



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9419th meeting

Friday, 15 September 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Dautllari	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mr. França Danese
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France	Mr. Olmedo
	Gabon	Mrs. Onanga
	Ghana	Ms. Osei
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Mr. Camilleri
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation	Ms. Zabolotskaya
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/669, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2697 (2023).

I shall now give the floor to those members who wish to make statements after the voting.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): We recall that the horrific atrocities committed by Da'esh shocked the world. The Security Council was clear in its response. Da'esh members had to be held to account, and justice had to be delivered for the survivors and victims of their crimes. That is why Iraq and the United Kingdom were at the helm of establishing the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) through resolution 2379 (2017).

Since it was established, UNITAD has supported the excavation of mass graves and facilitated the return of remains to families of victims. It has worked closely with Iraqi judges and prosecutors to build their capacity, in particular on evidence collection. It has provided survivors, including those of sexual and gender-based violence, with opportunities to provide testimony safely,

with their rights fully respected — testimonies that have been used in the prosecution of Da'esh members around the world. And it has enabled psychosocial treatment, in partnership with Iraq's Ministry of Health, providing real impact for survivors.

This year, as with every year, we approached this mandate in close partnership with the Government of Iraq and with the shared commitment of Security Council members to counter terrorism. The resolution we adopted this morning (resolution 2697 (2023)) puts us on course to improve evidence-sharing arrangements with the Government of Iraq and to consider options for UNITAD's future. The United Kingdom will work closely with the Government of Iraq, the United Nations and the Security Council to continue UNITAD's legacy, both in Iraq and around the world. We are grateful to the Special Adviser and his Team for their dedicated work in pursuit of accountability. And we stand firm in our commitment and continued international efforts to deliver justice for the atrocities of Da'esh.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): The United States welcomes the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) for another year. I would like specifically to thank the United Kingdom for its tireless efforts to achieve Security Council consensus on resolution 2697 (2023). We also thank the Government of Iraq for its commitment to UNITAD's important mission and for working with the Council to continue that important work for another year. Finally, we would like to thank Special Adviser Ritscher and his staff for their efforts to carry out UNITAD's mandate.

While we have made great strides, the fight against Da'esh will not be complete until perpetrators of atrocities are held accountable. That is why the Security Council heeded Iraq's own request in 2017 to partner with the United Nations to establish UNITAD. The United States has consistently supported this effort, and we will continue to do so. United States support has helped UNITAD and the Government of Iraq lay the foundation for future prosecutions based on comprehensive evidence, including advanced forensics and battlefield evidence in some of the world's toughest locations. Indeed, UNITAD is an essential component of the international community's broader effort to ensure that Da'esh members and their affiliates are

held accountable for their crimes, wherever they reside. Our support for UNITAD is support for the idea that international crimes should be investigated and prosecuted in accordance with established legal standards.

To that end, information-sharing with third States for those investigations in accordance with the terms of reference agreed between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq is one of the most important outcomes of cooperation to date. That cooperation has been absolutely essential in the efforts of United Nations States Members to hold foreign terrorist fighters accountable in their countries of origin and to repatriate them from detention centres of concern. To date, 18 Member States have requested that UNITAD share evidence to support prosecutions over 300 alleged Da'esh members and affiliates. UNITAD has already assisted 21 investigations in the United States, helped lead to successful convictions in Sweden and Portugal and facilitated the first-ever conviction in Germany of a Da'esh member for an international crime — genocide against Yazidis in 2021.

We urge the Government of Iraq and the United Nations to protect that essential cooperation and quickly to develop modalities for continued sharing of information in according with this resolution. It is clear that UNITAD's work is not done. I would like to emphasize that this resolution should not be understood to predetermine future action with regard to any future renewal of UNITAD's mandate. We will be ready to continue the work beyond the upcoming year, should the demand remain. We look forward to the opportunity to support UNITAD's important work with the Government of Iraq as both Iraq and the international community bring Da'esh perpetrators of violence and genocide to justice.

Ms. Zabolotskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation supported the establishment of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) in accordance with resolution 2379 (2017), as its main task was to document the crimes of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a terrorist organization that poses a threat to international peace and security, as well as its sponsors, and to transmit the evidence of criminal activity collected to the Government of Iraq. That was done with the consent and at the request of the Government of Iraq, which was the legal and

political basis for the Security Council decision. The resolution identified the Iraqi authorities as the main recipient of the evidence collected by the Team, without any preconditions.

During the six years of UNITAD's activity, Russia has recalled those key objectives of the Team and encouraged it to act transparently and in cooperation with the Government of Iraq. However, the Team never fulfilled the bulk of its mandate to support Iraqi national law enforcement and judicial efforts to bring to justice ISIL members and their sponsors.

At the same time, the transparency of this entity raises more and more questions every year. Evidence has been collected from unspecified non-governmental organizations, the list of which — for unknown reasons — has not been revealed even to the Security Council. The main beneficiaries of its work have been Western countries, which received information without Iraq's consent. Essentially, the Council does not know what the results of UNITAD's activities are or what it has managed to accomplish.

In that regard, Russia took into account and fully supported the demand of the Government of Iraq for an accelerated completion of the Team's mandate by 17 September 2024. The Russian Federation voted in favour of extending the Investigative Team's mandate only on the understanding that those conditions would be met. During the coming period, the Team must hand over all collected evidence to the Iraqi authorities, inform them of what evidence was transferred to third countries and henceforth refrain from transferring materials to third countries without the express consent of the Iraqi Government. The Council would also like to learn about the results of the Team's work, not only in terms of the number of cases transferred to third countries but also in terms of the substance of those cases. We expect to see that information in the Special Adviser's final report and that of the Secretary-General, which are expected to be issued during the reporting period.

We hope that the implementation of these Council directives will speed up the process of bringing to justice not only ISIL terrorists but also those who finance them.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the adoption of resolution 2697 (2023), on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for

Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), which was established on the basis of resolution 2379 (2017). As the UNITAD host country, Iraq made express requests in a letter with respect to the time frame of the mandate and the transfer of evidence, among other things. China always maintains that the ownership and leadership of the host country should be respected and that the Security Council should fully respond to the legitimate requests and concerns of Iraq. The resolution just adopted by the Council, in response to a request from Iraq, extends the UNITAD mandate only until 17 September 2024. It also requests the Secretary-General to provide recommendations regarding the transfer of evidence to Iraq by 15 January 2024, and requests the Special Adviser to develop an exit road map in consultation with the host country within six months. We hope that those Council requests will be fully and effectively implemented. We also hope that UNITAD will maintain close communication with the host country, properly transfer evidence, plan an orderly exit and cover the last mile of its mandate so as to achieve the historic mission of supporting Iraq's domestic accountability mechanisms.

Iraq has made tremendous sacrifices in combating Da'esh and recovering territories occupied by terrorist and extremist groups. The international community should continue to firmly support Iraq's efforts to eliminate the remnants of terrorist groups, bring terrorists to justice and consolidate the hard-won counter-terrorism achievements.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country welcomes the adoption of today's unanimous resolution 2697 (2023) to extend the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). That reflects the sovereign demands set out in the letter dated 5 September by His Excellency Mr. Fuad Mohammad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

We also extend our thanks to UNITAD for all its efforts since its establishment to support accountability for the terrorist Da'esh organization by collecting evidence about crimes committed by Da'esh and building up the capacity of the Iraqi authorities in that area. My country believes that establishing the Investigative Team in close partnership with Iraq is a model of United Nations efforts to support countries on their legal matters.

The United Arab Emirates actively engaged in the negotiations to build bridges and produce a resolution that takes into account the concerns of Iraq and the various views of the members of the Security Council, especially through our efforts to present proposals that could be accepted by everyone. We thank the United Kingdom for its pivotal efforts as penholder, which made it possible to adopt a resolution that is both balanced and within the required time frame. We also appreciate the contributions of other members of the Council on this issue.

As the UNITAD Team moves to gradually accomplish its tasks, we stress the importance of keeping the Council informed of the progress made in implementing the provisions of resolution 2697 (2023), including through the periodic briefing by the Special Adviser in December, especially regarding the termination of the work of the Team in coordination with the Iraqi Government.

We also hope that the Secretary-General's report to be issued at the beginning of next year will provide realistic and applicable proposals for the handover to the Iraqi Government of all the evidence collected by the Team, including that shared with third countries, the Iraqi Government being the main recipient of that evidence in line with resolution 2379 (2017).

We appreciate all the efforts made by Iraq to hold accountable the members of Da'esh and to achieve justice for the victims, survivors and their families. We support the Team's sharing of evidence with third countries, with the consent of the Government of Iraq, so as to ensure accountability for Da'esh elements wherever they are around the world.

In that context, my country stresses its rejection of linking terrorist groups, such as Da'esh, to the Islamic religion or other religions, nationalities or races. We also call for not being taken in by the narratives of such groups tarnishing religions to achieve their vicious goals.

In conclusion, I reaffirm our support for Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We stand in solidarity with the Iraqi people in their efforts to recover from the challenges of past decades.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.