

Press Releases: Remarks at the Saudi Arabia-Iraq Inaugural Coordination Council Meeting

Remarks

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SECRETARY TILLERSON: Your Majesty, Prime Minister, Excellencies, and delegation members, it is indeed a pleasure to return to Riyadh, particularly for this endeavor. I thank His Majesty King Salman for his hospitality and for hosting us today for this important event. I am grateful to both His Majesty and Prime Minister Abadi, for indeed it is a joy and an honor (inaudible) the Saudi-Iraq Coordination Council.

This event highlights the strength and breadth as well as the great potential of the relationship between (inaudible), and I am honored to take part in this ceremony. The U.S.-Saudi relationship remains strong as does the U.S.-Iraq relationship. Your important relationship between the Kingdom and Iraq is vital to bolstering our collective security and prosperity, and we take great interest in it. The United States supports enhanced cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Iraq across many pillars of the Coordination Council.

We are encouraged to see that Saudi Arabia and Iraq have made important strides in your bilateral relationship as evidenced by the recent opening of the Arar border crossing in August and the resumption of flights between Riyadh and Baghdad last week. Both represent the beginning of what we hope will be a series of even more tangible actions to improve relations, to strengthen cooperation, on a host of issues.

We are grateful for this progress and urge you to continue to sustain this vital relationship for the stability of the region. I also appreciate Prime Minister Abadi's leadership in the Government of Iraq. In recent months, you all have watched the impressive achievements in Iraq's fight against ISIS/Daesh, particularly the swift victories of Iraqi Security Forces in Tal Afar and Hawija.

As major military operations near conclusion, Iraq's financial needs for

stabilization and reconstruction are evident. The Joint Coordination Council will not only lead to closer cooperation in the fight against Daesh, but it will also help support the rehabilitation of facilities and infrastructures in the areas liberated. The council will also contribute to reforms that will grow and diversify Iraq's private sector. Such reforms will encourage foreign investment that is vital to Iraq's reconstruction efforts. This will be critical for winning the peace that has been earned through hard-fought military gains.

We are grateful that this council meeting underscores how important it is for the region that Iraq have a growing, stable economy and a government with increasing capacity to provide for all of its citizens. This event will lay the foundation for improved cooperation on these and other issues for the future of Saudi Arabia and Iraq to continue to build a relationship for the benefit of both members and the broader region. The United States and friends support continued cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, and again, we congratulate you on this important conclusion of the Coordination Council. Thank you.

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