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Letter dated 18 February 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation concerning Iraq” convened on Tuesday, 16 February 2021. A statement was also delivered by the representative of Iraq.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the briefing and these statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Barbara **Woodward**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**

Allow me to begin by condemning last night's deadly rocket attack on Erbil. Such reckless attempts to inflame tensions pose grave threats to Iraq's stability. Close collaboration between Baghdad and Erbil in order to bring the culprits to justice is now of the greatest importance.

With regard to the ongoing impact of the pandemic, we have welcomed a new year in which Iraqis hope to turn the page on a number of fronts: recovery from the pandemic, elections, economic reform, strengthening the rule of law and delivering a more secure environment for all. While 2021 presents many opportunities for profound, positive change in those and other areas, much work remains to be done. As I pointed out in my most recent briefing to the Security Council (S/2020/1144, annex I), the impact of the multiple, interlinked crises afflicting Iraq will be lasting. Decisive and concerted action is therefore all the more urgent.

Regarding the economy, Iraq continues to experience acute financial and economic difficulties, as reflected by the exceptional devaluation of the Iraqi dinar by more than 20 per cent in late December. Nevertheless, a nearly 40 per cent increase in oil revenues since November 2020 has eased the liquidity crisis, providing some breathing room for the Government. The projected continued increase in oil prices is expected to allow the Government to move forward on pressing matters, such as public service delivery and civil servant salaries.

However, unfortunately, very little progress has been made on the implementation of much-needed reform measures, as described in last year's economic white paper. It therefore bears repeating that Iraq can afford neither continued dependence on resource extraction nor the excessive burden of an outsized public sector. As always, the fight against economic and political corruption, the promotion of robust governance, transparency and accountability must all be the watchwords accompanying such reform.

As I have consistently pointed out in the past, numerous opportunities for meaningful and necessary reforms have been wasted since 2003. It is past time to prioritize sustainable economic diversification as well as the development of a value-adding, employment-generating private sector. I repeat: a dependence on volatile commodity prices is no strategy at all and, ultimately, it can only backfire.

On the budget and relations between Baghdad and Erbil, agreement on the 2021 budget law requires reconciliation and compromise between Baghdad and Erbil. In that context, I regret to again report that a final, durable agreement on budgetary and larger issues remains elusive. The harsh reality is that constructive negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil continue to be hampered by laws missing since 2005, for instance on oil and revenue sharing. Other areas of contention also include the disputed territories.

To date, no agenda or timetable has been set to address those outstanding issues. Those who followed the recent budgetary negotiations closely will have realized that the negotiations were not just centred on technical questions, such as barrels per day. They were also inherently political — about deeper misgivings and mistrust. Given the abundant lessons that Iraq's history offers, many consider the current state of affairs particularly disappointing. Let me again emphasize that a positive, stable relationship between federal Iraq and the Kurdistan region is absolutely essential to the stability of the whole country. And, of course, enhancing and strengthening Iraq's federal system require concessions on both sides and practising what one preaches. It requires the responsible use of moderate language by all.

Turning to the electoral calendar, the Council of Ministers, in consultation with the Independent High Electoral Commission, decided on a new date for Iraq's elections — 10 October 2021 — four months later than originally planned. Meanwhile, Parliament passed the legislation necessary to finance the elections, and the countrywide registration of candidates and alliances, as well as voter registration updates, are under way. However, Parliament has not yet finalized the outstanding Federal Supreme Court law. As the Court certifies election results, further delays cannot be accepted. I would like to urge all parties to proceed immediately; failure to do so will not be understood.

For credible elections to take place, it is imperative that parties and candidates operate in a free and safe environment. The same goes for members of the media. In that regard, the recent incidents are highly troubling, to say the least.

With that in mind, I call on all parties, stakeholders and authorities to come together, agree on a code of conduct and allow all Iraqi candidates to operate freely, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, language, religion, belief or background. Any Iraqi who wishes to participate in the elections as a candidate or a campaigner must be able to do so without fear of intimidation, attack, abduction or assassination. It goes without saying that voters must feel entirely free to choose their preferred candidates.

A request from the Government of Iraq for electoral observation is currently before the Security Council. I understand that a decision has not yet been made, but I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of obtaining clarity. As I address the Council, I would also like to underline that, no matter what the Council's response is, the elections will be Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned at all times. I sincerely hope that all of Iraq's political leadership truly takes that to heart. Equally important, yet not always fully understood, is the fact that the United Nations does not take sides. Our independence and impartiality define us.

I have come to realize that facts do not always prevail. On the contrary, sometimes facts are easily overtaken by perceptions, which, in turn, can morph into false, even dangerous, but accepted realities. As I said last time, misinformation and conspiracies are poisonous. Credible elections require collective, concerted, timely and transparent efforts, with all parties, authorities and stakeholders assuming their respective responsibilities in the service of the Iraqi people.

I must say that, after weeks of confusing declarations, I am encouraged by the very recent statements made by some senior Iraqi political leaders, clearly emphasizing the importance of credible elections and calling for the unity of the State and the nation, with an inclusive national identity.

Turning to politics and domestic and social issues, on the pressing need for greater transparency, justice and accountability, let me clearly state that repression, violations of fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, enforced disappearances and targeted killings, have no place in a democracy. Unfortunately, transparency, justice and accountability continue to remain largely absent throughout Iraq, including in the Kurdistan region, particularly when it comes to the repression of public protests. If that does not change, sooner or later public anger will erupt yet again.

With regard to armed groups, spoilers and the security and penal environment, although Iraqis marked the third anniversary of the territorial defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) this past December, the heinous suicide attacks on a market in Baghdad, which killed at least 30 people and injured more than 100, painfully demonstrated that violent extremism has not been vanquished. They were a callous act of cowardice and a stark reminder that Iraq cannot rest on its laurels. Of course, strengthening safety and security is as much about addressing the root

causes of extremism as it is about the immediate ability to respond to threats on the ground.

Despite operating in a uniquely complex geopolitical context, Iraqi leaders continue to maintain open relations in the service of a foreign policy that emphasizes the sovereignty of Iraq. As Council members have heard me underline before, the centrality of Iraq to regional stability cannot be overstated. Iraq must build its domestic resilience and be shielded from rivalries. That responsibility, of course, is shared first and foremost by the Iraqis themselves, but also by regional stakeholders and the international community as a whole. Once again, reckless attempts to inflame tensions, such as last night's rocket attack on Erbil, pose grave threats to Iraq's stability.

Turning now to the humanitarian situation, when I last briefed the Security Council the Iraqi Government had recently renewed its efforts to close camps for internally displaced Iraqis, many of them women and children. Camp closures have been ongoing for the past three months, and the possibility of further closures is imminent.

In November, members heard me affirm our understanding of the Iraqi interest in ending displacement, but I also emphasized that such closures should not lead to unwanted outcomes, such as secondary displacement, or people returning to areas without sufficient shelter or basic services. However, as we speak, that is unfortunately happening.

Today I can only repeat myself: the haste and the opacity surrounding camp closure decisions are of great concern to many. Once again, I would like to warn against decisions that could easily precipitate another crisis. To cut a long story short, closing camps cannot be an objective in and of itself. Instead, the focus must be on safe and dignified measures to solve displacement. We accordingly urge the Iraqi authorities to rapidly adopt and roll out their national plan for durable solutions.

On a separate but related note, I would also like to remind the authorities of the approximately 30,000 Iraqis residing in the Al-Hol camp, in Syria, including a number of non-ISIL-affiliated Iraqi humanitarian cases. As we all know, the Al-Hol camp continues to be a ticking time bomb. If it goes off, the impact will be immense. Like any nation, Iraq has a responsibility to take back its citizens, starting with the humanitarian cases. Many promises have been made, and it is truly time to live up to them. Again, non-ISIL-affiliated humanitarian cases must urgently be tackled, without excuses.

With regard to Sinjar, as I have said before, signing off on the October agreement was just a very first step. Visiting Sinjar last month, I again had an opportunity to engage with Sinjari representatives and officials. One thing is clear: much work lies ahead. Spoilers, domestic and external, continue to confuse the scene. I would therefore yet again like to stress the importance of establishing stable security structures without further delay, followed by a unified administration. There is undoubtedly a pressing need to do more, in unity and at a faster pace.

I will now turn to the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. Despite the continued restrictions on movement, the Tripartite Commission and the Technical Subcommittee successfully held semi-remote meetings. The Commission confirmed the formal closure of case files for 20 Kuwaiti missing persons. That is significant progress 16 years after the last identification. I extend my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, who waited three decades for that conclusion.

The sustained investigative work of the Iraqi Defence Ministry exemplifies Iraq's commitment to that file. The long-standing cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait, with strong support from the Tripartite Commission and the International Committee of the Red Cross, is clearly bearing fruit. I call on all partners to seize the momentum of the recent progress to further advance the search for missing persons.

In conclusion, allow me to reassert that credible elections require the collective effort and commitment of all Iraqis. For the elections to be trusted, unfounded theories must be disproved, baseless accusations refuted and intimidation replaced with accountability. Transparency must rule, and loyalties cannot be for sale. In this all-important election year, I am hopeful that Iraqis can continue to count on the Council's steadfast support and solidarity.

Annex II**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: English and Chinese]

I thank the Special Representative for her briefing, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Iraq to this meeting.

Currently, the political process in Iraq is at a critical stage, coupled with a complex security environment and a severe economic and humanitarian situation. The international community should fully respect the wishes of the Iraqi people and support the Iraqi Government in properly tackling the various internal and external challenges, safeguarding national security and stability and achieving economic and social development. In that regard, I would like to reiterate our appreciation and support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq for their work. In connection with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/120) and the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I would like to make the following observations.

First, the international community should create a favourable atmosphere for Iraq's political process and national reconciliation. Holding early elections is Iraq's most important political agenda this year. It is also an important step in Iraq's transition. We commend Iraq's finalization of the relevant legislation and its active advancement of electoral preparations. We hope that the elections will be held smoothly so as to achieve the vision of the Iraqi people. As a token of support, China donated remote video-conferencing systems and office computers to the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq at the beginning of this month to support the preparations for the elections.

Recently, Iraq once again wrote to the President of the Security Council with regard to election assistance (see S/2021/135, annex). In the light of the United Nations practice on electoral assistance, members of the Council should consider political, security, legal and budgetary factors, among others, and carefully study and discuss Iraq's request.

Enhancing unity and solidarity among the parties in Iraq, achieving inclusiveness and reconciliation and accelerating integration and development are not only in the fundamental interests of the Iraqi people, but also conducive to regional peace and stability. We support the further improvement of the relationship between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, which should continue their communication and dialogue on revenue sharing and budget allocation in the joint pursuit of sustainable solutions. China condemns the rocket attack that occurred near Erbil International Airport yesterday, and we oppose any actions that aggravate tensions in Iraq.

Secondly, the international community should support Iraq in consolidating its counter-terrorism achievements and safeguarding national security. China resolutely opposes all forms of terrorism and strongly condemns the suicide-bombing attack in Baghdad on 21 January. The international community should continue to support Iraq in dealing with the threat of terrorism and crack down on the remnants of such terrorist organizations as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. It should assist Iraq in solving the problem of foreign terrorist fighters and consolidating the hard-won achievements in countering terrorism. It is essential to actively support Iraq in holding terrorists accountable, fully respect Iraqi judicial sovereignty and avoid double standards on counter-terrorism issues.

China commends the development of mutually beneficial and friendly relations between Iraq and countries of the region. We agree with Secretary-General Guterres in his report that all the parties concerned should adhere to the principle of good-neighbourliness and friendship, jointly tackle cross-border challenges and effectively respect the territorial sovereignty of the countries concerned. Any military action on Iraqi territory must obtain the consent of the Iraqi Government. China welcomes the close cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing persons and property and hopes that progress will continue to be made in relevant efforts.

Thirdly, the international community should help Iraq fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, develop the country's economy and improve people's livelihoods. For a while now, low oil prices and the spread of the pandemic have posed daunting challenges to the reconstruction and development of Iraq. We have noticed that the Iraqi Government is making efforts to strengthen the prevention and control of the pandemic and is taking multiple measures to stabilize the economy. The international community should actively fulfil its commitments, continue to provide assistance to Iraq, support the reconstruction of key infrastructure, promote economic diversification, enhance public-service capacity and improve the situation of vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons.

Over the years, China has provided vigorous support for Iraq's reconstruction and development through pragmatic cooperation in various forms. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have stood firmly with the people and the Government of Iraq. We immediately dispatched a team of experts to train medical professionals for the country, built a testing laboratory and donated epidemic-prevention supplies. In January of this year, humanitarian aid supplies such as ambulances and generators were delivered to Iraq. Some 50,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine will be donated to Iraq in the near future. China will continue to work with the international community to help the people and the Government of Iraq cope with difficulties and challenges and achieve peace, stability and development at an early date.

Annex III**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I would like to thank Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing and for the excellent work she is doing.

We express our solidarity with and support for the Iraqi Government, which is facing political, economic and security challenges, as well as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

It is essential that all Iraqi stakeholders contribute to improving the environment for holding credible, transparent and inclusive parliamentary elections, which are crucial for restoring trust in Iraq's political system. We welcome the finalization of electoral legislation and call for continued technical preparations for the elections in close cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Iraq's request for UNAMI to play a role in observing the elections has been noted. The Security Council must seriously consider the options for responding to Iraq's request.

We fully support the steps the Government of Iraq is taking towards making urgently needed reforms. We call upon the Government to implement the economic reforms proposed in its White Paper, to take additional measures to improve governance and the rule of law and to bring all armed forces under State control.

The ongoing terrorist attacks in Iraq, including against diplomatic missions and convoys, are deeply concerning. We strongly condemn yesterday's deadly rocket attack in Erbil. In the context of the recent terror attack in Baghdad, we reiterate our continued support for Iraq's security and the fight against Da'esh. We also reiterate the need for all actors to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and refrain from any military action that would threaten the stability of the country.

We welcome the appointment of the third female member of the Iraqi Cabinet and support the call of the President of Iraq to develop programmes to support women's economic, social and political empowerment. With regard to the Government's efforts to combat COVID-19, more attention must be paid to the impact of the crisis on women and children, who continue to be affected the most.

We are concerned about the ongoing violence against protesters, civil society activists and journalists. We urge the Government of Iraq to take further steps to ensure accountability for all violations and protect the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. We welcome the engagement of the Government of Iraq with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and urge the Government to adopt legislation on protection from enforced disappearance.

On the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, we welcome the identification of 20 Kuwaiti missing persons recovered in Iraq. Hopefully this breakthrough will give impetus to further developments in this important humanitarian cooperation between the Governments of the two States.

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing. I would like to assure her of France's full support in the conduct of her mission.

We are at a turning point in the future of Iraq. The population has expressed legitimate aspirations to make the country more democratic, more just and more sovereign. It is the duty of the international community to accompany Iraq on this path. This means, first of all, that we need to make sure the elections in October take place. The Iraqi Government has expressed its sovereign desire to see the United Nations involved in observing the upcoming elections. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to provide a response that lives up to Iraq's expectations, bearing in mind the strategic stakes that those elections represent for the future of the country and for the stability of the region. France will participate in this discussion, as it has done in Brussels, to defend the idea of a European contribution to observing the elections. This is a matter of urgency. We must act.

Assisting Iraq also means standing with it to ensure that its security, sovereignty and territorial integrity are preserved. The 21 January attack in Baghdad demonstrates that the Da'esh threat continues to exist and has even gotten worse, with the Iraqi population as the primary victim. Preserving the international coalition's ability to act alongside the Iraqi security forces is essential if the progress made in recent years is not to be jeopardized.

France condemns in the strongest possible terms the rocket fire that hit Erbil last night, which killed one person and wounded several. We express our solidarity with the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The Iraqi Government should also have our full support in its efforts to put an end to the destabilizing activities of certain armed groups, which, notably, have in recent months attacked diplomatic targets.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2021/120) also notes continued incursions into the north of the country, which is a worrisome situation. The Iraqi Government's diplomacy of balance and good neighbourliness has our full support. Iraq's neighbours must accept the country's outstretched hand.

Assisting Iraq means speaking the truth about what remains to be done. Specifically, I am thinking of the fight against economic and political corruption, which are paralysing the country. I am also thinking of the fight against impunity for crimes committed against protesters. Nine months after the announcement of the establishment of a fact-finding body, it is time for that body to finally be made operational.

I also have in mind the situation of displaced persons. It is essential that their return be voluntary and that it be carried out in safety and dignity. It is essential that they be allowed to continue to receive assistance after they leave the camps, including health-care assistance, which is all the more crucial in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

It is the responsibility of the international community to contribute to helping stabilize and rebuild the regions liberated from Da'esh. France is playing its part to that end with a hospital project in Sinjar, whose cornerstone was laid on 24 November.

Finally, the dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil needs to make much more rapid progress. It is urgent that an agreement be found on budget transfers.

Before I conclude, I would like to say a word on the repatriation of the remains of Kuwaiti nationals who disappeared in Iraq. France welcomes the cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait, which has allowed for the identification of 20 Kuwaiti nationals. We hope that process will continue.

Despite the many challenges, France is determined to support Iraq. We hope that, when the time comes, all of Iraq's friends will be able to express their political and material support for the sovereignty of this country.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T. S. Tirumurti**

I thank Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her comprehensive briefing. We appreciate the close cooperation of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) with the Government of Iraq in providing the assistance needed to tackle the multiple challenges it is facing.

Let me begin by expressing my deep condolences to the Government and the people of Iraq and the families of those who were killed in the terrorist attacks in Baghdad on 21 January. We strongly condemn those attacks on innocent civilians and express our solidarity with the Government and the people of the country. I also wish a speedy recovery to those who were grievously injured in those despicable attacks.

The attacks are a stark reminder that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to pose a significant challenge to peace and stability in Iraq and the region. Terrorism remains the gravest threat to humankind and endangers its very foundation. It is important for the international community to continue its support for the Iraqi security forces and the Government so that they can credibly address the menace of terrorism and provide an environment free of terror and fear.

The report (see S/2021/68) of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, mentions that the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security is again on the rise and that the majority of the active 10,000 ISIL fighters in the region are in Iraq. This is deeply concerning. The focus of the Security Council should be on eliminating every threat posed by ISIL and other terrorist groups, in Iraq and elsewhere in the world. In order to ensure effective action, a holistic approach in the global fight against terrorism needs to be adopted. In that context, my Minister for External Affairs proposed an eight-point action plan for effectively countering terrorism at the Security Council's ministerial meeting last month (see S/2021/48, annex 5).

The upcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq, scheduled for October 2021, will be a valuable opportunity to strengthen the roots of democracy in the country. A transparent, free, fair and inclusive election, conducted in a violence-free environment and with high voter turnout, will empower the new Government to implement reforms, improve accountability, meet the genuine aspirations of Iraqi people, especially women and youth, and promote inclusiveness and reconciliation. International assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq and observation of the electoral process by the United Nations would also enhance the credibility of the elections and build confidence about the integrity of the results among the Iraqi people.

In that regard, India fully supports the Government of Iraq's request for United Nations observation of the upcoming elections in the country. We will support any process that respects the country's sovereignty, strengthens the democratic exercise and makes it credible, and therefore acceptable to the people of Iraq. In line with our strong democratic traditions, India has contributed to democratic and electoral processes in Iraq by training Independent High Electoral Commission officials and sending election observers.

We are pleased to note the positive progress made in preparation for the upcoming elections. The passage of the electoral law and allocation of funds to the Independent High Electoral Commission are significant steps in that regard. It is important that the remaining conditions for smooth elections, such as the completion of biometric voter registration and agreement on the members of the Federal Supreme Court, are also fulfilled in a timely manner. We acknowledge the valuable support provided by UNAMI in the electoral process.

We commend the concerted efforts of the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resolve all outstanding issues. We encourage both sides to continue constructive dialogue so as to reach a mutually satisfactory long-term sustainable agreement on these issues, including on revenue-sharing and budget allocations. We are also pleased to see the commencement of the implementation of the Sinjar agreement.

The continued attacks on diplomatic establishments and convoys by non-State armed groups, including yesterday's attack in Erbil, are a serious challenge to maintaining the fragile peace that prevails in the country. We appreciate the efforts by the Government of Iraq to provide protection to all diplomatic missions. We hope that a long-term solution can be found to this issue.

We applaud the Government of Iraq's determined efforts to maintain friendly and cordial ties with its neighbours and other countries of the region. The stability of the country should be of paramount importance to the region, and Iraq should not become a theatre for regional or global conflicts. I reaffirm India's steadfast support for Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We welcome the cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait in finding an amicable solution on the issue of missing Kuwaiti persons and third-country nationals, as well as the return of Kuwaiti property. The recent identification of Kuwaiti nationals from the remains sent by Iraqi authorities last year resulted in solace for the families of the deceased. Besides being important from the humanitarian perspective, this has furthered reconciliation between the two countries. We recognize the significant support provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross to facilitate progress in this matter.

India's friendship with Iraq is steeped in history. India has always been supportive of a democratic, pluralistic, federal, unified and prosperous Iraq fulfilling the aspirations of its citizens. Our people-to-people ties and trade relations are very strong. We have always responded to the urgent needs of Iraq for relief and reconstruction and contributed \$30 million. That includes supporting the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, a contribution through the World Food Programme and capacity-building under our Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme.

India is the preferred destination for medical treatment for many Iraqi friends, who visit every year. That cooperation has continued even during the coronavirus disease pandemic. I am also happy to note that under the Air Bubble Arrangement between the countries, more than 10,000 Iraqi nationals have travelled to India during the last four months alone for medical treatment.

The Government of Iraq is taking encouraging steps to achieve stability, reconciliation, peace and development in the country. As a reliable and longstanding friend, India will remain a willing partner of Iraq in its nation-building endeavours to deliver prosperity to its people.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

I want to say a special thank you to Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert for her really excellent briefing this morning. Ireland strongly supports the important work that she and her team are doing, so I thank her again.

Before I begin my statement, I also wanted to recognize the dedicated service of Ms. Walpole as Deputy Special Representative and to congratulate her successor, Ms. Gísladóttir. We wish her all the best in her new role at a critical juncture for Iraq. I have to say that it is a very welcome development to see the continuation of an all-female leadership at the team at the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

I want to begin by strongly condemning the terrorist attack carried out at a Baghdad market on 21 January, as well as the continued attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) across the country. Our condolences and sympathies are with the families of the victims and all those affected by this senseless violence. Just last week, the Council heard that the threat posed by ISIL has increased during the pandemic and that Iraq, along with Syria, remains the primary focus of ISIL objectives.

Of course, we also condemn in the strongest possible terms the rocket attack carried out overnight in Erbil. That has tragically, as we heard, resulted in loss of life. We encourage cooperation between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government towards a swift investigation into that attack in order to hold perpetrators to account.

Ireland firmly rejects any attempt to destabilize Iraq on its pathway to a more peaceful future. The Council is united in its support for Iraq's security and territorial integrity. We are also united in the fight against terrorism, which the international community remains committed to countering in accordance with international law, including international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

As Iraq's Yazidi community gathered just last week to bury their loved ones, let me echo Nadia Murad's clarion call for the Council to ensure that the perpetrators of horrific crimes against that community are brought to account.

While accountability is essential, the manner in which we pursue justice is also important. Ireland remains opposed to the use of the death penalty in all circumstances, and we regret the recent executions in Iraq.

Ireland fully supports Iraq's democratic processes. We welcome Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi's commitment to important political reforms and to holding early elections, and we take note of the decision to postpone those elections until October.

Important work clearly remains to be done to ensure that the Iraqi people are empowered to vote freely and safely, and all actors in Iraq have a responsibility to ensure that. The recent finalization of electoral legislation is very welcome, and the international community, too, now must play its part.

I would like to acknowledge the letter received last week from Foreign Minister Hussein regarding electoral observation. We are carefully considering this important issue and look forward to further discussion on this matter.

I want to underline today that the political process must be inclusive if it is to be successful. Women, young people and minority communities should be included

at every stage of the electoral process. We are pleased to see that the Government of Iraq has paid particular attention to promoting the inclusivity of elections in this preparatory phase, and we urge the Government to continue to prioritize this as the process continues.

Civil society and freedom of assembly are crucial to the democratic process. Just like the Special Representative has said to us now, Ireland is concerned by the continued targeting of protesters, activists, human rights defenders and journalists in Iraq. Those who perpetrate violence against people exercising their rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly must be held to account. We call upon the Federal and Regional Governments to end impunity and ensure the realization of those fundamental human rights for all.

We encourage the Iraqi authorities to continue engaging with UNAMI on a strategy to create durable solutions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of internally displaced persons. While for many Iraqis the idea of returning home is a cherished prospect, there are also considerable challenges and obstacles to overcome. As the Secretary-General said in paragraph 82 of his report (S/2021/120), “a new crisis in the form of secondary displacement should be avoided at all costs”.

Finally, I want to end by welcoming the positive news of a significant breakthrough in recent weeks with the identification of 20 Kuwaiti missing persons by Kuwaiti authorities following the successful transfer of remains by the Government of Iraq in recent years. That is testament to the commitment of the Governments of both Iraq and Kuwait to resolve outstanding issues and address the tragic legacy of the past. We commend the tireless work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNAMI to support them. We hope that the recent developments will bring some closure to the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives.

Annex VII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael Kiboino

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her insightful briefing. We also take note with appreciation of the Secretary-General's report on the progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/2021/120).

On the political situation, Kenya commends the Iraqi authorities on the preparations for free and fair elections later in the year. Those elections should provide an opportunity for trust-building and the demonstration of inclusivity and transparency.

We encourage the Government and all the stakeholders to work together to maintain conditions conducive to the elections and voters. In that regard, Kenya's delegation supports the request of the Iraqi Government for a strengthened role of the United Nations in the electoral process in a manner that the Iraqi Government deems viable and within the capability of the United Nations.

The imperative for durable solutions aimed at social cohesion for all vulnerable persons and groups, including displaced persons and returnees, cannot be overemphasized. Kenya welcomes President Barham Salih's statement at the end of 2020 affirming the need to take all measures necessary to end violence and discrimination against women and for the development of effective programmes, plans and mechanisms that support women's economic, social, and political empowerment. We encourage the Government to continue undertaking structural reforms that strengthen institutional capacity for the achievement of social cohesion and inclusivity.

We welcome the recent achievements in the identification of the remains of 20 Kuwaitis and third-party nationals and the subsequent closure of those files.

Kenya is encouraged by the Government's reforms aimed at turning the economy around. Although many economies globally are going through lean periods because of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the situation in Iraq is compounded by several security dilemmas, including the overspill of foreign tensions and terrorist activities by the Islamic State and other terrorist networks.

Indeed, 10 December 2020 marked the third anniversary of the military defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). However, ISIL remains an existential threat whose unrelenting depredations and other forms of inhuman violence continue to ravage innocent civilians in Iraq. Kenya condemns in the strongest terms those heinous acts, including the 21 January killing of 32 people in Baghdad, as well as yesterday's rocket attack at the airport in Erbil. We convey our sincere condolences to the affected.

Kenya urges the international community and the Council in particular to maintain the highest levels of vigilance against ISIL- and Al-Qaida-inspired terrorism not only in Iraq but also everywhere else around the world. We must redouble efforts to support Iraq to become a net exporter of peace.

We are also greatly concerned by the attacks on diplomatic missions and convoys in Iraq. In that regard, it is essential to pay heed to the Secretary-General's call for further concerted efforts by the Government, working with all relevant actors, to ensure the protection of all diplomatic missions and personnel in Iraq.

In conclusion, Kenya calls upon all actors to uphold the political independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and emphasizes that all actions should be motivated by the interests of the Iraqi people.

I reiterate Kenya's support for the continued work of UNAMI in its contribution to the Government and the people of Iraq in their quest for sustainable peace and security.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, for her detailed presentation on the situation in Iraq. I also take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and to welcome the representative of Iraq to this meeting of the Security Council.

Mexico condemns in the strongest terms any act of violence, and here we would recall the press release issued by the Council on 22 January (SC/14421), on the cowardly attack on a Baghdad market. We also condemn the most recent attack in Erbil and extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

We have taken note of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2522 (2020) (S/2021/120). In that regard, Mexico reiterates its concern about the abuse of invocations of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations in the context of the fight against terrorism. That practice runs the risk of de facto broadening the exceptions to the general prohibition of the use of force, as contained in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter. It is an irregularity that in our opinion should not be accepted.

On the other hand, we welcome Iraq's call to hold parliamentary elections next October. We note that, despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, progress has been made in organizing the electoral process. We would highlight the approval of the electoral law, the demarcation of electoral districts and the biometric registration of voters. We also applaud the fact that 25 per cent of seats in the next parliament have been reserved for women and that, in addition, seats have been reserved for minority representatives.

My delegation acknowledges the financial contributions made by Germany, the United States, France, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the European Union towards Iraq's electoral processes. We urge the Iraqi Government to continue to strengthen its institutional capacities and to promote the development of human resources in the electoral field.

Mexico also welcomes the commitment of the Iraqi Government to promoting the empowerment of women through their greater participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. In that regard, we would highlight the recent appointment of a new Minister of State as the third female Cabinet member in Iraq.

My delegation has also taken note of the negotiations between the central Government of Baghdad and the Erbil Kurdistan Regional Government aimed at resolving issues related to Government revenue and budget transfers to the Iraqi Kurdistan region. We urge that those talks continue with a view to reaching a solution.

We have noted with concern the repression of public demonstrations and the closing of media outlets. We call on the Iraqi Government to guarantee the exercise of civil liberties, including freedom of demonstration and freedom of expression. We call on the Iraqi authorities to release the detained protesters and to provide information on the whereabouts of those still missing.

On 16 November, 21 people were executed for terrorist acts. Mexico categorically rejects the application of the death penalty under any circumstances. Capital punishment constitutes a violation of human rights; it is cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, with unalterable consequences that make it impossible to

reverse potential judicial errors. Mexico calls on the Iraqi Government to promote actions aimed at a moratorium on the application of the death penalty and its eventual abolition.

Finally, Mexico commends the efforts of the Government of Iraq to strengthen cooperation with regional partners such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and thereby promote stability in the region. In particular, we acknowledge the progress made in the repatriation of the remains of Kuwaiti and third-country citizens, thanks to the mediation of UNAMI and the International Committee of the Red Cross. That step represents an important measure for re-establishing trust between neighbouring countries.

Finally, Mexico includes the recent request of the Iraqi Government to extend the mandate of UNAMI in view of the elections set to take place next October. We will work closely and in coordination with the members of the Council in considering such a request.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: English and French]

I would like to thank Mrs. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her intervention and congratulate her on the excellent work that she and her team are doing in a particularly difficult environment.

I would also like to welcome the representative of Iraq to this meeting.

Iraq, as we well know, has come a long way and is trying to rebuild itself after years of conflict. The Government's efforts to address the multiple crises that the country is facing and to steer it in a new direction are, to say the least, commendable.

Equally commendable are the efforts of the Iraqi authorities to develop friendly and peaceful relations with neighbouring countries and expand their partnership at the regional and global level. Those relations are indeed important to help Iraq in its reconstruction efforts, particularly in the economic sector, but also in terms of security.

With regard to the protection of human rights, my delegation deplores the killings and attacks against human rights activists and defenders by unidentified armed assailants. That remains a real source of concern for the Niger, and we encourage the Government to take all the measures required by the situation to honour its commitments to operationalize the body responsible for investigating the killings of human rights activists and other defenders and bring the perpetrators to justice.

My delegation remains equally concerned about the challenges faced by Iraqis trying to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. As the Secretary-General states in his report, "Respect for fundamental freedoms is integral to the strengthening of public trust in State institutions." (*S/2021/120, para. 79*) In that regard, we reiterate our call to the Government of Iraq to seek appropriate solutions to protect all peaceful demonstrators, civil society activists and human rights defenders in the exercise of their rights.

We also call on the Government of Iraq to take the necessary measures to overcome the existing administrative and security difficulties in order to put an end to the violations against children, as reflected in the Secretary-General's latest report on children and armed conflict in Iraq (*S/2019/984*).

With regard to the electoral process, we commend the efforts of the Iraqi Government and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for the continuous support of the Independent High Electoral Commission in preparing for the upcoming elections to ensure free, fair, inclusive and credible elections.

To that end, the Niger remains convinced that a sustainable process must include Iraqi women and youth, particularly the Women's Advisory Group. It is also important to support women who play the role of informal leaders in their communities during conflicts to transform that dynamism into a positive political contribution. Therefore, we welcome the step taken to increase the diversity of senior positions in the Iraqi Government, especially with the confirmation of the third woman Cabinet member.

While the process of normalizing the situation in Iraq is in a crucial phase, the Security Council and the international community should support the Iraqi authorities in their legitimate quest for more democracy, peace and progress.

On the issue of missing persons, property and archives from Kuwait and third countries, my delegation welcomes the continued cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait, despite the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We also commend the determination of UNAMI, the Tripartite Commission and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their efforts to move the issue forward.

In conclusion, it is highly regrettable that the transnational threat of terrorism remains present in the country, with the recent terrorist attacks in Baghdad and Erbil, claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). I would like to reiterate that, as Iraq is trying to recover from the deep crisis it has been going through in recent years, we must not lose sight of the fact that the victory over ISIL is not synonymous with its total eradication in the country. Hence we call on the Iraqi authorities and the international counter-ISIL coalition to remain vigilant and continue the fight against terrorism in order to thwart its reconstruction ambitions.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

First, I thank you, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert, for your briefing. We highly appreciate the work of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and your support for the preparation of national elections in October. Norway also fully supports Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi's efforts in preparing for the elections. Free, fair and transparent elections and an inclusive political process that ensures the participation of women are vital for the integrity of, and public trust in, the electoral process.

We take note of the Iraqi request for election observation and look forward to the Security Council's discussion on how to best meet that request. We call on all Iraqi stakeholders to ensure that all electoral and legal requirements are in place, including the adoption of a Federal Supreme Court law.

The security situation in Iraq continues to be of grave concern, with continued attacks against diplomatic missions and convoys. Norway condemns last night's rocket attacks on Erbil, which killed one civilian contractor and injured several members of the Global Coalition to Counter Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. All efforts must be made to investigate and hold the responsible accountable. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), too, remains a serious threat, and our condolences go to the victims and the families of the appalling suicide attacks on 21 January.

Norway is committed to the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, through which we continue to support Iraq in its efforts to combat ISIL. Continued international support to Iraq's democratic process and its efforts to rebuild after the territorial defeat of ISIL is vital. That includes significant stabilization and humanitarian support. Iraqi ownership and commitment remain key to success.

Long-term stability cannot be achieved without addressing underlying causes of conflict and instability. Those range from economic, social and political aspects to water security issues and climate change. Although the coronavirus disease pandemic is making the work to address those issues harder, we welcome the Government's efforts, including their plans for much-needed economic reform.

National dialogue and reconciliation remain vital for the stability of Iraq. We call upon the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to reach an agreement on federal budget allocations and oil revenues. The Sinjar agreement is a positive step towards peace and stability after much suffering, especially by the Yazidi population. It is critical that the agreement be implemented through dialogue with the affected parties and lead to rebuilding and the provision of basic services. Continued focus on, and commitment to, the fight against sexual and gender-based violence also remains important, both nationally and globally.

Allow me to also echo the concerns of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General about the humanitarian consequences of the hasty closing of internally displaced persons camps. All returns must be safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable. We urge the Government to coordinate with the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to that end. Furthermore, we remain concerned by the reported abduction, torture and targeted killing of protesters and activists. Perpetrators must be held accountable, and the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly must be ensured.

Norway welcomes the recent announcements regarding the identification of human remains of 20 Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. We commend Iraq's commitment to cooperate with Kuwait and bring this humanitarian file to a close.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert for her briefing.

We support the efforts of the Government of Iraq to stabilize the difficult situation, for a number of objective reasons. We understand that the problems facing the Iraqi authorities cannot be resolved quickly. Measures are being taken to improve the socioeconomic situation, but protests in the country continue. The situation has been exacerbated by the sharp decline in Government revenues owing to falling oil prices, as well as the spread of the coronavirus disease.

The fight against terrorism remains a pressing issue. Despite the successes achieved by Iraqis in countering terrorism, the security situation in the country remains fragile, in particular because of increasing insurgent activity. A sad example of this is the recent dual attack in the centre of Baghdad, which claimed the lives of 32 civilians, and yesterday's attack in Erbil. We strongly condemn those terrorist acts. At the same time, we are proceeding from the assumption that all those involved in the fight against terrorism in Iraq must respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi State and coordinate their actions with Baghdad.

There have also been attacks on civilian and military facilities on Iraqi territory by the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The American Embassy and the motorcade of the British diplomatic mission were attacked in Baghdad. We stand against such provocations.

We are convinced that inclusive dialogue can help resolve the remaining internal problems. For our part, in our contacts with all political actors in Iraq, we encourage them to seek compromise solutions. That said, we call on all external stakeholders interested in stabilizing the domestic situation in Iraq to refrain from steps that could negatively impact that process.

One of the priorities of Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi's Cabinet is to prepare for early parliamentary elections, which were recently postponed from June to October. We continue to look into ways to engage the United Nations in the process of organizing and holding the elections and are ready to discuss this issue with other Security Council members.

We believe that further improvement in relations between Baghdad and Erbil will help Iraq to strengthen security and effectively harness its economic potential for the benefit of all its people.

We support the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, which can support reconciliation processes while respecting the sovereignty of the country. The commitment of Baghdad and Kuwait City to a speedy resolution of all problematic issues in the Iraq-Kuwait file is worthy of special support.

We reaffirm our consistent approach, according to which Iraq must not become a platform for regional confrontation. We appreciate Baghdad's principled position in favour of building good-neighbourly relations. We also note Baghdad's diplomatic potential for promoting de-escalation in the region. We call on the international community to engage in constructive cooperation to promote peace and stability throughout the Middle East region, including on the basis of resolution 598 (1987) and Russia's collective security concept.

Annex XII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Halimah DeShong**

We welcome the briefing by Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and extend our gratitude to her and her team.

We begin by welcoming the positive milestones highlighted in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2021/120), particularly the Government's efforts towards the creation of a stable, secure and prosperous Iraq. This includes the steps taken to increase diversity in senior positions within the Government and efforts to strengthen relations with international partners, as well as countries in the region.

The Government of Iraq has continued its efforts towards the holding of free, fair and credible elections, such as the finalization of the electoral legislation to facilitate continued preparation for elections. We also welcome the critical role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in line with its mandate, including electoral assistance. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines expresses its support for the United Nations continued cooperation with the Iraqi Government in that regard. We support, in so far as is feasible, the strengthening of the United Nations engagement to assist the Government with the elections, thereby ensuring the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. Notwithstanding this support, however, we underscore that the upcoming elections are Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned.

The path to reconstruction and peace is not without its challenges. While Iraq was able to celebrate, on 10 December, the anniversary of the military defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, security threats persist. It is disheartening that insecurity and violence continue to impact civilians, including women and children. It is also concerning that attacks against diplomatic missions and convoys in Iraq have continued. These unjustifiable and reckless acts undermine all good-faith efforts towards stability, and we call for the perpetrators to be identified and held accountable. We call on the international community to lend support to the Iraqi Government to strengthen its capacity, and on all actors within Iraq to work with the Government to strengthen State control. Also critical to bolstering domestic resilience is the need to collectively address the ongoing economic crisis, and we call on international partners to support the Government's efforts in this regard.

We welcome the progress made towards the identification of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. Furthermore, we recognize the role of the Tripartite Commission, the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNAMI in advancing this issue.

In conclusion, we affirm our support to UNAMI. We further emphasize our solidarity with the Government of Iraq and its people as they endeavour to consolidate peace, and recall the need to ensure the preservation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for her valuable briefing, and reiterate my country's support for that Mission. I welcome the participation of the representative of Iraq, Ambassador Mohammed Bahr Aluloom.

Tunisia has been closely following the Iraqi Government's efforts over the recent period to consolidate political, economic and social reforms in response to the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

As part of this approach to reform, we welcome the financial and economic measures adopted to reform fiscal and monetary policy and advance profound economic reforms. We also appreciate the bold decisions to combat corruption and mismanagement, improve management performance and upgrade basic services, thereby consolidating a vision for the future to build a developed and prosperous Iraqi economy.

Meanwhile, the upcoming elections will mark an important milestone in the process of consolidating political stability and national unity and reinforcing the foundations of security and stability. While we welcome the progress made in preparing for the elections, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2522 (2020), we support the request by the Republic of Iraq to strengthen the role of UNAMI to provide more guidance, support, technical assistance and election observation.

We also note the meeting of the three Iraqi leaders with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. That meeting attested to the will and readiness of Iraq to ensure the success of this important milestone by completing voter registration and all technical operations and verifying legal and constitutional references, in order to make it possible to hold transparent, fair and credible elections.

We also reaffirm our full solidarity with the Republic of Iraq in combating the remnants of terrorist groups and thwarting their plots to undermine security and stability.

In addition, Tunisia welcomes the Government's efforts to strengthen the role of Iraqi women and support their representation and active participation in decision-making. It also supports the Government's continued efforts to take all necessary measures, including by establishing effective programmes, plans and mechanisms to eliminate violence and discrimination against women, thereby consolidating the foundations of peace and stability.

With regard to relations between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, we call on both parties to continue to cooperate and intensify efforts to reach a sustainable and long-term agreement on issues of common concern.

Tunisia reaffirms its commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, and calls for dialogue and cooperation to resolve border issues.

With regard to Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations, we express our satisfaction with the significant progress made on the humanitarian front with the identification of the remains of 20 Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. In that context, we value the

cooperation between the two States and their tireless efforts to consolidate it further, as well as the efforts by Iraq to uphold its obligations and continue the search for missing persons and the Kuwaiti archives.

Annex XIV

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward

The United Kingdom welcomes the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hennis-Plasschaert, and thanks Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Walpole for her service.

Iraq is at a critical juncture. It is essential that the elections in October be free, fair and credible. Our commitment to the democratic process in Iraq remains steadfast, and we look forward to further discussions on how the United Nations can support the elections following Iraq's request for United Nations observation.

Iraq faces an economic crisis, increased unemployment, poverty and food insecurity. The Government of Iraq's proposals for economic reform are welcome. We now call on all parties to put aside their differences and agree a sustainable budget that allows Iraq to build back better from the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Last month's devastating attack in Baghdad demonstrates the importance of the ongoing work of the Global Coalition to Defeat Da'esh, in close partnership with the Iraqi security forces. We also condemn last night's attack on coalition forces and civilians in Erbil.

We are deeply troubled by the short notice and uncoordinated closure of camps for internally displaced persons. We urge the Government of Iraq to coordinate with the United Nations to ensure that all returns are safe, dignified and voluntary.

We welcome the Government of Iraq's continued efforts to strengthen relations with regional neighbours. We continue to reiterate the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and Turkey to combat terrorism, ensure regional security and protect civilians. We commend the shared commitment of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti Governments to make progress on the file of missing Kuwaiti persons and property, pursuant to resolution 2107 (2013).

The United Kingdom continues to support the Government of Iraq as it seeks to deliver free, fair and inclusive elections, to combat terrorism and to implement crucial economic reform.

Annex XV**Statement by the Acting Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I thank you, Madam President, and thanks to the Special Representative for her informative report. I also want to thank her and her staff for their ongoing diligent efforts, even as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the uncertainty of the security situation complicate their mission.

Since this is the first time the Biden Administration addresses the issue of Iraq in the Security Council, let me begin with laying out our goals for Iraq.

The Biden Administration supports a strategic partnership with a stable, democratic Iraq. The Administration will be a steady, reliable partner that supports Iraq's anti-corruption and economic reform efforts, strengthens regional relationships, holds accountable human rights violators and those who abuse human rights, provides humanitarian assistance, backs efforts to control militias and to control Iran's destabilizing activities and advises and assists Iraq's counter-terrorism forces.

Among its top priorities, the United States will seek to help Iraq assert its sovereignty in the face of enemies, at home and abroad, by preventing a resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams (ISIS) and working towards Iraq's stability.

For the United States, this means supporting Iraq's efforts to hold credible, inclusive and peaceful elections. The Iraqi Government is taking firm steps towards this goal, we believe. In late 2019, when Iraqis took to the streets demanding political and economic reforms, the Iraqi Government responded, in part by planning early elections, now scheduled for October 2021. These scheduled elections will be critical in establishing a responsive and representative Government.

The United States welcomes the recent letter submitted to the Council by the Government of Iraq requesting the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to provide election observers for its October elections. We support international observation of Iraqi elections to ensure that the elections are free, fair and credible, and look forward to working with Iraq, the Council, fellow members and the United Nations to determine the most feasible form such an effort can take.

UNAMI has already been providing, we believe, excellent technical assistance to the Iraqi Government to ensure that the elections scheduled for October are free and fair, and working with the Government to increase public trust in the electoral process.

The United States recognizes and supports the critical role that UNAMI plays in assisting the Government's election preparations, which is why we are providing a \$9.7 million grant to support UNAMI in its efforts. We thank the other countries that have supported UNAMI as well, but we also want to encourage all international donors to contribute to UNAMI to help it and Iraq prepare for these important elections.

The report we have just heard on elections preparations, however, again highlighted the complicated situation in Iraq. It is essential to create a conducive environment for elections so that they are credible, peaceful and inclusive. One of the highest barriers to a conducive environment, however, is the presence of armed militias, violent extremists and spoilers. Iraq's electoral administration and key security personnel should work closely to plan for and coordinate around securing the elections, and this work must begin immediately alongside other preparations for the electoral process.

A conducive environment means that we must address Iran-backed militias and Iran's destabilizing activities in Iraq, as well as the remaining ISIS elements. These groups undermine the public's trust in the Government and in the October 2021 elections. They are killing Iraqi citizens and depriving Iraq of much-needed economic relief and foreign investment. No one is immune. They also have attacked United Nations convoys and targeted both diplomatic personnel and non-governmental organizations seeking to assist Iraq and Iraqis. Just yesterday, as we heard, an attack claimed one civilian contractor and injured several members of the coalition, including one United States service member.

As Secretary Blinken said yesterday, the United States is outraged by the rocket attack in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. We express our condolences to the loved ones of the civilian contractor killed in this attack, to the others who were injured and to the innocent Iraqi people and their families who are suffering from these acts of violence. The United States pledges our support for all efforts to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for these heinous actions.

We appreciate UNAMI's ongoing documentation of humanitarian abuses and human rights violations, as well as its accountability efforts, including supporting a strengthened judiciary and addressing enforced disappearances.

The United States remains committed to Iraq's economic development. Low oil prices, COVID-19 and the security situation have each contributed to Iraq's current, unsustainable economic position. The United States has provided Iraq more than \$706 million since the beginning of fiscal year 2019, and more than \$2.4 billion in both humanitarian and development assistance since 2014. This assistance helps provide critical shelter, essential health care, emergency food assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene services across Iraq, and has supported the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced persons, including members of ethnic and religious minority groups.

Real recovery, however, means real reforms to end corruption. Economic reform efforts will only be strengthened by concrete steps, including the establishment last year of a permanent committee to investigate corruption. Endemic corruption undermines economic progress — as well as trust in political bodies — and the permanent committee demonstrates, we believe, the Government's political will to fight endemic corruption in Iraq. We commend the Iraqi Government for its efforts and encourage committed action, in accord with Iraq's constitutional protections for human rights and due process, to ensure the independence, impartiality and adequate resourcing of the committee.

Let me end by saying that the United States will remain a steady, reliable partner for Iraq and for the Iraqi people, today and in future.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I thank Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for her valuable briefing. I also thank all United Nations personnel and aid workers operating on the ground at this difficult time. I welcome Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq, to our meeting today.

Viet Nam reaffirms its support for the tremendous efforts undertaken by the Iraqi Government and people towards the long-term stability of the country. In that regard, we commend the Iraqi Government's preparation for the elections scheduled for this coming October.

While considering that the support from the United Nations and the international community is very important, we continue to emphasize that Iraq's elections must be led by Iraq. They must be held in a free, fair and inclusive manner, with the broad participation of all components of society, especially youth and women.

We welcome the passage of the election law that reserves 25 percent of the seats in the Parliament for women.

Given the multiple challenges that Iraq is facing, Viet Nam also encourages the Iraqi Government to implement the necessary reforms to deal with these challenges, especially those brought about by the economic situation and the coronavirus disease pandemic.

We also support a stronger relationship between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to address outstanding issues.

Viet Nam remains concerned about the security situation in Iraq. Recalling the attacks on civilians and diplomatic missions and the rocket attack yesterday in Erbil, we reiterate our condemnation of all acts of terrorism and extremist violence. Perpetrators must be brought to justice.

We encourage the strengthening of the relations between Iraq and countries of the region in dealing with common challenges, including security concerns. At the same time, we continue to call for full respect of Iraq's independence and territorial integrity by all regional and international actors.

Regarding the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs), we continue to support the efforts by the Government of Iraq and international organizations towards the return of the displaced to their homes. However, there are concerns about the possibility of a new crisis. The Secretary-General's report (S/2021/120) shows that 28 percent of arriving households had not returned to their locations of origin and were considered to be secondarily displaced. The whereabouts of at least 11,000 individuals remain unknown after the camp closures in late 2020. We join the international community in calling for the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return and settlement of IDPs. We also call for more efforts by all parties to avoid a secondary displacement crisis.

In this context, the support of the international community, including the United Nations agencies, notably UNAMI, is essential. Viet Nam welcomes the efforts of UNAMI and United Nations agencies to assist Iraq in the quest for national stability and security and to provide humanitarian assistance to a large number of people affected by conflict, poverty and the ongoing pandemic. We also call upon international donors to continue their assistance to Iraq through United Nations agencies.

Before concluding, we would like to reiterate our support for the continued cooperation between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait in the search for missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the return of Kuwaiti property. We welcome the recent DNA identification of Kuwaiti missing nationals. We commend the Iraqi Government's efforts to fulfil its obligations in accordance with resolution 2107 (2013) as well as other relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Her Excellency Ms. Barbara Woodward, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also extend my sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. Tarek Ladeb, Permanent Representative of Tunisia, for his outstanding management of the Council's meetings last month.

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

Since the last Council meeting on the situation in Iraq in November 2020 (see S/2020/1144), there has been no real change in the situation or the magnitude of the major and interrelated economic, security, health and social challenges facing my country, Iraq. The Iraqi Government is expeditiously working to the best of its ability and at the highest levels, as promised, to meet the people's demands by maintaining peace and security, providing services, countering the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, fighting terrorism and instituting political and economic reforms.

The economic situation remains a source of concern for the Iraqi Government because of plummeting and fluctuating oil prices on the one hand, and the exorbitant costs borne by Iraq in combating terrorism, rebuilding liberated cities and clearing them of remnants of war and landmines on the other. In that regard, as part of efforts to address the economic and financial crisis, on 13 November 2020 the Government presented the House of Representatives with a white paper for economic and financial reform to reduce dependence on oil revenues and boost investment, and recommended urgent measures to address the financial situation, particularly the lack of liquidity. The recommendations covered three main areas: increasing revenues and reducing expenditures; reforming fiscal and monetary policy; and carrying out general economic reform. On 21 December 2020, the Government also sent a draft budget to the House of Representatives, where it is still being considered.

The situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is critical. Despite the actions taken by the competent authorities, the number of cases is alarmingly high. The COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge for Iraq, despite a high recovery rate of 88 per cent and a low mortality rate of 2.2 per cent. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a threat to the health care system, with more than 23,000 health care workers infected as of early December, and resources depleted as a result of the high number of cases. The health crisis has also continued to affect the social and economic situation of the most vulnerable groups in Iraq; having to allocate resources to address the pandemic has affected the country's other commitments.

In that regard, Iraq expresses its sincere gratitude to the World Health Organization and friendly countries for their generous health assistance in support of the Iraqi effort to tackle the pandemic. It looks forward to support from the international community for providing vaccines to all in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

Since its formation, the current Government has made it a top priority to fulfil the commitment it made to the people to respond to the demonstrators' demands. In that regard, the Government has sought to gain the people's confidence, especially

that of young people, by listening to their voices and respecting the constitutional right to demonstrate peacefully and express oneself freely.

The Government has also promised to protect demonstrators from human rights violations. The competent authorities have made significant efforts to prevent extralegal groups from targeting demonstrators and to minimize the number of incidents by giving all State security organs and forces strict instructions to refrain from using force or carrying weapons at demonstration sites. The Government formed a law enforcement command to provide protection at major social events, uphold the law, promote freedom of peaceful demonstration and protect demonstrators and their right to express their views peacefully in all Governorates. The Government then restructured that command to bring it under a unit formed by the Ministry of the Interior and referred those accused of violations for investigation. In addition, directives were issued requiring all members of those forces to take human rights training and education courses. The Iraqi Government has also set up specialized investigative commissions to locate abducted protesters and journalists, gather information on the perpetrators of the crimes and bring them to justice so that they receive their just punishment. As part of steps taken by the Government to uphold its obligation to protect demonstrators, reinforce measures to ensure that justice is served and prevent impunity, members of groups responsible for killing activists will be arrested. My Government has also made efforts to compensate the victims and their families by, inter alia, providing compensation to demonstrators who were attacked and to their families and forming a commission in the Office of the Prime Minister to follow up and communicate with demonstrators in order to attend to their needs. It has also worked to hold those responsible for committing violations fully accountable by forming a fact-finding team to investigate the bloody events and the acts of violence that have led to demonstrators being killed or injured, with a view to preventing such violations from recurring in the future. Appropriate legal action was taken, in accordance with the relevant domestic law, against members of the security services found to be involved in targeting demonstrators.

In its programme, the Iraqi Government has pledged to enforce the rule of law, restrict possession of weapons to the State and promote security reform efforts in government institutions in order to strengthen human rights procedures as part of its effort to enforce the rule of law.

In this area, terrorism is the most formidable threat as well as the one most likely to hinder Iraqi efforts to develop and rebuild the country, help displaced citizens return to their homes and deliver humanitarian assistance. Recently, Baghdad witnessed a terrorist attack targeting innocent civilians in a popular market in January. A terrorist operation carried out just today in the city of Erbil killed dozens and injured hundreds. In that same month, there were clashes between Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist gangs and a number of military units in different regions. In that regard, Iraq reiterates its commitment to continue to cooperate with the international community to combat terrorism and to continue to mobilize the capabilities of the competent national entities.

Our national strategy commits us to implementing all relevant United Nations resolutions to achieve our national objectives and priorities, namely, preventing all forms of terrorism and violent extremism, preventing the financing of terrorism, preventing recruitment and crippling terrorist movements, combating terrorist and extremist rhetoric, preventing the establishment of ties to organized crime and confronting biological and chemical threats.

Iraq appreciates the press statement issued by the Security Council (SC/14421). In it, the Council affirms continued international support for Iraq in its fight against terrorism and solidarity with the Government and people of Iraq in the light of the

recent cowardly terrorist attack on Baghdad. International support is a key pillar for Iraq in strengthening its efforts and capabilities in the fight against terrorism. It is doing so by building its capacity, exchanging information and logistical assistance, implementing special programmes on countering violent extremism and on the link between terrorism and organized crime, and rebuilding liberated cities, which will make it possible for all displaced persons to return home. It is stepping up efforts to repatriate family members of foreign terrorist fighters and help to establish a national counter-terrorism centre.

My Government is fully committed to protecting the accredited diplomatic and consular missions and mission personnel in Iraq. In that connection, it is making every effort to prevent the recurrence of rocket attacks carried out by outlaw groups. In perpetrating such attacks, those groups seek to destabilize Iraq and adversely affect cooperation between the Government and the international community in the fight against terrorism.

The return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin is a top priority for the Iraqi Government, and my Government has made a significant effort to facilitate their safe return through a range of actions and measures. Those measures include providing documents that enable them to return voluntarily and taking several steps, in coordination with UNAMI, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, other relevant international organizations and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society and the competent national authorities, to alleviate their suffering and enable them to return home safely. On 12 January, the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration announced that it had achieved some success on the internal displacement issue. Some 47 camps had closed over the previous six months, and 66,000 families had returned to their areas once suitable conditions had been put in place, in cooperation with local governments and security agencies, in line with the Government's programme to end displacement. The Ministry stressed that several camps, including Salamiyah camp and Amiriyat al-Fallujah camp in Anbar, would be closing soon, explaining that it was cooperating with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on closing Jad'ah camp in Ninawa. The Government also drew up a plan with IOM to rebuild the destroyed homes of the displaced, and that plan is currently being implemented. The internal displacement crisis is also linked to national humanitarian needs. According to the relevant United Nations reports, the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq provided for 128 activities, with total financial requirements of \$662.2 million, including \$397.4 million unrelated to the pandemic and \$264.8 million for pandemic response to cover humanitarian needs in various humanitarian areas such as health, education, hygiene, awareness-raising, food security and the management of camps for internally displaced persons. My Government has facilitated the delivery of international humanitarian assistance to its destination by taking a series of measures. It has provided displaced persons with an emergency grant, food assistance and income-generating projects, in addition to allocating a new amount to the reconstruction fund for areas affected by terrorist operations to rebuild those areas. The emergency plan or the national plan to be launched will include substantial amounts, in cooperation with international organizations, to prepare homes for their return. The Government has coordinated and consulted with international organizations, the relevant ministries and local governments to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches its intended destination, according to need and without exception or discrimination. Regular consultation meetings were held by the bureaux of international organizations and the relevant international institutions to discuss obstacles to humanitarian access, find sustainable solutions and address any urgent problems. In that connection, my Government emphasizes that it remains necessary for the relevant specialized agencies to meet national humanitarian needs, particularly given that the threat of COVID-19 persists.

It appreciates the valuable assistance provided by donor countries, notably, the United States of America, Germany, Canada, Japan and the European Commission, to meet the costly amount of need.

I am also pleased to highlight the recent developments in the electoral process, the most important of which is the postponement of the early elections to 10 October. On 17 December 2020, the House of Representatives enacted a law on funding early elections, allocating 329 billion Iraqi dinars and dividing Iraq into 83 electoral districts. The Independent High Electoral Commission has announced that, as of 11 January 2021, 433 parties had registered to participate in the upcoming elections. In an important development, the Commission announced that it had completed the process of securing electronic voting machines within the timetable established in agreement with a foreign company, noting that there are an estimated 58,915 polling stations within Iraq and abroad. The Commission has therefore completed the process of securing electronic voting machines within the operational timetable for the electoral process, with more than 14 million voters registered biometrically, out of a total of 26 million voters, yielding a registration rate of 56 per cent.

The Iraqi Government is working very carefully to create a climate conducive to promoting dialogue with the local government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, particularly with regard to the upcoming budget, control over border crossing points and the management of oil resources. In that connection, I would like to inform you that the meetings are intensive and on-going and that their aim is to reach a sustainable agreement on the budget, with two delegations from the region visiting Baghdad. The agreement of 9 October between the federal and the Kurdistan Regional Governments on administrative, service and security arrangements in Sinjar, Ninawa Governorate, entered into force on 21 November. The Joint Operations Command confirmed the start of the implementation of the agreement's security provisions on 1 December 2020.

Iraq continues to strive to strengthen relations and build partnerships with its regional neighbours and international partners. For example, in the area of economic development, the fourth meeting of the Iraqi-Saudi Coordination Council was held in Baghdad on 8 November 2020 at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs. The two sides reaffirmed their determination to strengthen bilateral relations in order to coordinate their positions on oil issues, cooperate in countering terrorism, support regional stability and strengthen trade relations.

Since November 2020, my Government has been eager to launch cooperative and strategic dialogues with many countries, resulting in a number of high-level official visits, with the Prime Minister visiting Ankara and Amman. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has also conducted official visits, including to Moscow, with a view to strengthening bilateral ties, including economic ties, with international partners.

During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq welcomed delegations from the United Kingdom led by Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly, the State of Palestine, Norway and the United States. Issues discussed during these meetings included the promotion of bilateral relations; national, regional and security developments; continued cooperation to counter ISIL; and reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

The Iraqi policy of regional and international interaction aims to strengthen the country's regional role in order to consolidate stability and security to move towards a better and prosperous future for the region.

My country, Iraq, places the idea of cooperation at the centre of its relations with Kuwait and complies with the obligations set forth in paragraph 4 of resolution

2107 (2013), including searching for the remains of missing Kuwaitis and Kuwaiti property and continuing to cover compensation instalments in a timely manner.

Iraq continues to demonstrate that it is fully committed to paying compensation in a timely manner. Its most recent payment was \$270 million on 26 January. Iraq is also working to uphold its commitment to returning Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. In that connection, Iraq has handed over 362,000 items to the Kuwaiti authorities since 2018, along with another set of properties and archives. It continues the painstaking effort to locate another collection of Kuwaiti archives that were supposed to have been delivered by the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April 2020. That delivery was postponed owing to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to the question of missing persons, Iraq welcomes the announcement by the Kuwaiti authorities that the remains of 20 of the 69 missing persons whose remains were handed over in two instalments since August 2019 have been identified. Meanwhile, Iraq calls on the Tripartite Commission and the State of Kuwait to accelerate the process of announcing the results of DNA tests of the remains of the other 49 persons and to make the announcement at the earliest opportunity.

The upcoming early elections are an essential component of the reform agenda to which the Iraqi Government is committed. In view of their vital importance, my Government addressed a letter dated 18 November 2020 to the President of the Security Council requesting United Nations support with electoral observation.

Building and strengthening citizen confidence in the electoral process is a key factor in ensuring the success of the most important pillar of democracy, namely, elections. The Government and people of Iraq are confident that the neutrality of the United Nations and the professionalism of its staff will establish integrity and transparency standards for the electoral process. This confidence is what my Government wishes to take advantage of to strengthen and rebuild the confidence of voters in the entire process, which will encourage them to participate actively, so that the will of the people is expressed in the election results. Those results, in turn, will be reflected in the formation of a Government that draws its strength from broad popular support and that is capable of meeting various challenges, consolidating stability and combating terrorism.

My Government understands that the new date for the elections gives the United Nations time to address the Iraqi request more effectively while respecting the country's sovereignty and cooperating with the relevant national authorities.

The Iraqi Government is in contact with the President of the Security Council regarding its request that the United Nations help to ensure the success of the electoral process in Iraq. In that connection, two letters have been addressed to the President of the Security Council concerning the provision of support and electoral observers.

In conclusion, allow me, Madam President, to point out that the time remaining before the upcoming elections is precious. We hope that Council members will make optimal use of it by responding affirmatively to the request by Iraq for United Nations observers.