



# Security Council

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## Implementation of resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#)

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every four months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since his previous report of 11 May 2023 ([S/2023/340](#)) and the briefing to the Security Council by the Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI on 18 May 2023.

#### II. Summary of key political developments

##### A. Political situation

2. On 12 June, the Council of Representatives adopted the Federal Budget Law, which covers the fiscal years 2023, 2024 and 2025. In a statement issued the same day, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, underlined that the Government would review budget amendments made by the Council of Representatives in order to ensure that they were aligned with the ministerial programme. On 21 June, the President of Iraq, Abdullatif Jamal Rashid, ratified the budget law.

3. The budget outlines record levels of annual revenue, spending and deficit of \$103.5 billion, \$153.1 billion and \$49.6 billion, respectively, based on an estimated oil price of \$70 per barrel. The budget continues to be based on oil revenues and provides for a substantial increase in public sector salaries and pensions. On 7 August, the federal Supreme Court ruled on the appeals filed by the Prime Minister regarding several provisions in the Federal Budget Law, holding that some of the provisions under review were unconstitutional.

4. On 20 June, the Council of Ministers set 18 December 2023 as the date of the provincial council elections. On 26 June, the Independent High Electoral Commission organized a conference for political parties and coalitions to clarify procedures for the registration of individual lists, political parties and coalitions. Registration of political entities was held between 1 July and 7 August and the submission period for candidate lists ended, after several extensions, on 22 August. The Commission



reported on 16 September that a total of 39 electoral alliances, 29 political parties running outside electoral alliances and 66 independent candidates will run in the election. On 21 September, the Commission reported that more than 6,000 candidates, of whom 1,650 are women (27.3 per cent), were registered. On 9 July, the Commission opened a one-month period for voters to update their biometric voter registration records.

5. On 16 July, the High Committee to Support Women's Participation in Provincial Council Elections launched its workplan. The High Committee, which comprises government, civil society and United Nations representatives, was established in May by an executive order of the Council of Ministers. Its workplan includes measures designed to boost women's political participation, such as addressing hate speech against women candidates and advocacy for an electoral code of conduct among political parties. In parallel, UNAMI held consultations in Anbar, Basrah, Muthanna, Najaf, Karbala', Dhi Qar, Wasit and Salah al-Din Governorates between 19 June and 22 August to promote women's participation in political and electoral processes, with the participation of local authorities, civil society representatives, former provincial council members and former parliamentary candidates. The consultations were aimed at supporting the Government's efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda.

6. Technical and political discussions were held during the reporting period to prepare for the conduct of the delayed Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections. On 30 May, the federal Supreme Court issued a ruling in which it held that the extension of the term of the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region was unconstitutional and affirmed the role of the federal Independent High Electoral Commission in organizing the regional parliamentary elections. On 18 July, in a letter addressed to the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Commission stated that it could organize and conduct parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq from 18 February 2024 onward. The Commission had issued a statement on 12 July in which it indicated that it had begun to update the voter registration list for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. On 3 August, the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq decreed 25 February 2024 as the new election date. On 13 September, the federal Supreme Court decided to postpone ruling on lawsuits filed by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and a member of the Sulaymaniyah Provincial Council regarding the constitutionality of specific provisions of the Kurdistan Region electoral law.

7. On 24 June, the Office of the Prime Minister published the summary of the first semi-annual report on the implementation of the government programme, which covers the period from December 2022 to June 2023. In the report, emphasis is placed on the achievements that have been made in the absence of a budget, utilizing available resources in line with the government's prerogatives. Key achievements in the period covered by the report include the completion or rehabilitation of health-care institutions and schools; providing services and engineering support in underserved areas; and introducing the National Education Strategy for 2022–2031. The report indicates that ministries were directed to resubmit major contracts for financial and legal review and ensure that ministers' senior staff acted impartially and had no affiliation with political parties. The report identifies economic reform as a priority, including the diversification of the revenue sources of Iraq through industrial and agricultural sector development. Other items highlighted in the report include the establishment of the Iraq Development Fund in order to align budgetary allocations with government priorities and improve the country's investment environment, as well as the proactive approach that Iraq was taking in fostering regional cooperation, stability and development initiatives, including the launch of the Development Road project, a transportation network that will connect the Gulf region to Türkiye and

Europe. On 7 August, the Iraq Development Fund Regulation (No. 3 of 2003) was published in the *Official Gazette*.

8. During the reporting period, a series of protests occurred in Baghdad and other governorates to condemn repeated Qur'an desecrations in Europe. On 28 June, the burning of the Qur'an by an Iraqi national residing in Sweden drew widespread condemnation from political and religious leaders, as well as armed actors. On 29 June, the leader of the Sadrist Movement, Muqtada al-Sadr, mobilized his supporters to demonstrate in front of the Embassy of Sweden in Baghdad, where they burned the rainbow flag symbolic of the LGBTIQI+ community. In demonstrations organized by other actors on that same day, protesters breached the compound of the Embassy of Sweden and burned the rainbow and Swedish flags. At another protest on 8 July in Karbala', the American and Israeli flags were burned.

9. On 20 July, the Iraqi individual involved in the June Qur'an-burning incident staged another protest in Stockholm, during which he stamped on the Qur'an and the Iraqi flag and mishandled photos of Muslim clerics. Talk had circulated on social media earlier in the day that such actions were being planned. Protesters again breached the Embassy of Sweden in Baghdad and ignited a fire. The Iraqi security forces made dozens of arrests. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq immediately condemned the protesters' actions, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden denounced the attack as a "serious violation" of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The Prime Minister chaired an emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers, which affirmed the Government's commitment to holding the perpetrators accountable and ensuring the security and safety of all diplomatic missions.

10. In further reaction to the 20 July incident, calls were issued on some social media platforms for demonstrations in Tahrir Square in Baghdad. On 21 July, as protests were ongoing in several governorates, reports emerged of a Danish ultranationalist group burning the Qur'an in front of the Embassy of Iraq in Copenhagen. In the evening of 21 July, hundreds of protesters gathered for several hours in Tahrir Square and attempted to reach the Embassy of Denmark, but they dispersed after security forces intervened, using tear gas. On 22 July, the Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Security Media Cell of the Office of the Prime Minister issued separate statements urging the international community to take a responsible stance and calling for calm.

11. The acts of desecration in June and July were met with strong condemnations from the Government of Iraq and political leaders. On 30 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden wrote to its Iraqi counterpart expressing "its strong rejection of such anti-Islamic actions". On 22 July, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark condemned the events that had occurred in Copenhagen. On 20 July, the Prime Minister of Iraq ordered the expulsion of the Ambassador of Sweden and recalled the Chargé d'affaires of Iraq from Stockholm, while the Department of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Regional Government announced that it was suspending its mission in Sweden.

12. On 29 June, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani raised the issue of the desecration of the Qur'an in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General, stressing that freedom of speech could not justify such actions and calling on the United Nations to take "effective steps" in response. On 21 July, the Secretary-General responded by letter to Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani. In his letter, the Secretary-General condemned the acts of intolerance, violence and Islamophobia that had occurred and noted that the United Nations is determined to fully implement Human Rights Council resolution [53/1](#) on countering religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

13. On 24, 25 and 26 July, the President and Prime Minister met separately with representatives of diplomatic missions. They condemned the desecration of the Qur'an and reaffirmed the commitment of Iraq to protect diplomatic missions. On 31 July, the Minister for Foreign Affairs participated in an extraordinary virtual ministerial-level meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, during which he reiterated the calls made by the Government of Iraq for international resolutions on respect for religion and religious symbols. The Organization issued a resolution renewing its condemnation of the incidents that reflected the proposals of Iraq.

14. Iraqi leaders remained actively engaged in responding to the challenges posed by climate change and water scarcity. The President met with the Minister of Water Resources on 28 May, 25 June and 31 July, while the Prime Minister met with the Minister of Water Resources on 28 May and chaired the third meeting of the Supreme Water Committee on 2 August. In their discussions, the participants emphasized the need to negotiate water-sharing agreements with neighbouring countries and adopt a national plan for water resources management. The Ministry of the Environment announced the adoption of new measures to reduce environmental pollution on 14 June, having launched a related comprehensive strategy on World Environment Day on 5 June.

15. Meanwhile, the Government contended with a growing electricity crisis in Iraq. On 29 May, the President met the Minister of Electricity, and on 10 July, the Prime Minister met with officials from the Ministries of Electricity and Oil. The ongoing power shortages were linked to Iraqi payments for Iranian gas, which have been stalled owing to the sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United States of America. The relevant authorities were instructed to explore alternative solutions. On 11 July, the Prime Minister announced that Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran had reached an agreement under which the import of Iranian gas would resume in exchange for Iraqi crude oil. The electricity shortages triggered protests in Baghdad on 14 July, after an armed group calling itself Ashab al-Kahf (People of the Cave) called, on 9 July, for protests outside the Embassy of the United States to demand the release of funds needed to pay outstanding fees for Iranian gas. Protesters reportedly attempted to breach the International Zone but withdrew after Iraqi security forces intervened.

16. On 27 July, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers issued a circular clarifying the meaning of the term "gender" and instructing that, in official documents, the term is to be followed by the words "man and woman" placed in parentheses. The circular was issued as several national and local governmental institutions, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, disseminated instructions defining the term or curtailing its use.

17. On 8 August, the Communication and Media Commission, the media regulatory authority of Iraq, issued instructions prohibiting the use of the terms "gender" and "homosexuality". On 15 August, the Council of Representatives completed the first reading of a draft amendment to the Anti-Prostitution Law (No. 8 of 1988), by which the law is renamed the Anti-Prostitution and Homosexuality Law. Under the proposed amendment, homosexual relationships are criminalized and anyone convicted of this specific offence is subject to the death penalty or life imprisonment.

18. On 3 July, the 2013 presidential decree appointing Cardinal Louis Raphaël Sako as the head of Chaldean Church inside and outside Iraq, as well as the official in charge of Church endowments, was revoked. Cardinal Sako objected to the revocation of the decree and relocated from Baghdad to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on 21 July. Mr. Rashid emphasized, including in diplomatic meetings held in Iraq on 25 and 26 July, that the decree had been revoked for technical and legal reasons. On 1 August,

in an open letter to Mr. Rashid, Cardinal Sako rejected any interim measure by the Presidency short of fully reinstating the appointment decree and noted that he intended to remain in Erbil until the tenure of Mr. Rashid had ended if the decree is not reinstated.

19. On 5 August, the Prime Minister addressed the National Conference for Youth Dialogue held in Baghdad. He highlighted the efforts of Iraq, which has one of the world's youngest populations, to capitalize on its youth, including by promoting their engagement in the private sector. On International Youth Day, 12 August, the Council of Ministers held an extraordinary session to discuss the outcome of the conference, during which it decided to establish a Higher Council for Youth, chaired by the Prime Minister.

## **B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil**

20. The federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments continued to engage in dialogue on outstanding issues, including revenue-sharing and the draft federal hydrocarbon law. On 9 and 10 June, the Council of Representatives voted on provisions of the draft budget law related to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The vote followed extensive negotiations over amendments that had been introduced by the parliamentary finance committee on 25 May and denounced by the Kurdistan Regional Government as an infringement "upon the rights of the Kurdish people", the Constitution and prior agreements reached with the federal Government. On 13 June, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, welcomed the approval of the budget, while denouncing the approach to the Region exhibited during parliamentary debates.

21. Under the budget law, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will receive 12.67 per cent of the budget in return for fulfilling other obligations, including, inter alia, providing at least 400,000 barrels of oil per day to the State Oil Marketing Organization for export or domestic consumption. The budget also covers compensation for oil transportation and production costs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the handover of non-oil revenues to the State treasury and a commitment to settle dues between the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments from 2004 to 2022. Other provisions in the act stipulate that revenues derived from Kurdistan Region of Iraq oilfields must be deposited into a single bank account opened by the Ministry of Finance; outline a new dispute-resolution mechanism; and commit the Kurdistan Regional Government to prioritizing payment of the salaries of the civil servants of the Region and the pensions of retirees and to disbursing the outstanding investment funds of the governorates of the Region. Under the act, the federal Prime Minister is authorized to take necessary actions should the Kurdistan Regional Government not fulfil these commitments.

22. On 22 June, the Cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government urged the federal Government to reconsider amendments made to the federal budget law. The Kurdistan Regional Government sent several delegations to Baghdad in July and August to discuss implementation of the budget. On 1 August, the Prime Minister affirmed the commitment by all parties to implementing the political agreement with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and announced that the federal Government had begun disbursing to the Region a portion of its share of the budget. He also announced that the federal Ministry of Oil had been receiving oil from the Region. In June and in July, the federal Government transferred 400 billion Iraqi dinars to the Region, thereby contributing to retroactive payment of amounts owed to civil servants. On 7 August, the federal Supreme Court ruled on an appeal filed by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government against specific provisions of the Federal Budget Law, including provisions relating to the obligations and entitlements of the

Kurdistan Region of Iraq, most notably the supply of oil to the federal Government, financial compensation for oil production and transportation costs in the Region, and the routing of non-oil revenues to the State treasury. In its ruling, the Court found the modalities of a dispute resolution mechanism to be unconstitutional, but it dismissed several other aspects of the appeal.

23. Meanwhile, the Iraq-Türkiye pipeline from Kirkuk to the port of Ceyhan in Türkiye remained closed. Türkiye has informed Iraq of inspections and ongoing repair of the pipeline, which was damaged by the earthquake that struck the area on 6 February. The two sides continued to hold meetings in order to discuss other outstanding issues pertaining to their cooperation on the pipeline.

### **C. Security situation**

24. Da'esh continued to conduct asymmetric attacks, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates, while Iraqi security forces continued counter-terrorism operations in response to Da'esh activity. From 18 May to 19 August, 69 attacks were attributed to Da'esh, most of which targeted Iraqi security forces. A total of 178 attacks were attributed to Da'esh during the first half of 2023, compared with 526 attacks during the first half of 2022. That figure was the lowest reported over a six-month period since Iraq declared victory over Da'esh in December 2017, and is indicative of the overall decline in attacks attributed to the group.

25. Attacks against convoys belonging to Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da'esh coalition continued sporadically, with four attacks reported between 18 May and 19 August in Babil and Qadisiyah Governorates. No casualties were reported as a result of those attacks, all of which were claimed by the Ashab al-Kahf group.

26. Throughout the reporting period, the Ministry of Defence of Türkiye reported ongoing ground and air operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in northern Iraq, including in Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. On 24 May, the Minister of National Defence of Türkiye, addressing a conference in his country, stated that "the fight against terrorism in northern Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic continues".

27. Türkiye has previously reiterated that it has been exercising its "inherent right of self-defence, as outlined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations". In addition, Türkiye has stressed that the "utmost sensitivity and attention is accorded to protect the properties and lives of the civilian population and the environment". Iraq has previously called for an end to "Turkish incursions and violations of Iraqi sovereignty" and has reiterated its willingness to cooperate with Türkiye with a view to "finding common ground and arriving at peaceful solutions".

28. On 3 July, the Governor of Sulaymaniyah announced that the Government of Türkiye had extended its flight ban on Sulaymaniyah International Airport. The ban, which was first announced on 3 April 2023, was extended until 3 January 2024. On 5 April, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye stated that the decision was taken owing to "infiltration [...] into the airport" by PKK.

### **D. Regional and international developments**

29. The Government of Iraq continued to strengthen bilateral cooperation with regional and international partners, with a focus on bolstering economic ties, regional economic integration and foreign investment. Key aspects of the policy include

promoting joint action to address climate change, water scarcity, terrorism and drug trafficking. The Government continued its efforts to maintain balanced regional and international relations, while underlining the need to respect the sovereignty of Iraq.

30. On 17 May, following the decision of the League of Arab States (LAS) to reinstate the Syrian Arab Republic as a member the League, the Minister for Foreign Affairs participated in the LAS ministerial-level meeting in Jeddah. He also met with his Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts in the context of their countries' tripartite cooperation framework. Bilateral economic cooperation was a topic of discussion when the Prime Minister visited Cairo on 12 and 13 June, and when the Prime Minister of Jordan visited Baghdad on 25 July.

31. On 19 May, the Prime Minister attended the LAS summit in Jeddah, which was also attended by the President of the Syrian Arab Republic. At the summit, he noted that the return of the Syrian Arab Republic to the League was a crucial step towards regional stability. On the same day, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and his Saudi counterpart co-chaired a meeting of the Iraqi-Saudi political, security and military committee, with a particular focus on countering illegal narcotics. On 4 June, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic met with the three presidencies and with his Iraqi counterpart in Baghdad. On 16 July, the Prime Minister visited Damascus, where he met with the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and reiterated that Iraq supported lifting the sanctions imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic, in order to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

32. On 27 May, the Prime Minister launched the Development Road project during a conference in Baghdad that was attended by ministers of transport, or their representatives, from neighbouring States and the Gulf States, as well as by representatives of the European Union and the World Bank. The Prime Minister said that the project's objective was to establish a transportation network spanning 1,200 km of interconnected roads and railways, contributing to sustainable growth, economic diversification, the fight against climate change and enhanced regional cooperation.

33. On 14 July, the Prime Minister received a telephone call from the President of Türkiye. The focus of their conversation was enhancing economic partnerships and regional security and stability.

34. On 8 June, the Minister for Foreign Affairs led a delegation to Riyadh to participate in a ministerial meeting of the international counter-Da'esh coalition. In his address, he highlighted the strong cooperation of Iraq with the coalition and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and stressed the efforts made by the Government of Iraq to combat terrorism, enhance stability in the liberated areas, facilitate the return of displaced persons and repatriate Iraqi citizens from Hawl camp in the Syrian Arab Republic, while urging other States to repatriate their citizens.

35. On 15 June, the Prime Minister received the Amir of Qatar in Baghdad, and the Governments of Iraq and Qatar signed a joint declaration of intent for wide-ranging cooperation, as well as memorandums of understanding relating to various fields, including energy and investment cooperation.

36. On 19 and 20 June, the President and the Prime Minister met separately with a delegation led by the head of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran and discussed various issues with them, including the security and stability of Iraq.

37. On 30 July, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait visited Baghdad and met with the three presidencies and his Iraqi counterpart. The discussions were focused on reaching a definitive settlement in relation to the demarcation of the countries' maritime border, with Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials expressing their commitment to

resolving the issue. On 4 September, the federal Supreme Court of Iraq ruled that Law No. 42 of 2013, ratifying the agreement between the Governments Iraq and Kuwait concerning regulation of maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah, was constitutional. Prior to that, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations, in identical letters dated 22 August 2023 addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (A/77/1013-S/2023/651), had reaffirmed the sovereign rights of Iraq in the exclusive economic zone of the Durrah field. On 11 September, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) called on Iraq to abide by the 2012 maritime navigation agreement concluded by Iraq and Kuwait and Security Council resolution 833 (1993), which was adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, and to complete border demarcation with Kuwait. On 17 September, the GCC countries reiterated their call on Iraq to "take serious and urgent steps to address the negative repercussions" arising from the decision of the federal Supreme Court.

38. On 7 and 8 August, an Iraqi delegation led by the Minister of Defence travelled to Washington, D.C., to participate in the inaugural session of the joint security cooperation dialogue between Iraq and the United States of America. In a joint statement, the two sides noted that discussions had focused on bilateral security cooperation in accordance with the 2008 strategic framework agreement and as a part of a comprehensive partnership. Some of the issues discussed included cooperation in the fight against Da'esh, the role of the international counter-Da'esh coalition and building the capacities of the Iraqi security forces, including the Peshmerga. Both sides highlighted a shared commitment to regional stability.

39. On 22 and 23 August, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Türkiye visited Baghdad and met with his Iraqi counterpart, the three presidencies, the President of the Supreme Judicial Council and political leaders. On 24 August, he visited Erbil and met with the President and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and other political leaders. The discussions centred on, inter alia, bilateral economic and trade relations, the security situation and water issues.

### **III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team**

#### **A. Political activities**

40. Throughout the reporting period, the UNAMI leadership met with government officials, political parties, the judiciary and civil society organizations in different parts of the country, encouraging constructive dialogue among the various Iraqi actors in support of stability, security and development.

41. The Special Representative and the Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance engaged extensively with the Independent High Electoral Commission and other electoral stakeholders, discussing ongoing United Nations advice and assistance in support of the upcoming elections. In the light of the protracted constitutional vacuum, they cautioned against further delaying parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. On 2 August, in an address to the Women's Political Forum in Baghdad, the Deputy Special Representative highlighted that the upcoming provincial council elections were an opportunity to promote women's electoral participation.

42. On 3 August, the Special Representative participated in events in Baghdad and Erbil to commemorate the crimes committed by Da'esh against the Yazidi community, while the Deputy Special Representative addressed a similar event in Baghdad on



1 August. They called on all parties to contribute to a constructive environment on the ground, in order to facilitate returns and address the issue of accountability. In addition to the statements delivered by the Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative, the Mission engaged in community consultations and broader advocacy efforts in order to accelerate the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement, with the long overdue appointment of a temporary mayor for Sinjar as the next essential step in the implementation process.

43. On 13 August, following a meeting with civil society representatives, the Special Representative, in response to the debate surrounding the use of such terms as “gender” and “women’s empowerment”, issued a statement in which she underlined that “disinformation or attempts to ban universally accepted terms are not helping Iraq to achieve stability and prosperity”. In addition, she noted that the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of Iraq and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights apply to all Iraqis.

44. In line with the Mission’s mandate, the Special Representative conducted visits to Türkiye and Iran. On 4 and 5 July, she met in Ankara with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Türkiye and other officials. From 29 to 31 July, the Special Representative visited Tehran to meet with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and other officials. In meetings with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs for Bilateral Affairs of Iraq and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, held on 2 and 7 August respectively, the Deputy Special Representative offered the support of UNAMI for negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait on the demarcation of their maritime border.

45. On 12 June, the Special Representative addressed an event in Baghdad on the vision of Iraq for Hawl camp. The event was chaired by the National Security Adviser and attended by government officials and members of the diplomatic community. In her speech, the Special Representative encouraged strong coordination between all governmental stakeholders to repatriate Iraqi citizens from the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic and announced that a renewed “all-of-United Nations” plan was in the making to support the endeavours of the Government in that regard. In addition, she called on the States of the international community to continue supporting Iraq, including by repatriating their own nationals.

46. The Mission continued to keep climate change on the political agenda, complementing the technical advice and support provided by the United Nations country team. On 5 June, the Deputy Special Representative participated in a panel discussion held in Baghdad on climate change and the role of civil society, during which the importance of joint action by the government and by non-governmental and international organizations in implementing adaptation and mitigation measures was emphasized.

## **B. Electoral assistance**

47. UNAMI continued its electoral assistance activities as the Independent High Electoral Commission proceeded with preparations for provincial council elections, which are scheduled to be held on 18 December 2023.

48. On 11 June, the Commission addressed a letter to the Special Representative requesting support in various areas, including election technology, electoral operations, legal affairs, voter education and stakeholder engagement. UNAMI, in consultation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, is developing a support package to enhance United Nations electoral assistance activities. On 5 July, the Deputy Special Representative briefed the

diplomatic community in Iraq on electoral developments and encouraged continued international support for electoral processes in Iraq.

49. Technical preparations for the provincial council elections progressed in accordance with the electoral timeline, including the registration of political entities, submission of candidate lists and updating of biometric voter registration records. In addition, the Commission developed, with the support of UNAMI, technical specifications for the procurement of electoral materials and services, including ballot papers, election kits, cameras and external auditing of information technology. The tender processes for these electoral materials and services are ongoing.

50. Between May and June 2023, UNAMI, with support from the United Nations Office for Project Services, conducted 16 workshops in Baghdad, Basrah, Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah Governorates for Commission staff and representatives of civil society organizations, with a view to enhancing coordination between them. Some of the themes covered were voter registration, monitoring and evaluation, electoral procedures, election security and information technology for election results management.

51. UNAMI continued to support the efforts of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Independent High Electoral Commission to move forward with the Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections. On 15 June, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq held a meeting with the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission that was attended by the Special Representative to discuss the requirements for holding parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In that connection, UNAMI, at the request of the Commission, is identifying potential forms of support that it can provide to the Commission.

### **C. Human rights and rule of law developments and activities**

52. From 1 April to 31 August, UNAMI documented 34 incidents resulting in at least 59 civilian casualties (24 dead, including 7 children and 1 woman, and 35 injured, including 8 children and 4 women). The majority of civilian casualties were caused by explosive remnants of war, followed by improvised explosive devices, small arms fire and air attacks.

53. In May, UNAMI documented the execution of 10 male adult prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offences under article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Law (No. 13 of 2005) in Nasiriyah Central Prison and the Adalah complex prison. Another four prisoners were executed in July.

54. From 6 to 9 August, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted an official mission to Iraq. In Baghdad, Basrah and Erbil, he met senior government, parliamentary and judicial officials, as well as civil society representatives, including women human rights defenders, environmental activists, journalists, lawyers and artists. During his visit, the High Commissioner raised concerns about shrinking civic space and encouraged the Government to protect journalists, activists and human rights defenders from intimidation and interference. In addition, he welcomed the Government's commitment to address the challenges of climate change and highlighted the need for legislative and policy reform, capacity-building and awareness-raising in this area. The High Commissioner also stated that the terms "gender" and "women's empowerment" are not in contradiction with any culture, religion or tradition, and he highlighted the need for more women in decision-making positions and measures to address violence against women. Among other key messages, he urged the Government to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances following its recent visit to Iraq and called on the Government to declare a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

55. During the reporting period, the country task force on monitoring and reporting grave violations against children in armed conflict verified 23 grave violations against 19 children (14 boys and 5 girls), including the killing of 6 boys and 1 girl and the maiming of 7 boys and 1 girl by explosive remnants of war; the abduction of and the commission of acts of sexual violence against 3 girls by Da'esh; the abduction of 1 boy by PKK; and one attack against a school committed by unknown perpetrators.

56. On 26 June, the task force delivered a training session on child protection to 40 members of the Popular Mobilization Forces in support of the action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children and to institutionalize child protection in Iraq. Joint engagement and training provided by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the establishment on 20 June of a human rights directorate within the Popular Mobilization Forces, with a view to promoting child protection and human rights within the entity.

57. In May and June, UNAMI engaged with the judiciary to discuss charges brought against journalists and civil society actors that have led to self-censorship on social media platforms.

58. On 23 and 24 June, UNAMI and the Women Journalists' Forum organized a two-day training session in Basrah, attended by 20 women, that was aimed at developing the capacities of women journalists to integrate human rights in their reporting. On 14 and 15 July, a similar training session in Najaf was attended by 23 women.

59. On 15, 17 and 22 May, three round tables were held in Erbil that were attended by 45 participants, including 37 Asayish (Kurdistan Region security officers), five general prosecutors and three investigative judges. The round tables were aimed at promoting and enhancing knowledge of the rights of detainees and defendants, including due process rights, under Iraqi and international law.

60. During May and June, UNAMI organized three workshops in Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah that were attended by 53 officials (19 women and 34 men) from the Kurdistan Regional Government. The aim of the workshops was to enhance coordination and promote accountability measures for acts of violence against women in domestic settings. Participants agreed to establish a coordination mechanism with government entities to enhance communication and targeted action to address violence against women.

61. On 19 June, to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Mission held an event in Erbil that was attended by 34 participants (25 women and 9 men) from civil society, government and the international community to highlight the wider impact of the use of sexual violence by Da'esh in Iraq against women from the Christian, Shabak, Turkmen and Yazidi communities, as well as the experiences of Sunni Arab women who were forcibly married to Da'esh fighters, and to identify sustainable programming to support survivors.

62. On 20 June, UNAMI held a dialogue on the role of the media, including social media, in countering hate speech in Iraq. The event brought together 43 participants representing the Office of the Prime Minister, the High Judicial Council, the Ministry of Interior, the Commission on Media and Communications, the High Commission for Human Rights, a diverse array of religious and ethnic groups, and civil society activists. The event was organized to commemorate the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, with a focus on the human rights 75 initiative. In her remarks, the Special Representative emphasized that "there are more than words at stake. No matter the group being subjected to inflammatory and hateful messaging". On 7 June, a group of 14 young lawyers attended an event in Kirkuk to promote awareness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

63. UNAMI organized several events in the framework of the human rights 75 initiative, including one in Erbil on 25 July on diversity as a tool to promote and protect human rights, with a focus on minority rights. The 28 participants (15 men and 13 women) of diverse ethno-religious backgrounds came from government and civil society organizations. The participants discussed key provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights relating to minority rights and strategies to strengthen collaboration among all stakeholders to promote and protect minority rights in Iraq.

64. On 23 July, UNAMI, together with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the National Security Advisor, UNICEF and other international organizations, conducted a mission to the Jad'ah 1 rehabilitation centre to assess the situation and services being provided to children returning from Hawl camp in the Syrian Arab Republic.

65. On 7 and 14 August, UNAMI and TARKIB, a local non-governmental organization (NGO), organized a collaborative workshop for 18 Iraqi artists on thematic art projects on women's rights, climate change and water scarcity, and the perspectives of the post-2003 generation. The workshop was aimed at raising awareness on pressing issues using a human rights-based perspective as part of the human rights 75 initiative.

66. On 5 July, UNAMI organized a round table in Erbil on civic space that was attended by 31 representatives (5 women and 26 men) of the security services and civil society, including journalists, activists and representatives of NGOs. The event was part of an initiative to offer a platform for dialogue between security forces and civil society in order to promote the right to freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly.

#### **D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development**

67. Significant progress has been made in strengthening coherence across humanitarian and development pillars, as well as in relation to durable solutions, and supporting the authorities in delivering progress under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to work with the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments towards finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons and returnees and advancing development efforts, while building government capacity to lead this transition. Meanwhile, funding shortfalls remain a challenge and are affecting the response to remaining critical humanitarian needs.

68. In August 2023, approximately 1.15 million persons remained internally displaced in Iraq, whereas 4.83 million displaced Iraqis have returned to their areas of origin since April 2015. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) identified 317 locations in seven governorates as areas without any returns, largely because of security concerns and destruction of residences. Since May 2021, a total of 1,383 households consisting of 5,565 individuals (3,237 women and 2,328 men) have relocated from Hawl camp to Jad'ah 1 centre. Of that number, 839 households (61 per cent) consisting of 3,364 individuals (1,924 women and 1,440 men) have since left the centre and returned to their areas of origin or other areas in Iraq. IOM continues to support the return process from Jad'ah 1 centre and respond to an increase in protection threats at the centre by engaging with government representatives, protection actors, centre management and tribal networks.

69. The World Health Organization (WHO) continued its enhanced focus on strengthening preparedness for health security. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Health and WHO continued to capitalize on gains from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response to build a more resilient health system. WHO also

supported the provision of resilient primary health-care services for host communities, internally displaced persons and refugees.

70. The Mine Action Service cleared 578,009 m<sup>2</sup> of explosive ordnance in Basrah and Ninawa Governorates. Ongoing advocacy by the Service contributed to the decision taken in June by the Government of Iraq to allocate budgetary funding to operational demining, which is indispensable to ensuring sustained survey and clearance efforts. The Service also continued to build the capacities of the Ministry of the Interior to locate and render safe explosive devices, delivering train-the-trainer courses to 3 women and 19 men.

71. UNDP, in coordination with the Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, as well as the United Nations country team, supported the ongoing drafting of the Sustainable Development Goals insight report of Iraq ahead of the country's participation in the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September. The report is based on the Iraq Vision 2030 plan, with emphases on climate change, social protection, poverty eradication and food security.

72. The Mission and the United Nations country team continued to collaborate with the Government of Iraq to address climate and environmental challenges. They supported the agricultural sector through the promotion of climate-smart practices and the restoration of marshlands and other ecosystems. The United Nations also supported populations displaced as a result of climate change by contributing to strengthening social protection mechanisms and access to services, as well as to the development of sustainable livelihoods.

73. On 22 May, in line with the commitment to plant 5 million trees that the Prime Minister made at the climate conference held on 12 March in Basrah, the World Food Programme (WFP) launched a mangrove nursery in Basrah with the participation of youth and local fishermen. Representatives of the Government of Iraq and of the international community, including the Special Representative, attended the event. In addition, WFP supported water management initiatives by Iraq, including by assisting the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ra'id Centre for Smart Irrigation Techniques in evidence-gathering and research on water scarcity, and to promote modern irrigation techniques.

74. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued implementing projects to build community resilience, including for returnees and those affected by climate change and water scarcity. FAO applied various approaches in that regard, including anticipatory action, farmer business schools, climate-smart agriculture, on-farm water management and small agribusiness management. In addition, FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture worked to strengthen veterinary services and increase the productivity and sustainability of the agricultural sector. On 15 June, FAO launched a digital application that provides farmers with essential agricultural information.

75. On 3 June, the Ministry of Trade, as part of its social security reform project, which is being implemented with WFP support, launched a digital initiative to reform the public distribution system in Najaf Governorate. The Ministry plans to roll out this initiative nationwide. In addition, WFP conducted capacity-building activities to ensure that Ministry staff are fully trained and capable of leading the reform process.

76. In June, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched the "Victims' voices, silencing terrorism" campaign, featuring stories of victims' resilience. The campaign helped provide an alternative narrative to the narrative of terrorist groups, by raising awareness of the resilience of victims of terrorism and the importance of having their voices heard through a message of peace. UNODC and

UNDP supported the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Office of Iraq. Their supported helped the Office join the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, of which it became a member on 5 July. Membership of the Egmont Group will enable the Office to better secure communication channels with other financial investigation units.

77. In May and June, UNDP conducted specialized training for lawyers, investigators and judges, as well as other representatives of State bodies, to enhance their capacity to prevent and investigate corruption and to litigate (lawyers) and adjudicate (judges) corruption cases.

78. In June, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) secured the approval of the Ministry of Health for a family planning costed action plan, and it developed a range of thematic policy briefs, including on sexual and reproductive health rights. Between January and June, UNFPA sensitized 6,400 people on the rights of persons with disabilities in Ninawa Governorate, training young persons in order to improve their skills, economic prospects and social inclusion. In June, UNFPA presented inclusive educational procedures for adolescents and young persons with disabilities to youth centres in Ninawa Governorate and the Ministry of Youth and Sport. In addition, UNFPA provided vocational training equipment to youth centres in Basrah, Ninawa and Qadisiyah Governorates. The Fund also supported the Government of Iraq in finalizing the national population policy, which was launched in June and is aimed at bolstering national interventions on overpopulation and supporting evidence-based interventions.

79. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development supported the modernization of Iraqi customs procedures by providing training to Ministry of Finance personnel as the first step in preparations for the establishment of an automated system for customs data.

80. During the reporting period, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provided training on the safety of journalists and related issues, including for 160 judges across Iraq, 86 officers of the Ministry of Interior and 184 journalists. In addition, UNESCO and the Kurdistan Regional Government agreed to establish a submechanism for journalist safety, leading to the formation of a specialized committee in July.

81. On 28 May, the joint steering committee of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations country team discussed the recommendations that emerged from the workshop on the review of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the period 2020–2024. The joint steering committee, which will oversee implementation of the Framework, emphasized the need for joint ownership of the implementation process. The Government and United Nations country team agreed to coordinate timelines and next steps in relation to the Framework for the period 2025–2029 and to consider the possibility of cost-sharing for the implementation of the Framework.

## **IV. Security and operational issues**

### **A. Update on security arrangements**

82. In order to enable United Nations operations, the Department of Safety and Security continued to carry out its monitoring activities, adjust security measures and contingency plans, liaise with host Government authorities and disseminate security advisories to inform staff of changes in the security environment.

83. The Department supported an average of 45 field missions per day across the country, all at risk levels assessed as medium or high, and it continued to ensure necessary security support for United Nations operations through close coordination with the host Government.

## **B. UNAMI facilities, logistics, aviation, financial and legal issues**

84. UNAMI completed the project to rehabilitate the Tigris riverfront adjoining the Mission's integrated compound in Baghdad, improving the riverfront environment while creating space for recreation.

85. A solar energy project is being executed in United Nations compounds in Baghdad, Erbil and Kirkuk. The project, which is aimed increasing the share of renewable energy to half of total consumption, is expected to be completed by December 2023. UNAMI has also partnered with UNICEF to upgrade wastewater treatment plants at those locations in order to make it possible to use wastewater for irrigation and technical purposes.

## **V. Observations**

86. I commend the Government of Iraq for the strong commitment expressed in its ministerial programme to improving public services, carrying out economic reforms and building confidence in the private sector. I hope that the passage of a budget law will enable the Government to transform these longstanding commitments into tangible improvements in the daily lives of all Iraqis.

87. The efforts of the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission to move forward in holding provincial council elections – the first since 2013 – are commendable. I reiterate the importance of enabling the Commission to organize the elections in an effective, orderly and timely manner, while ensuring that it retains its independence, integrity and professionalism in fulfilling its constitutional duty. UNAMI stands ready to provide support in accordance with its mandate. I also encourage the international community to remain engaged and continue supporting the Mission's work with regard to providing assistance for Iraqi electoral processes.

88. The decision to hold the delayed parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on 25 February 2024 is another positive development. The people of the Region have the right to periodically choose their representatives in the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region, duly elected in a credible, transparent and professionally managed electoral process. The United Nations stands ready to support the Commission in conducting these elections in a timely and orderly manner.

89. Constructive relations between the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments are essential to securing political and economic progress for Iraq. I again encourage both sides to engage in an institutionalized and structured dialogue with a view to addressing remaining issues on the basis of the Constitution, and for the sake of economic development and political stability in the whole of Iraq.

90. I welcome the constructive discussions between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Iraq that took place during the High Commissioner's recent visit to Iraq. I encourage the Government of Iraq to build on the outcome of the visit, including by addressing impunity, implementing the recommendations of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and empowering judicial institutions and the High Commission for Human Rights of Iraq to work effectively and independently. The willingness of Iraq to consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or

Degrading Treatment or Punishment is a welcome step. I encourage the Government to consider introducing a moratorium on executions in Iraq.

91. I note with concern the recent increase in disinformation in connection with attempts by State institutions to ban the use of universally accepted terms. Such attempts might negatively affect gender equality and lead to intimidation and harassment of women's rights activists. I call on all stakeholders to allow a respectful and informed debate to prevail.

92. Acts targeting religious symbols, such as the recent Qur'an burnings, exacerbate tensions and contribute to discrimination and radicalization. The United Nations system is determined to fully implement Human Rights Council resolution 53/1 on countering religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. I call on all sides to respect the right to freedom of religion, including symbols of religions, and the right of peaceful assembly. Political and religious leaders have a particularly important role in speaking out firmly against manifestations of religious hatred and in making it clear that peaceful dialogue is the best path to promoting mutual understanding and respect, including respect for diversity, which are essential building blocks for a cohesive and resilient society. I also recall that diplomatic premises are inviolable.

93. The United Nations remains ready to support the efforts of the Government of Iraq to repatriate its nationals from Hawl camp in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. In this context, I encourage the continuation of collaborative efforts between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq in respect of internal displacement, with Iraq assuming the leading role.

94. The United Nations reaffirms its support for addressing current humanitarian needs and achieving durable solutions for internally displaced persons. I encourage the Government of Iraq to ensure that all humanitarian needs are being met, including through funding allocations. I urge the international community to remain committed to supporting the development priorities of Iraq and its people.

95. To ensure the resilience of Iraq in the face of climate change and water scarcity, urgent assistance from the international community is imperative. I call for increased technical support to enhance Iraqi endeavours in mitigating and adapting to these challenges. While we recognize the transboundary nature of these challenges, there is also a pressing need to foster regional cooperation to collectively address climate change and water scarcity. I am pleased that UNAMI is providing assistance to the Government of Iraq in finding practical and sustainable solutions to these complex and pressing issues.

96. Finally, I would like to thank my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the United Nations staff in Iraq for their continued dedication to implementing the Organization's mandate in the country.