promote national and regional dialogue have contributed significantly to the stability of Iraq and the region. Even two decades after its mandate was given, UNAMI's role is still essential. We, the Security Council, should have continuing discussions on that matter and seek the best approach for UNAMI and the United Nations entities in supporting the Government and the people of Iraq to realize stability and prosperity. Japan will continue to provide its full support for UNAMI's work.

**Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert for the information she provided us and Ms. Khanim Latif for her briefing. I also welcome the presence in the Chamber of the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

Ecuador supports the work carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and welcomes the outcomes of the actions taken by the Special Representative to promote peace, national reconciliation and security in Iraq. We agree with the principles that the Government of Iraq's reform agenda aims to pursue, with a focus on combating corruption, creating jobs, diversifying the economy and improving the provision of public services. We also encourage the Iraqi authorities to continue the discussion process with a view to adopting new legal frameworks on priority issues through a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach at both the national and local levels.

In accordance with resolution 2631 (2022), effective governance based on the implementation of national objectives, as well as political stability and the promotion of conditions conducive to well-being and development, are indispensable factors for

ensuring progress in peacebuilding. We encourage the continuation and deepening of efforts to strengthen the rule of law and institutions in Iraq through transparent accountability processes that ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, consistent with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000). Iraq must strengthen its channels of cooperation at the local and regional levels in order to address challenges such as the devaluation of the national currency, the effects of climate change, especially water scarcity, and the dependence on humanitarian assistance, as well as the challenges in promoting the return and reintegration of displaced persons and in creating effective institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

We condemn the continuing attacks attributed to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which — as we heard earlier — continue to threaten the lives and safety of civilians despite their decrease in number compared to the previous year. We deplore the civilian casualties caused by improvised explosive devices and remnants of war. The action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces is a tool, the implementation of which can contribute to a sustained reduction of human rights violations and abuses against minors. The Council must reject violence and defend the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. Peace in Iraq is conducive to peace in the region.

Ecuador will support the renewal of UNAMI's mandate for an additional year. We also hope that there will be a possibility to carry out an independent strategic review of the mandate, in close consultation with the Government of Iraq and all stakeholders, with a gender-inclusive approach. In that process of consolidation, it is imperative that we support the Government of Iraq in the application of strategies that promote social and economic development and governance.

Finally, UNAMI assistance will also be essential in building institutional capacities to promote the participation of all social and political sectors, particularly of women and youth and minority, ethnic and religious representatives.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I, too, thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her detailed briefing on the situation in the Republic of Iraq. We also listened very closely to Ms. Khanim Latif,

and we welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Iraq in today's meeting.

We are closely following the positive trends in the internal political situation in the friendly country of Iraq against the backdrop of the continuing difficult socioeconomic situation.

In that regard, we welcome and support the efforts of the Cabinet of Ministers, led by Mr. Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, to improve the sociopolitical situation in the country, ensuring stability, security and law and order and conducting socioeconomic reforms. We expect that all Iraqi political forces will continue to act responsibly and will strive to resolve existing differences only through constructive dialogue and in the interests of all ethnic and religious communities and social groups.

In that context, we support the continuation of substantive negotiations between the federal authorities of Baghdad and the Kurdish Autonomous Region of Iraq on all outstanding disputed issues, primarily in the oil and gas industry. We are convinced that resolving such issues will help to effectively realize the economic potential of the country, for the benefit of the Kurds and the Iraqi people, as a whole.

According to the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2023/340), various provinces of the Republic continue to be targeted by attacks by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant fighters, who are thus destabilizing the already precarious regional security. We are concerned about the military activity in the northern parts of the country, including in the Kurdish Autonomous Region. In that context, we would like to emphasize once again that the remaining challenges and threats can be effectively countered only through the broadest possible coordination of counter-terrorism efforts. At the same time, we continue to maintain that all parties involved in the fight against terrorism in Iraq must respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi State and coordinate their actions with the official authorities.

We note that sustainable normalization in Iraq continues to be hampered by some countries' attempts to capitalize on intra-Iraqi disagreements. It is unacceptable to transform the country into an arena for settling political scores and for regional confrontation. We highly appreciate Baghdad's efforts to build good neighbourly relations and call on the international community to support Iraq's steps to stabilize the overall regional situation.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm our commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and stability of Iraq and our unflagging support for the various activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, which will turn 20 in August. We support the extension of its mandate, which expires on 31 May.

**Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom):** I would like to thank the Special Representative for her very clear briefing and Ms. Latif for her words about protecting the rights of women and girls.

At the outset, I would like to commend the continued work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and thank the team for its efforts. Over the past 20 years, the Mission has played a vital role in supporting Iraq and the Iraqi people. We strongly support the renewal of UNAMI's mandate and welcome the opportunity for an independent strategic review to ensure that the Mission is aligned to the current peace and security threats facing Iraq.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting the Iraqi Government and the implementation of its ambitious reform agenda. In particular, approving a budget will be a crucial step in delivering the Government's priorities, including on economic reform and energy diversification. We welcome the steps already taken to tackle corruption, strengthen economic infrastructure and begin the green energy transition.

We also commend the steps taken by the Iraqi Government to find durable solutions to address the displacement crisis in Iraq, to provide essential services and to support survivors of conflict, including those from minority communities. We continue to encourage further implementation of the Yazidi female survivors law, including through the timely distribution of reparations to survivors. And the United Kingdom will continue to work with the Iraqi Government to support accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, including so that the horrific crimes perpetrated by Da'esh are addressed and prosecuted effectively.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her update on the Kurdistan region and we urge the Kurdistan Regional Parliament and the Kurdistan Regional Government to take all necessary steps to ensure that the planned elections are able to take place in November, without further postponement. It is incumbent on all parties to ensure an

electoral process that adheres to international standards and upholds the rights of all citizens, including women and minorities, to participate in the democratic process. We welcome the Special Representative's update on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property.

We commend Iraq's focus on its regional relations and welcome the Special Representative's role in supporting regional dialogue. As we continue to see the adverse impacts of climate change, the Special Representative's engagement on transboundary environmental issues is particularly valuable.

Once again, I would like to renew the United Kingdom's commitment to the stability and security of Iraq and to the Mission's essential supporting role. We look forward to participating in further discussions on the renewal of the mandate in the coming days.

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

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Ms. Khanim Latif for their briefings. Switzerland commends the work of the Special Representative and of all the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) during almost 20 years, and we welcome the presence among us of the representative of Iraq.

Switzerland welcomes the Iraqi Government's reform programme, which includes fighting corruption, providing basic social services, combating climate change and protecting human rights. We encourage the Government to take concrete steps to implement those reforms and thus meet the legitimate aspirations of the Iraqi people.

In that connection, we would like to highlight three particularly important points.

First, we welcome the representation of women in the Parliament and the Government and encourage Iraq to build on this to strengthen women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all aspects of life. As Ms. Latif just stated, the approval of the law against domestic violence would be an important step in that regard. In addition, efforts to protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and, more generally, to protect the space for civil society must continue. Those responsible for human rights violations must be held accountable. In

that regard, we welcome UNAMI's activities to assist the Government in those areas.

Secondly, the protection of minorities and the most vulnerable is essential for social cohesion and national reconciliation. In that regard, Switzerland welcomes Iraq's efforts to find durable solutions for internally displaced Iraqis. Providing them with the necessary civil documentation to access basic social services, including education for children, is fundamental. We recognize the progress made by the Iraqi Government in implementing the Yazidi female survivors law by distributing the first payments. In addition, the issue of the inclusion of children born as a result of conflict-related sexual violence deserves to be addressed, in particular by tackling the administrative obstacles faced in reporting such cases.

Thirdly, Switzerland welcomes Iraq's accession to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. We welcome the holding of the conferences on water and climate change, in Baghdad and Basra, respectively. Indeed, climate change is a destabilizing factor in Iraq, as it contributes to droughts and water scarcity, with serious consequences for agriculture and livelihoods, thereby reinforcing threats of social unrest and internal displacement. Every measure aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change also serves a preventive purpose. For this reason, Switzerland believes that aspects related to climate change should be maintained and strengthened in the UNAMI mandate.

With regard to missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, we welcome the ongoing efforts to make progress on this issue, including the question of missing Kuwaiti property, in particular the national archives.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our commitment to Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and thank Iraq for its efforts to bring greater stability to the region by facilitating dialogue. The Security Council has a duty to support Iraq as it continues its journey towards a stable and prosperous future. To this end, Switzerland will engage in the negotiations for the renewal of UNAMI's mandate.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

**Mr. Fatah** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Her Excellency Ambassador



Pascale Baeriswyl, Permanent Representative of Switzerland, for presiding over the Security Council this month. I would like also to thank His Excellency Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, for presiding over the Council in April. I would like also 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. I take note of Ms. Khanim Latif's briefing.

The Government of Iraq perseveres within the national partnership framework to achieve its ambitious Government reform programme, including diversifying the economy, building more robust democratic and security institutions, combating unchecked weapons, strengthening accountability, consolidating the security and stability of the country, promoting human rights and women's empowerment, finalizing the refugee dossier and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for all Iraqis. The Government is sparing no effort to address the challenges facing the country, including combating administrative and financial corruption and inflation.

The Government is also focused on instituting radical reforms of the banking and fiscal system, so that they can work in tandem with the global system. It is also addressing the electricity crisis, implementing strategic projects, improving delivery of public services and creating job opportunities for all Iraqis, especially young people. The Government is also focused on safeguarding Iraq's share of water resources and on improving and increasing agricultural production. Efforts are under way to prepare for the third Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership in the last quarter of this year, where we will focus on economic topics, which are the priority of the current Iraqi Government in line with its stated programme.

Allow me to brief the Security Council on the most important key developments in Iraq over the last four months. With respect to the relationship between the federal Government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, there has been a sort of rapprochement, especially since the parties came to understandings in relation to the Kurdistan Region's share of the national fiscal budget and to the temporary agreement on oil exports from the Region, pending the adoption by the Iraqi parliament of a permanent oil and gas law. These will contribute to the success of the parties' efforts to improve their relationship and

address a number of outstanding issues, including the modification of relevant articles of the Constitution and the matter of disputed territories.

With respect to security, and notwithstanding the diminished presence of terrorist groups on the ground, Iraq continues its cooperation with the international community, the United Nations and ad hoc agencies to combat radical ideologies or uproot them altogether, in addition to cooperating with the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Iraq continues its cooperation with the NATO mission in Iraq, whose representatives are training Iraqi security forces and providing military advice in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence and the National Security Council, which is one of the outcomes of the visit of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to Brussels last month, including his meeting with the Secretary General of NATO.

Iraq reiterates its call for respect for its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and it underscores the importance of upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially sovereign equality and the principles of good-neighbourliness.

As for supporting liberated regions and refugees, Al-Hol camp hosts some 60,000 persons, half of whom are Iraqis, and the Government is sparing no effort in repatriating 150 Iraqi families every month and transporting them to Al-Jada'a camp for their security and psychological rehabilitation. In addition, the Government is committed to the full implementation of the Sinjar Agreement and allowing the voluntary, safe and dignified return of Yazidis to their homes.

Iraq calls upon other countries and the international community to shoulder their responsibilities, intensify efforts, take all necessary measures and procedures towards facilitating repatriation of their nationals from Al-Hol camp and other locations by making use of the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria/Iraq Third Country National Returnees, and creating an environment conducive to serving the best interests of children, in accordance international law, given that the majority of the refugees in Al-Hol camp are less than 12 years of age and are without any means of extracting themselves from this desperate situation and its attendant deprivation. Iraq also reiterates how important it is for the international community to

shoulder its responsibility with regard to the extradition of terrorists and to stopping the financing of terrorism.

As for the economic sector, the Iraqi Government is currently focusing its investments on new infrastructure to diversify and develop a number of productive sectors, including reconstruction, industry, agriculture, renewable energy and information and communication technology. To achieve this objective, the Government is focused on building a multifaceted connectivity infrastructure system comprised of ports, airports, highways and railway lines to connect Iraq to neighbouring countries and countries of the Gulf, such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar. Iraq stands ready to cooperate with all countries in terms of economic partnerships, and we have committees that are working on economic projects that involve productive partnerships between Iraq and fraternal countries in the Arab region, as well as countries from around the world.

The Government of Iraq attaches special importance to investment in natural gas sector, which is vital for global energy market. It conducts monthly reviews of the investment environment in Iraq and is working on improving it through legislation. The Economic Ministerial Council is focusing on engaging private sector. At the same time, the Government is currently addressing the issue of the public sector as an exclusive employer, and the Iraqi parliament is about to look into voting on a unified retirement law that would serve as an important structural reform because it will also support the private sector. With regard to women's empowerment, Iraq is committed to upholding international conventions on women and the family in terms of the participation of women at the political, legislative and executive levels. We have 96 female members of parliament, as well as 116 female judges and 3 female ministers, which demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the participation of women. The Government of Iraq is currently also promoting all institutions and committees related to improving the participation of women in decision-making, including political decision-making.

In terms of human rights, Iraq is preparing to host, in September, the fifty-second session of the Arab Human Rights Committee. That Committee was adopted by the League of Arab States at the ministerial level.

Iraq and the United Nations signed, on 30 March, an action plan on the prevention of the use and

recruitment of children by armed forces as a critical step towards improving the situation of children. The Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights continues to carry out its responsibilities and its mandate, including by documenting the various demands by protesters and making sure that security forces are present to protect them, as well as addressing the needs of prisoners and residents of elderly homes and orphanages.

There is significant cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme regarding the repatriation and the return of IDPs, especially in the districts of Hawija and Riyadh, and the residents of Debaga camp, as well as following up on services related to their education and health. We have also participated in the first meeting of the ad hoc committee on the implementation of the provisions of the law on human trafficking, and we are discussing specific mechanisms and procedures to address a number of issues, including begging and foreign workers, as well as suspicious cases of digital extortion and other negative cases.

In relation to combating desertification and addressing climate change, Iraq participated with a high-level delegation in the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", and contributed with very important statements in the side events that were held under the presidency of the President of the Republic.

Iraq was the first Arab State and the forty-ninth country in the world to join the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, which attests to its seriousness regarding cooperating and negotiating with neighbouring States on that issue, and ownership in protecting the Tigris and the Euphrates. It also reiterates the success of Iraq in water diplomacy with a view to securing the legitimate right of Iraqis to their share of water; implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; addressing the negative impacts of the drought at the economic, social and cultural levels and its wide-reaching repercussions on the environment, including scorching temperatures and relentless desertification, as they also affect food security, health and transportation and cause displacement, demographic changes and upheaval. Moreover, they threaten biodiversity and historical sites listed on the World Heritage List, as well as the

wetlands classified by the Ramsar Convention. In that connection, Iraq stresses its commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at resolving the water crisis, reducing water waste and addressing increased salinity through transboundary water management that ensures an equitable distribution of water to combat water scarcity, which has led to dwindling water levels in rivers, marshes and lakes. We must also focus on cooperating with neighbouring countries to reach equitable and integrated management of transboundary water resources.

Turning to its relations with the fraternal State of Kuwait, Iraq is keen to preserve its bilateral relations with Kuwait. It promotes and maintains those relations at the political, economic and cultural levels with a view to ensuring the prosperity of the peoples of both countries. We are continuing our dialogue on all technical and legal aspects of the finalization of the demarcation of the marine and maritime borders between the countries beyond point 162. Moreover, Baghdad hosted, on 19 February, the fifth round of the Iraqi-Kuwaiti joint technical committee, and recently, the sixth round, hosted by Kuwait, was held.

Iraq expresses its appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the International Committee of the Red Cross, as Chair of the Tripartite Commission, which monitors the dossier of the prisoners of war and missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals. We pledge to continue cooperating in that effort.

In conclusion, I would like to thank His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, for the firm position of the United Nations in supporting Iraq and upholding its sovereignty, its territorial integrity, as reiterated by him during his visit to Iraq, accompanied by Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, from 1 to 2 February. I would like to thank the international community for its continued support for our efforts to promote the prosperity and stability of the Iraqi people. In that regard, I would like to express my gratitude for the efforts undertaken by UNAMI. We call for renewing the mandate of the UNAMI for another year. In the meantime, it is essential that an independent review of the future activities of UNAMI be carried out, which could result in a limited mandate for the Mission, in accordance with the demands of the Iraqi Government. We also would like to thank the country team representing a number of United Nations specialized agencies and funds for their provision of basic humanitarian assistance.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at noon.*