

Returning refugees home and securing lasting peace in Iraq

Thank you, Madam President. And first, let me begin by thanking SRSO Hennis-Plaeschert for your briefing and for the excellent work that you and your team are doing on the ground in Iraq. You have our full support. And we particularly welcome the announcement of the MOU between the government of Iraq and UNAMI to establish the trust fund to support the government of Iraq's recovery and development, and also welcome Iraq's own decision to contribute to the fund. It will be important for the new trust fund to work in cooperation with the World Bank's Reform Recovery and Reconstruction Fund, which will in turn support Iraqi-led priorities in this area.

Madam President, I think Iraq is a very different issue to the other Middle East issues that are on our agenda as a Council. The key challenge for for us here and for UNAMI is: how can we best support Iraq as it seeks to rebuild and strengthen the state following the defeat of Daesh? And I agree very much with all of the priorities that the SRSO set out today in her intervention. And I want to touch briefly on three of them.

First, the SRSO highlighted that there remain 1.6 million IDPs in Iraq, all of whom have complex and acute needs. Finding a sustainable, durable solution for these people is a concern for all of us. So we welcome the work that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is doing to support the government of Iraq to enable voluntary return of IDPs. And we think that providing the displaced people with basic services should continue to be a focus for the government of Iraq, supported by UNAMI in the coming months. And we encourage the government of Iraq to expedite the providing of identity documents to these people – especially to those people that have no documents at all, including children.

Second, Madam President, other speakers this morning have emphasised the need for a stable and accountable security apparatus in Iraq, both to prevent the resurgence of terrorism, but also to provide greater security for those Iraqis who wish to return home. So like the US and Peru and others, we very much welcome Prime Minister Abdul Mehdi's executive order to bring the popular mobilisation forces under state control. And we look forward to the implementation of this order. And UNAMI's focus on SSR should continue to support the government of Iraq in ensuring that people feel safe to return home and that all members of the security services are held to account by the government of Iraq.

The third issue I want to touch on is the importance of building strong, independent state institutions, which will be vital to ensuring future stability in Iraq. I particularly welcome UNAMI's focus here on tackling corruption. And like others, I welcome the fact that the ministerial positions of defence, justice and the interior have been have been filled. This is an important step forward. However, we do share the concerns of I think almost all of the speakers today about the lack of women represented in

ministerial positions. And we hope this will change soon and that the government of Iraq will ensure the broadest possible representation of women and minorities across ministerial positions.

And when it comes to strengthening institutions, the SRSG also touched on the relationship between the KRG and Baghdad. We welcome the announcement of Nechirvan Barzani as President of the Kurdistan region of Iraq. And in particular, we welcome President Salih's attendance at the inauguration. And we commend the efforts of both President Salih and Nechirvan Barzani to tackle the outstanding issues, in particular those relating to oil revenues.

Madam President, turning briefly to the question of Kuwaiti missing persons and property, we very much welcome the SRSG's announcement today on the good news about the confirmation of Kuwaiti missing persons following DNA testing. And we also welcome UNAMI's support for this work and the decision by the United States to share the analysis of satellite imagery with those concerned. And we have every confidence that the government of Iraq will remain engaged on this issue. And we look forward to the results of the ICRC's 110th subcommittee meeting on 25 September on this vital issue.

Finally, and in conclusion, Madam President, Iraq has made great progress in recent years, especially in the military defeat of Daesh. But Iraq continues to face significant challenges both domestically and also regionally, as Iraq seeks to guard its stability and independence in an unstable region. It's therefore vital that this Council and the international community remain engaged in supporting the government of Iraq as it tackles these challenges and steers the country towards fulfilling its huge potential.

Thank you.