

UNAMI Herald

Volume 6, Issue 2

March — April 2019



Reviving public trust: A necessity



Sulaymanyah, 6 March 2019 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended the Sixth annual Sulaimani Forum: "Iraq and Its Neighbours: Toward a New Regional Order", held in Sulaymaniyah. Here is the text of her keynote address:

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the invitation to this forum, it was stated that there are many political and economic issues to be addressed in the aftermath of last year's federal and Kurdistan regional elections.

Very true indeed. One can certainly not deny that the road to well-deserved sustainable stability in Iraq will be long and far from easy.

There are so many issues to be resolved.

In this regard, I should begin by saying that I will speak candidly today. My comments aim to be both challenging and thought-provoking, so that we can attempt - honestly and constructively - to address some of the deep-rooted problems within Iraqi processes and institutions.

Only by focusing on these systemic concerns will it be possible to revive public trust in the government, to revive public trust in state institutions and to restore faith in the nation as a whole.

Clearly decades of conflict and economic hardships have caused deep scars in Iraqi society. Iraqis have sacrificed a lot. And also the more recent sectarian legacies, ethnic tensions and internal political strife have added to the distrust among the religious and ethnic groups, have added to the distrust between political leaders and their constituents.

At the same time, in this period of post-conflict recovery, Iraq finds itself at a critical juncture. Iraq finds itself on a path whereby realism and great determination will be necessary in facing the challenges ahead. And not only that. Political and societal will is a precondition, obvious ownership and engagement of all Iraqi components and communities will prove crucial. And it goes without saying that a sense of urgency to see and feel the need for a turn-around is essential.

However, to date, the government formation remains incomplete in both Baghdad and Erbil. Nine months and five months, respectively, after elections.

Political infighting and factional politics seem to be the rule. Parliamentary committees have yet to start their substantive work. Is it any surprise that the sense of public disillusionment remains high? Is it any surprise that people do not believe that the political process serves them or that it can bring about institution-

al change?

Can we shy away from the lack of viable and responsive institutions, from the lack of capacity to follow-up on important decisions, from the deadlock between ruling elites, from the sectarian militarism, from the fragmentation along ethnic or religious lines? No, I would say, as all of this continues to play out at the expense of the Iraqi people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The entire country feels proud when watching the Iraqi national football team play. At the same time, many people continue to tell me that they do not see how a national identity can go hand-in-hand with their other affiliations.

So, one big question is: how can we collectively promote a sense of pride and confidence in the country? After all, Iraq needs a renewed sense of patriotism to re-emerge stronger.

As divisions in the country remain an underlying problem, part of the solution must be to engage in sustained and meaningful national and community reconciliation to bridge the differences and grievances, to accept others and - where needed - to apologise to others, to respect each other's special history, to build social cohesion and thus to move towards a sense of national unity.

Within this context, political, community and religious leaders should play a central role to build tolerance and counter extremist ideologies. For leadership failures and the rise of violence are closely connected.

Community activists, including youth leaders, require much greater support than at present. The lack of meaningful participation by some minority groups is also of serious concern. And excluding women from the political process, is to ignore half of Iraq's potential, half of Iraq's talent and half of Iraq's energy. The country cannot afford to do that.

The good news is that last year major political parties, for the first time in national elections, did reflect upon the diversity of Iraq and the need for a national narrative. As a consequence, the sectarian divides of the past were replaced with cross-

Reviving public trust: A necessity *(continued)*



sectarian political alliances. However, half of the voting population decided not to exercise its democratic right, thereby sending a strong signal of a growing grassroots scepticism over whether politicians are able to meet the people's expectations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Hundreds of millions of dollars in aid and development-funding have poured into Iraq in recent years, but living conditions across much of the country remain shockingly poor.

Iraq is a country with a very substantial revenue from its hydrocarbons sector and yet many of its citizens live in poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and unemployment. How is that possible?

Part of the answer lies in corruption. Corruption is pervasive across all levels in Iraq. One shall not be allowed to unjustly enrich himself at the expense of another. Yet, it is happening in so many ways.

'Transparency International' reported that out of 200 countries, only 12 are more corrupt than Iraq. If the country is to retain and expand international investment and support this problem will need to be tackled urgently. Representatives of donor countries are continuously telling me that they are getting tired of fighting the Iraqi system for the privilege of helping the country. The fight against corruption will not be an easy one. But if there is any hope to revive public trust the interests of the Iraqi people and the nation as a whole should be placed above individual enrichment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Citizens call for tangible improvements in their everyday life. They ask for water that they can drink without fearing it will make them ill. They ask for having access to irrigation water for agriculture. They ask for reliable electricity supply so they do not have to use expensive and polluting generators. They

ask for a functioning garbage disposal system to keep their streets free of trash. They call for a developed economy that allows youth to find jobs. They call for a balanced distribution of revenues across the country. They call for proper education, for accountability, for justice.

Law-abiding citizens are looking for reassurances. A woman needs to feel safe going down a street, speaking her mind and dressing the way she wants. A writer needs to be reassured that his life is not threatened for airing his views in public. And parents need to know that their children can go to school in safety. These are the basic things in life.

And whether we like it or not, simmering anger easily swells. And a failure to act will inevitably lead to a new cycle of violence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Another major concern with regard to Iraq's security and stability relates to those armed groups operating outside state control, some of which have transitioned to little more than criminal gangs, expanding their economic and social influence throughout the country. For instance, and as we speak, Iraqi citizens are confronted at illegal checkpoints by armed men extorting their money. Displaced people returning to their homes are suddenly expected to pay so-called loyalty fees. Farmers in the fields are being forced to pay bribes or lose their livestock.

These practices are adding to the many hardships that returnees and other vulnerable populations are already experiencing on a daily basis. It is a very serious problem one cannot afford to ignore.

Resolute action against all this is of the greatest importance for a stable Iraq, for boosting the morale of its people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to domestic stability, Iraq

needs to promote regional security through expanded relations with its neighbours as well as others. And the ongoing sustained outreach to other states, rightly positioning itself as a reliable and capable partner, is the way forward indeed. A great piece of diplomacy. Iraq can be the stabilising factor in a turbulent region. Indeed, Iraq can be the bridge, the arena for regional conciliation.

At the same time, Iraq faces serious challenges in preventing its territory from being used as an arena for different competitions. It is imperative that Iraq be allowed to pursue its own national interests without outside interference. Putting an extra burden on Iraq is the last thing it needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I believe that the key to national recovery and progress is through building public trust and social cohesion, ensuring the delivery of public services, kickstarting the economy, tackling corruption and establishing state institutions that are fit for purpose, without delay.

To achieve this, a sustained, constructive dialogue among political factions, components and communities is desperately needed, placing national interests above partisan interests. And as I said: obvious ownership and engagement of all Iraqi components and communities will prove vital. Political and societal will - at all levels - is a precondition. Otherwise, the country risks leapfrogging from one crisis to another.

Continued support from the international community will be pivotal, too. I will therefore continue to encourage the international community to work alongside the United Nations to provide support to humanitarian, stabilization and development efforts.

The UN family remains strongly committed to assisting the Government of Iraq in all of these processes, in accordance with our mandate and in the interests of the Iraqi people.

Iraqi's of all components and affiliations live here since time immemorial. I sincerely hope that a tipping point will be reached where the people of Iraq, regardless of their ethnic, religious or political affiliation, commit to investing in a common destiny in an Iraq where peaceful coexistence is the norm, based on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

I am optimistic by nature, and I stand ready to serve. Iraq has immense opportunities and great potential. This beautiful country, with all its diversity, is truly close to my heart. Thank you.

In this edition ...

Films portray loss and human suffering as well as the resilience, beauty and strength of Iraqis, says UN Human Rights Chief in Iraq at the 3 x 3 Film Festival

Baghdad, 07 March 2019 – The United Nations in Iraq commended Iraqi filmmakers, directors, actors, musicians and artists for the production of twenty-four short films covering human rights issues in Iraq, as part of the 3 By 3 Film Festival held in Baghdad 3 to 5 March 2019. ... *More on page 28*

At IHEC Strategic Planning Workshop, DSRSG Walpole emphasizes the importance of forward planning for elections

Sulaymaniyah, 11 March 2019 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) Alice Walpole addressed on Sunday the opening of a strategic planning workshop attended by members of the Board of Commissioners and staff of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)... *More on page 6*



Humanitarian Community appeals for US\$701 million to reach 1.75 million Iraqis with assistance

Baghdad, 29 April 2019 - The humanitarian community in Iraq is appealing for US\$701 million this year to support 1.75 million highly vulnerable people, including a million internally displaced persons, struggling with the legacy of conflict and mass-displacement that engulfed the country from 2014 to 2017.

The 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan was launched at a conference on the return of displaced persons in Baghdad ... *More on page 42.*

“Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability” workshops kick off in Basra

Basra, 28 April 2019 – At a three-day workshop in Basra City, young Iraqi women and men from across the governorate voiced opinions, hopes, concerns and suggestions about their role in advancing peaceful coexistence and addressing the challenges in their communities. The event was the first in a series of workshops under the theme “Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability”, which are taking place in locations across in Iraq throughout 2019... *More on page 9*



Government of Iraq, UNITAD conclude first Sinjar mass grave exhumation in Kojo village

Baghdad, 21 March 2019 – UNITAD (United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL) announced this morning the completion of the first exhumation of a Yazidi mass grave in the Sinjar region, in the village of Kojo. UNITAD reports that the victims' remains and associated evidence have safely arrived at the Medico-Legal Directorate in Baghdad... *More on page 35.*



President of the Republic of Iraq receives UN Resident Coordinator, UN Women Representative following the signing of MoU on cooperation in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment

Baghdad, 17 April 2019 – H.E. President of the Republic of Iraq Mr. Barham Salih received on April 15, 2019 the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Marta Reudas, and UN Women Representative in Iraq Ms. Dina Zorba, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UN Women and the President's Office. The MoU provides a framework of cooperation in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment.... *More on page 26*

UNAMI Herald is published bi-monthly by the Public Information Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

PIO Director: Samir Ghattas
Editor-in-Chief: Ivan Djordjevic

Editorial Board: Samir Ghattas, Khalid Dahab, Ivan Djordjevic, Laila Shamji, Celia Thompson, Sarmad Al-Safy.

Photos: UNAMI PIO, UNHCR, UNCHR, UNICEF, IOM, OCHA, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, UNOPS, UN Habitat, UN Photo, UN Women, UNIDO, UNMAS, UNDP, WFP and as credited.

In the UNAMI Herald articles are sorted according to the topic and in a chronological order.

SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert attended Iraqi Martyr's Day commemoration held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 9 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today Iraqi Martyr's Day commemoration organized by the Al Hikma National Movement in Baghdad. Here is the text of the statement by the SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert at this event:

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to join you on this special day, the day of the 16th anniversary of the martyrdom of Ayatollah Muhammed Baqir al-Hakim.

We are gathered here to honour his memory first of all, the memory of Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, but also to honour the sacrifices of all martyrs of Iraq.

Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim was a true leader for many, a leader who dedicated his life to promoting unity, justice and equality in Iraq.

And he made the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice for an Iraq in which all Iraqis would be able to live without fear and oppression.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is of paramount importance to remember and not to forget and thus to reflect upon the life of Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, to learn and to ensure that his sacrifice was not in vain.

Following the military defeat of Da'esh Iraq finds itself at a critical juncture. And really, in this period of post-conflict recovery, the need for national unity goes (in a way) without saying.

A sense of pride and confidence is also justified. Iraq has great qualifications.



And with this in mind, a renewed sense of patriotism is not only possible but also necessary. It is necessary to re-emerge stronger.

Now the Iraqi people have overcome so many major challenges, they have overcome violence and conflicts.

However, the country is yet to achieve the dreams of the martyrs.

Divisions continue to remain as an underlying and defining challenge to Iraqi society and politics.

Though bridging differences and grievances will be the way forward, respecting and accepting each other's special history. And so, it is of great importance to work closely together to build tolerance and a peaceful co-existence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Iraq, with all its diversity, could be

serving as an example for many. And it can be done.

Reviving Iraq's glory will inspire its people regardless of their ethnic, religious or political affiliation. It will command world-wide respect.

A basic principle in life is that we need each other to be our best. Respect all. Accept all. And unite all. Do good to all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim is more than a figurehead. He is above all a great source of inspiration a man who inspires us to commit and to invest in a common destiny.

So let us not forget.

Let us remember.

Let us honour.

And let us continue.

Thank you.



At IHEC Strategic Planning Workshop, DSRSG Walpole emphasizes the importance of forward planning for elections



Sulaymaniyah, 11 March 2019 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) Alice Walpole addressed on Sunday the opening of a strategic planning workshop attended by members of the Board of Commissioners and staff of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). She welcomed efforts by the IHEC to collectively and systematically discuss and define its strategic direction for the next five years.

“In defining the future strategic direction of the institution, it is important to reflect and learn from the lessons of

previous experiences, and to formulate goals and objectives that are responsive to the demands of electoral stakeholders,” the DSRSG said. She highlighted areas for close consideration during the workshop, including the integrity of the voter registry, the use of election technologies, the importance of public outreach and the need for inclusive participation, particularly by women, minority communities and those displaced from their areas of origin.

“The UN and other international partners are beside you in developing and implementing this strategic plan. I encourage the Commission to continue

to maximize the opportunities of having such experienced partners,” the DSRSG added.

In his remarks, IHEC Chairman Maan Al-Hetawi recalled that this is the third strategic plan that IHEC has prepared. He underlined IHEC’s resolve to develop its capacities, to improve electoral processes and to continue efforts in building the trust of electoral stakeholders. He also expressed appreciation for the continued engagement of UN-AMI, UNDP and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) which all provided support to the workshop. In a press conference after the opening of the workshop, Chairman Maan confirmed that the IHEC Board of Commissioners had proposed 16 November 2019 to the Council of Representatives as the provisional date for Provincial Council elections.



On a visit to Fallujah, UNAMI urges women and youth to register to vote in provincial elections

Fallujah, 18 April 2019 – Iraqi voters have an opportunity to make their voices heard in upcoming provincial elections, but they risk missing that opportunity altogether if they do not register now, the Deputy Special Representative (DSRSG) for Iraq of the United

Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, said today after touring a number of voter registration centres in Fallujah in Anbar Governorate. She was accompanied by IHEC officials.

Ms. Walpole, whose office in the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

coordinates UN advice and technical support for the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), commended the professionalism of the voter registration centre staff and the smooth process but expressed dismay at the low enthusiasm for registration, and urged in particular women and youth in Anbar to ensure that they are able to exercise their right when election day comes.

“I’m a bit disappointed with the numbers of citizens who are registering, especially women and young people. People may not realise that they have to get themselves onto the voter register now if they wish to participate in elections later this year,” Ms. Walpole said. “We need to reflect more on how to target that population that has not yet registered to vote. The process itself has been much simplified and is very straightforward,” she added.

In addition to the tour of the Voter Registration Centres (VRCs), the Deputy



On a visit to Fallujah, UNAMI urges women and youth to register to vote in provincial elections *(continued)*

Special Representative called on the Mayor of Fallujah City, Mr. Issa Sayer Al-Issawi, and local tribal leaders.

In preparation for the forthcoming provincial council elections, IHEC is conducting a voter registration update (VRU) to give an opportunity for all eligible voters to check and update their voter registration records. There are 906 VRCs in the 15 governorates that are not incorporated into regions and, in addition to static VRC locations, IHEC also sends mobile teams to areas of difficult access and displaced camps. As of mid-April 2019, IHEC reports indicate that the cumulative total of voters with biometric registration accounts for 51 percent of the total voters. Comparatively, Anbar has one of the lowest biometric registration rate so far: only 43 percent of the total number of eligible voters.

"I think that it is extremely important in a country like Iraq, where so many voices have been forcibly silenced in the past, that people take the opportunity to choose their representatives; registering now will ensure they can participate in elections as and when they come up," Ms. Walpole said.

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IHEC sets up voter registration centres in camps to enable IDPs to register to vote in provincial elections

Esyan Camp, Duhok, 24 April 2019 – Although the Kurdistan Region will not be participating in Iraq's upcoming provincial council elections, those Iraqi citizens who have been displaced into

the Kurdistan Region from elsewhere in the country by terrorism and recent conflict will nonetheless get an opportunity to cast their ballots as though they were in their places of origin - but

this can only be achieved if they register now while they still have the opportunity.

On 24 April 2019, the Deputy Special Representative (DSRSG) for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, visited mobile voter registration centres (VRCs) in Shariya and Esyan camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Duhok governorate in the Kurdistan Region to experience firsthand the ongoing IDP registration process, listen to suggestions and concerns, and understand better how the United Nations can assist. She also paid a call on the Independent High Electoral Commission's Director for Duhok province, Mr Yousef Barwari, and his team to discuss some of the challenges facing IHEC in providing a registration service to Duhok's huge



IHEC sets up voter registration centres in camps ... (continued)

IDP population (around 240,000 eligible voters). Mr Barwari accompanied Ms Walpole on her visit to the Esyan voter registration centre.

Ms. Walpole, whose office in the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) coordinates UN advice and technical support for the Iraq Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), commended the professionalism of all the IHEC staff she met, some of whom are delivering mobile registration services in very remote areas. She urged all eligible IDPs to register to ensure that their voice is heard.

“If you register now, you can vote when the elections come. If you don’t, you risk not making your voice heard”, Ms. Walpole said.

She discussed with IHEC’s local media outreach team and the Esyan and Shariya camp managers how best to announce and promote the registration process to camp residents. There was a widespread view that the registration period need to be extended to ensure

maximum participation.

In preparation for the forthcoming provincial elections, IHEC is conducting a voter registration update to give an opportunity for all eligible voters to check and update their voter registra-

tion records. There are 906 VRCs in the 15 governorates that are not incorporated into regions and, in addition to static VRC locations, IHEC also sends mobile teams to less accessible locations, such as IDP camps.



Reconciliation

Workshop on roles to strengthen social cohesion held in Fallujah

Fallujah, 27 March 2019 – UNDP Integrated Reconciliation Project in Iraq and Local Peace Committee in Fallujah conducted its first public session with 40 religious leaders on roles to strengthen social cohesion.



First forum of young media professionals held at Al Anbar University

Baghdad, 09 April 2019 - UNDP Integrated Reconciliation project has launched the first forum of Young Media professionals in Al Anbar University to hear and support on the role of the young professionals and the media in consolidating community cohesion and the use of news in rejecting intellectual extremism and promoting community peace. The Forum was a success with hundreds of attendees of media students and teachers at Anbar University, professionals and journalists, representatives of satellite channels and news agencies.



Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate – Kirkuk Branch hosts media conference on coexistence and civil peace in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 22 April 2019 - On 20 April, the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate – Kirkuk Branch hosted a workshop on the role of media in promoting coexistence and civil peace among different communities in Kirkuk. The event was attended by journalists, media professionals, academics, intellectuals representing all communities, Iraqi Turkmen Front and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan politicians.

Mr. Mohammed Daghistani, President of the Kirkuk Branch of the Syndicate highlighted the role of the media in promoting democratic principles, freedom of opinion and respect for diversity. Speakers recalled the role and responsibility of media to report events avoiding politicization, overcoming personal views, and working in the interest of the community. The use of different languages in the media was commended as a means to bridge differences.

It was emphasised that media, as well

as school texts, are significant in recognising and respecting the history of different communities, prepare for coexistence and highlight the richness of the Kirkuk social fabric. In this regard, speakers emphasised the need to teach

and maintain the principle of peaceful coexistence through new generations. The conference marked a positive step in Kirkuk's peaceful coexistence and highlighted new goals of cooperation and the way forward.



“Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability” workshops kick off in Basra

Basra, 28 April 2019 – At a three-day workshop in Basra City, young Iraqi women and men from across the governorate voiced opinions, hopes, concerns and suggestions about their role in advancing peaceful coexistence and addressing the challenges in their communities. The event was the first in a series of workshops under the theme “Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability”, which are taking place in locations across in Iraq throughout 2019.

Over two days, a diverse group of 20 young women and men participated in interactive sessions to discuss youth

participation in building social peace and stability. They discussed strategies for dealing with conflict and how to apply these concepts when working to counter challenges, such as unemployment, tribal conflict and climate change, within their communities.

On the third and final day, local political figures joined the young people in a dialogue on issues facing the governorate - opening a valuable communication channel for the young activists with decision-makers and increasing the politicians' awareness of youth needs and priorities.

In her remarks at this final session,

Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General Alice Walpole underlined the added value of youth participation in Iraq's post-conflict revival and welcomed the workshops as providing a significant opportunity for youth to speak out on important national and local issues.

“Empowering young people, supporting them and ensuring they can fulfil their potential is important in every society. But beyond this, if we are to create a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Iraq, we need young Iraqis to lead,” Ms. Walpole said. “The catalytic energy that young people can bring to resolve political or social deadlock should not be underestimated. We need you to build a peaceful, sustainable future Iraq, which will meet the aspirations of all its people. Today the floor is yours. We are listening.”

The event on 26-28 April 2019 was organised by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in cooperation with the Higher Committee for Coexistence and Community Peace of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and the Iraqi Al-Amal Association. The activity is in line with UNAMI's mandate to support youth and their valuable contributions to the country. The next workshops will take place in Karbala and Babil governorates on 2-4 May.



The leadership of the United Nations, UNAMI, UNITAD and UN Country Team in Iraq continued intensive political consultations.



Paris, 25 February 2019 - For the first time ever, a President of Iraq has visited UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. President Barham Salih met today with UNESCO Director-General, Ms. Audrey Azoulay. They talked about Iraq's reconstruction and discussed joint efforts to build a sustainable peace through culture and education.



Baghdad, 04 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Iraq, Mr. Fatih Yildiz. They discussed the current political situation in Iraq and possible ways how Turkey can support United Nations efforts in the country for the benefit of the Iraqi people.



Baghdad, 4 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with Mr. Christian Buck, Director for Near and Middle East and North Africa in the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They discussed current situation in Iraq and the region and how Germany can support United Nations efforts in the country.
Photo courtesy of Mr. Buck.



Baghdad, 4 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with a group of Turkmen Committee Council members. They discussed the political situation in the country with a special emphasis on the political representation of the Turkmen component.



Baghdad, 4 March 2019 - Newly appointed UNHCR Representative to Iraq, Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh, presented his credentials to H.E. Ambassador Saywan Barazani at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad.



Baghdad, 5 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Ms. Alaa Talabani, a member of the Council of Representatives and a member of the PUK Leadership Council. They discussed the current political situation in Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region with special emphasis on the need for greater women's participation in the political sphere.



Baghdad, 7 March 2019 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Mr. Jaafar Al-Husseini, Head of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation. They discussed the current political situation in Iraq and how the United Nations can support the work of the Committee and the reconciliation process in the country.



Baghdad, 10 March 2019 - Dr. Oluremi Sogunro, Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iraq, met in Baghdad with Dr. Mahdi Al-Alaq, Secretary-General of the Iraq Council of Ministers. During the meeting, they discussed the upcoming census for Iraq as well as the priorities for women and girls in Iraq. Dr. Sogunro expressed the interest of donors and their continued commitment to support the upcoming programmes aimed at serving the development and reconstruction sector and according to the priorities of the Iraqi government. Dr. Sogunro also called for Iraq's participation in the New York Development and Population Conference scheduled for 7-11 April 2019.

Photo courtesy of the Iraq Council of Ministers.



Baghdad, 11 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Dr. Salim Al Jubouri, former Speaker of the Council of Representatives and Secretary General of the Civil Alliance for Reform. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country and the region.



Baghdad, 13 March 2019 - Dr. Fadel El-Zubi, Representative to Iraq of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and Mr. Paul Schlunke, met in Baghdad with Her Excellency Dr. Sarbagh Salih, First Lady of the Republic of Iraq. Discussions focused on the UN FAO activities and programmes being implemented in Iraq, as well as the challenges that the country faces in the field of agriculture and available water resources.

Photos courtesy of the Office of the First Lady of the Republic of Iraq.



Baghdad, 18 March 2019 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, called today on Ambassador Hazem Al-Youssaifi, Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and Multilateral Relations in the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

DSRSG Walpole commended Iraq's continued search for the remains of Kuwaiti and other nationals missing since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and reiterated the United Nations' readiness to provide support and expertise in the resolution of this dossier. She also commended the recent return of Kuwaiti property, recalled Kuwaiti hopes for the return of their National Archives, and offered support for the repatriation of further property as it is traced and identified.



Baghdad, 20 March 2019 - UNAMI and UN Women representatives met today with the Al-Amal Association civil society group to discuss and explore possible areas of collaboration to advance the women, peace and security agenda in Iraq.



Baghdad, 25 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Iraq, Mr. Maksim Maksimov. They discussed the current political and security situation in Iraq and the Region with special emphasis on how the Russian Federation can support United Nations activities in Iraq for the benefit of the country and its people.

Photo courtesy of the Embassy of the Russian Federation.



Baghdad, 25 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Iraq, Mr. Iraj Masjedi. They discussed the current political and security situation in Iraq and the Region stressing at the same time the cooperation both sides extend to the Government of Iraq in supporting the country and its people.

Photo courtesy of The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).



Baghdad, 27 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received by His Excellency Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Adil Abdul-Mahdi. They discussed the current political, security and humanitarian situation in the country and the region as well as Government future plans.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister (Archive).



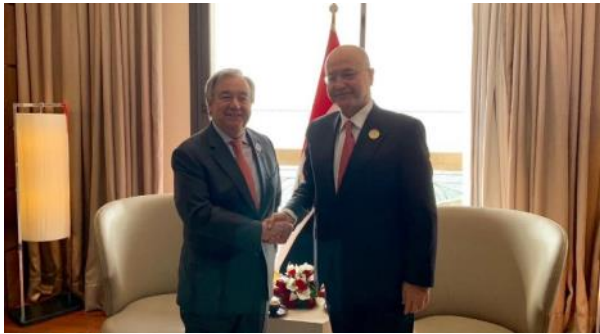
Baghdad, 28 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by UNAMI's Head of Human Rights Section, Ms. Danielle Bell, met today with Judge Faik Zeidan, President of the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq. They discussed the efforts of the Supreme Judicial Council for legislative reforms in compliance with international human rights standards, reiterating UNAMI's readiness to provide advice and support if required.



Baghdad, 28 March 2019 - Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with His Eminence Ammar Al-Hakim, Head of the Hikma Movement. They discussed the current political situation in the country.



Berlin, 28 March 2019 - Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of Investigative Team, Karim A. A. Khan QC, met with former German ambassador to Iraq and Special Envoy for Crisis Prevention and Stabilization at the German Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Ekkehard Brose and discussed matters related to UNITAD's ongoing work in Iraq.



Tunis, 31 March 2019 – On the sidelines of the Arab Summit held in Tunis, the President of the Republic, Barham Salih, met with the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. They discussed the role of the United Nations in Iraq in various humanitarian fields, particularly in providing necessary assistance to refugees and displaced persons.



Baghdad, 31 March 2019 - Mr. Amir A. Arain, Director of UNAMI Electoral Assistance Unit and UN Principal Electoral Advisor, met with Mr. Emad Youkana, Advisor for Components Affairs to the Speaker of the Iraq Council of Representatives. They discussed the issue of minorities and elections, previous elections, challenges and obstacles faced by minorities, representation of minorities on the Iraq Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) Board of Commissioners and electoral legal frameworks.

Photo courtesy of Assyrian Democratic Movement.



Baghdad, 31 March 2019 – Dr. Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, visited today H.E. Salem al-Zamana, Ambassador of Kuwait in Iraq, with whom he discussed the 2020 Iraq census and the Kuwaiti support to the Health sector in Iraq.



Erbil, 01 April 2019 – The Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Office in Erbil, Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez Carbonell, was received today by Mr. Hemin Hawrami, Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan Region Parliament. They discussed the current political situation in the Kurdistan Region, including the government formation.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Deputy Speaker of the KR Parliament.

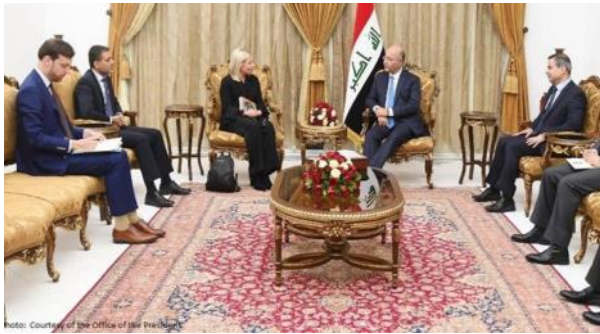


Baghdad, 02 April 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Mohammed al-Halboosi. They discussed the current political situation in the country and latest developments in the negotiations to complete the process of the government formation.

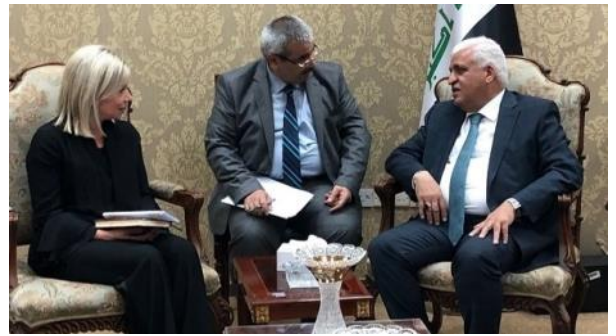


Baghdad, 03 April 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Mr. Jamal al-Karbouli, Chairman of the Al-Hal Movement (National Movement for Development and Reform). They discussed the current political and humanitarian situation in the country.

Photo courtesy of Al-Hal Movement.



Baghdad, 03 April 2019 - The President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Mr. Barham Salih, received today in Baghdad the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. They discussed the current political, economic and humanitarian situation in the country. Photo courtesy of the Office of the President.

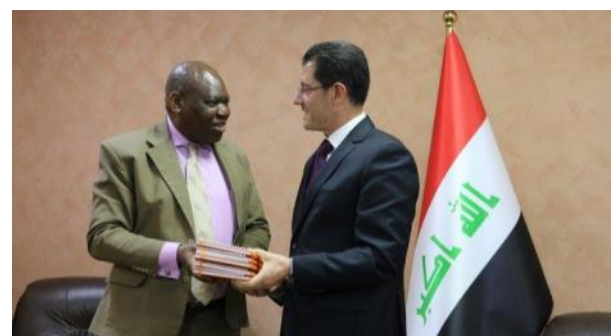


Baghdad, 03 April 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the National Security Adviser, Mr. Fahih Al-Fayad. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country.



Baghdad, 03 April 2019 - The Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, Dr Mahdi Al-Alaq, honored the outgoing UNICEF Iraq Representative, Mr. Peter Hawkins, and thanked him for his work on behalf of children, during his 3 and a half years in Iraq at a ceremony held in Baghdad.

Photo courtesy of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.



Baghdad, 3 April 2019 - Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, met today with HE Nouri Sabah Al-Dulaimi, Minister of Planning, with whom he discussed the on-going preparations for the census 2020 and the technical support that UNFPA will provide in the process.

During the meeting, which was also attended by a UNFPA delegation and the head of the Central Statistics Office, the Minister confirmed the commitment of the Government of Iraq to conduct the census in 2020, following the approval of the establishment of High Commission on Census, yesterday. The UNFPA Representative reiterated UNFPA's readiness to provide the required support for the preparation and implementation of the census.

The Minister acknowledged the important contribution made by UNFPA during the humanitarian crisis, providing life-saving reproductive health and gender-based violence services. He also requested UNFPA's support in reviewing and updating Population Policy.

At the end of the meeting, the Minister offered his support to celebrate UNFPA's 50th anniversary and ICPD's 25th anniversary and confirmed Iraq's participation in the Nairobi summit in November.



Baghdad, 3 April 2019 - An IOM delegation led by IOM MENA Director, Ms. Carmela Godeau, and Senior Regional Advisor for MENA, Mr. Hassan Abdel Monam, met with senior Iraqi officials from different ministries to discuss key priorities and challenges in post-ISIL Iraq and partnership in providing assistance to vulnerable Iraqis.

Regional Director Godeau also briefed IOM Iraq donors in Baghdad. They talked about protracted displacement, durable solutions for IDPs and priorities for the recovery of liberated areas in Iraq.



Tikrit, 3 April 2019 - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI met with the President of the Salah al-Din Court, Hon. Judge Abud Hamdan, in Tikrit City. Among the topics discussed were the challenges facing the judges and other court personnel because of the threat from ISIL as well as the monitoring of trials by the Human Rights Office.



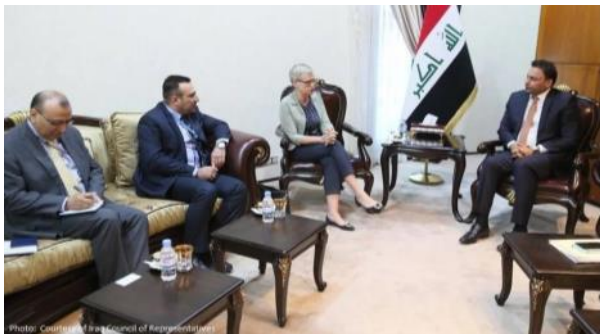
Amman, Jordan, 08 April 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Minister of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mr. Ayman Safadi. They discussed the UNAMI's efforts to help Iraq achieve political, economic and social stability.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs - Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.



Tehran, Iran, 15 April 2019 - During her visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif. They discussed the current political, security and humanitarian situation in the region. The SRSR stressed the importance of cooperation between the countries in the region.

The visit is in line with UNAMI's mandate to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq on facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of border security, energy, environment, water, and refugees.



Baghdad, 22 April 2019 - Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Alice Walpole, was received by Mr. Hassan Karim al-Kaabi, First Deputy Speaker of the Iraq Council of Representatives.

Accompanied by Mr. Aamir Arain, Director, UN Integrated Electoral Assistance and UN Principal Electoral Advisor, DSRSG Walpole and First Deputy Speaker Kaabi discussed the preparations in place for the forthcoming provincial council elections.

Photo courtesy of Iraq Council of Representatives.



New York, 26 April 2019 - The Special Advisor of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Karim A. A. Khan QC. They discussed how UNITAD is working with the Iraqi authorities to ensure accountability for ISIL and other perpetrators of atrocities. The United States recently provided UNITAD with \$2 million to support its ongoing efforts.

Photo courtesy of the United States Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

International Women's Day

Joint statement by UN Women and UNFPA in Iraq on International Women's Day

Baghdad, 8 March 2019 - Women in Iraq and across the world are entitled to live in dignity, in freedom and without discrimination. Gender equality, a human right, plays a crucial role in sustainable development, peace and security. This year, the world celebrates women by putting innovation at the heart of efforts to achieve gender equality. The International Women's Day theme for 2019: "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change" highlights the role innovation plays in overcoming social barriers, accelerating progress for gender equality, encouraging investment in gender-centred initiatives, and building services and infrastructure that responds to the needs of women and girls across the world. Women in Iraq have suffered from major

psychological and emotional consequences due to the continuous displacement, the traumatic events and the violence the violence caused by the protracted crises, threatening their ability to build a better future for themselves, their families and their communities. The United Nations estimates that there are 3,3 million women and girls in need of humanitarian assistance in 2019 across the country. While the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government have taken significant steps towards acknowledging women rights, women and girls are yet to be given the opportunity to contribute more effectively in shaping policies and making changes, especially at a time when the country recovers from three years of conflict.

On this International Women's Day, we call upon both governments to invest further in the great potential of the women in Iraq to boost economic and social development of the country. UN Women and UNFPA renew their commitment to advancing gender equality and empowering women in the areas of social protection and access to public services across the country to improve the lives of women, adolescents and youth, enabled by population dynamics and human rights.

Dina Zorba, Representative, UN Women Iraq
Dr Oluremi Sogunro, Representative, UNFPA Iraq

Advancing women's empowerment contributes to national stability, says DSRSG Walpole at International Women's Day celebration

Baghdad, 07 March 2019 – International Women's Day was celebrated today at an event organized by the Directorate for the Empowerment of Iraqi Women at the Council of Ministers.

The event, which was supported by UN Women and the International Medical Corps, was attended by senior Iraqi government officials, including the two Deputy Speakers of the Council of Representatives, human rights activists, civil society representatives, the international community and many others.

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) Alice Walpole addressed the meeting, along with Dr. Mahdi Al-Alaq, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, who represented the Prime Minister; Dr. Thikra Alwash, Mayor of Baghdad and Chair of the Standing Committee on the Advancement of Women; UN Women's Representative, Ms. Dina Zorba and UNFPA Representative, Dr. Oluremi Sogunro; as well as the Director-General of the Directorate for the Empowerment of Iraqi Women, Dr. Ibtisam Aziz.

In her remarks, DSRSG Walpole welcomed the upcoming discussions in Parliament on updating the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. "We need to acknowledge that domestic violence diminishes and shames all of society; it is a threat not just to women but to society itself," she emphasised.

Reflecting on the challenges facing displaced women across Iraq, DSRSG Walpole noted that "They continue to suffer the brutal consequences of the recent conflict".

"Female-headed households should be prioritised in accessing public services,"



she said, and called on the Ministries of Defence and Interior, and the National Operations Command, to "to ensure that secure clearance mechanisms are coordinated among security actors to minimize re-screening of individuals already screened; and to consider removing security clearance requirements for civilians who have not been charged with a criminal or terrorism-related offence, so they do not face obstacles in accessing public services, including civil registries and courts".

DSRSG Walpole also noted the high unemployment rate amongst young women, which is double that of men. She called on the government to "offer small business grants to female entrepreneurs to help them into the business arena, in particular to women returnees in the liberated areas, and those heading households".

"Advancing women's economic empow-

erment in this way will contribute to the government's efforts to achieve national stability," she noted.

In her speech, Ms. Dina Zorba, UN Women Iraq Representative, affirmed the agency's support for efforts to empower women and remove obstacles facing them in all fields of life.

She said the celebration comes to honor women, their achievements and their contribution in serving their society. It also comes a reminder of the obstacles facing women and impeding them from achieving their potential in the service of their society, she said.

Following is the text of the remarks by Ms. Alice Walpole at this event:

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Guests,
UN Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be here today on the eve of International Women's Day, recognizing, celebrating, promoting the contribution and achievements of Iraqi women. This year's national theme, Social Protection and Economic Empowerment of Women, provides an excellent platform for a frank discussion on the progress made in narrowing economic and social inequalities for women. I am particularly interested in the economic aspects of gender equality: Iraqi women still have limited access, compared with their male counterparts, to the labour force, to credit and other financing, and to property ownership rights.

Ladies and gentlemen,
The United Nations recognises and



Advancing women's empowerment contributes to national stability, says DSRSG Walpole ... *(continued)*

values the vital importance of the full, meaningful engagement of women – half of the population, half of its talent – in Iraq's political, economic, security and social decision-making. We can, and we must, do more to promote women's full participation in the life of Iraq. This country simply cannot afford to ignore or under-use all their experience, knowledge and expertise.

We have accordingly prioritized the promotion of women's political participation in our engagement with senior Iraqi interlocutors. Getting women into senior political roles will help open the door to a richer engagement by women in other areas of Iraqi public life. Current discussions in Parliament and within the Independent High Electoral Commission on amendments to the Political Parties Law offer a good opportunity to establish legally binding provisions – for example, quotas – that enhance the political participation of women.

Meanwhile, male political leaders must defend and promote the political, economic and legal space for women. Legislators must remove legal obstacles hindering women's participation in all spheres of life. I have met several male champions of gender equality among Iraq's political ranks. I call on them to advocate for the consideration of Iraq's many qualified women for senior public roles. Although, disappointingly, we have yet to see any women appointed to ministerial roles, let us concentrate fresh effort on supporting women into other senior appointments – deputy ministerial posts; chair-ships of parliamentary committees; leadership roles within political party structures; senior judicial positions; ambassadorial appointments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The advancement of women is, of course, not just about ensuring female representation at the highest levels of society. It's about ensuring that the ordinary woman in the street is able to maximise her individual potential, to make the very best of her life, to make the greatest possible contribution to her community.

In this context, I want to mention the issue of violence against women and girls, which not only denies their rights, it prevents them from fully participating in society. I very much welcome ongoing parliamentary discussion to update and finalise the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. This will be a vital step for the government in ensur-

ing that Iraq is implementing its commitments under international treaties and resolutions to combat violence against women and girls. We need to acknowledge that domestic violence diminishes and shames all of society; it is a threat not just to women but to society in general.

Let me turn to economic issues. The unemployment rate for young women is double that of men. Iraq's private sector is not yet able to generate the investment and enterprise growth needed to create employment and reduce Iraq's high level of dependence on oil revenues and public sector employment. We need to see a rapid expansion of the private sector to generate significant employment opportunities for women. I warmly encourage the government to offer small business grants to female entrepreneurs to help them into the business arena, in particular to women returnees in the liberated areas and those heading households. Advancing women's economic empowerment in this way will contribute to the government's efforts to achieve national stability.

Ladies and gentlemen,

International Women's Day cannot pass in Iraq without some reflection on those many women in this country who remain displaced from their homes, some of whom are living in intolerable circumstances. You will be aware of the challenges faced by displaced communities, notably, women-headed households, widows, female victims of Da'esh, women returnees, women who have, rightly or wrongly, been perceived as affiliated with extremists. They continue to suffer the brutal consequences of the recent conflict. For example, widows face challenges in securing death or missing persons certificates for their husbands; women perceived to have ties with Da'esh must undergo multiple rigorous security screening and clearance processes; others exist in a limbo without personal

documentation, some the victims of sexual violence and abuse. Discriminatory practices and cruelty towards such women, and a heavy stigma, inhibit them from accessing courts, civil registries and other public services, including social welfare benefits.

I therefore, on this International Women's Day, urge the Ministry of Defence, National Operations Command and Ministry of Interior to ensure that secure clearance mechanisms are coordinated among security actors to minimize re-screening of individuals already screened; and to consider removing security clearance requirements for civilians who have not been charged with a criminal or terrorism-related offence, so they do not face obstacles in accessing public services, including civil registries and courts. Female-headed households should be prioritized in accessing public services.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fight for gender equality should not be restricted to International Women's Day. We must sustain our efforts throughout the year to fight for Iraqi women's rights. To break down the barriers hindering their political economic and social participation in the life of this country. For our part, the United Nations will continue to provide technical support for the development of the second Iraqi National Action Plan on women, peace and security; and continue urging the government to establish a formal commission, fully authorized and properly funded, to coordinate implementation of the Plan and national frameworks and policies.

We look forward to collaborating with you. In the words of Gloria Steinem, world-renowned women's rights activist: "the story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single activist nor to any one organization but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights." Let us show that collective effort.

Thank you.



International Women's Day 2019 marked in Baghdad by IOM and UNMAS



Baghdad, 09 March 2019 – The United Nations family in Iraq marked International Women’s Day today in Baghdad, Iraq. The event was organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) at The Station Foundation for Entrepreneurship and was supported by the Embassy of Australia, the Embassy of Canada, and the European Union Delegation in Iraq.

It was an opportunity to hear the voice

of Iraqi women from diverse communities in panel discussion, and hold a photo exhibition, showing Iraqi women in action, their resilience in displacement, and recovery after returning to their homes.

Remarks were provided by Dr Joanne Loundes, Australian Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, Senior Program Manager for UNMAS in Iraq, and Ms. Gudrun Kroner, IOM Head of Liaison and Programmes in Iraq.



SRSg Hennis-Plasschaert: “Iraq cannot afford to exclude women from the political process and ignore half of Iraq’s potential!”

Baghdad, 14 March 2019 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended on 10 March 2019 the celebration of International Women’s Day organised under the patronage of the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Mohammed Al-Halbousi.

SRSg Hennis-Plasschaert underlined that Iraqi women have played a very limited role in the decision-making

process for government formation following last year’s national elections and that not one single woman has been confirmed in a ministerial role in the Iraqi government. She added that Iraq cannot afford to exclude women from the political process and ignore half of Iraq’s potential.

“Current discussions in the Parliament and within the Independent High Electoral Commission on amendments to the Political Parties Law offer a good

opportunity to enhance the political participation of women” continued SRSg Hennis-Plasschaert . “There are so many qualified Iraqi women. Iraq has great female potential and this country cannot afford to lose it. So, please, just use it!”

SRSg Hennis-Plasschaert, also attended the International Women’s Day celebration hosted by the Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 14 March 2019.



International Women's Day celebrations in Iraq

Iraq, 08 March 2019 — IOM celebrated it at the Community Resource Centre in Falluja. Falluja's district mayor and many returnees attended the celebration. The celebration included poetry and presented artworks such as



paintings and handcrafts by women. Women from the displaced and host communities showcased handcrafts and artworks in a Bazaar/trade show during the International Women's Day event held in Erbil, Kurdistan Region,



Iraq. The event aimed at empowering women economically through access to employment and income generation opportunities. The event was facilitated by IOM Iraq.



Gender

International Gender Group for Iraq met in Baghdad

Baghdad, 4 March 2019 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) hosted today the International Gender Group (IGG), which is a coordination mechanism of the international community for advancing the women, peace and security agenda, in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who chaired the meeting, noted that it was important that the IGG promoted common messages to amplify women's voices. During the meeting participants discussed efforts to increase women's role in decision making in Iraq, the implementation of the National Action Plan on 1325, preparations for the Anti-Domestic Violence Law as well as civil documentation issues of IDPs.



Leadership, Women and the UN programme strikes a chord

Torino, Italy, 10 March 2019 - 245 women from various countries across the globe including Peru, Venezuela, Jamaica, United States, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, Azerbaijan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Congo, Chad, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Fiji and other 57 duty stations have attended the Leadership, Women and the UN programme in the past three years.

Head of Programme Office for UNMAS in Iraq was one of the 46 participants from more than 15 UN Agencies who

attended last week this program.

The Leadership, Women and the UN programme was created in 2015 in response to the underrepresentation of women leaders in the UN system and the need for a forum for female UN staff at the P4 and P5 level to learn, share and act.

“Our goal was to design a programme not only equipping UN female staff with successful leadership approaches and experiences, but also building a strong supportive network of female

leadership agents across the UN system. The fact that we've already welcomed so many women from all over the world and that they value our training for their personal and professional growth is a great success,” said Ariane Sabet, Course Coordinator at UNSSC in charge of the programme. Since 2015, participants from over 45 UN agencies and departments have been attending this programme annually to gain a better understanding of different approaches to leadership as

Leadership, Women and the UN programme strikes a chord *(continued)*

well as the gender aspects of leadership. The programme provided them the opportunity to increase their self-awareness through a 360-degree leadership assessment and personality profile, and develop a set of skills and competencies in communication for transformative and charismatic leadership, effective negotiation, and change. It has also been creating a unique space for UN female staff to learn from each other's experiences and build lasting relationships.

The programme has struck a chord with women across the UN family and resulted in a 100 % recommendation rate. The acting Chief of Staff for the World Health Organization (WHO) and former Leadership, Women and the UN participant, Ms. Erin Maura Kenney, stated: "Leadership, Women and the UN is an excellent course – very well organized and facilitated, top notch speakers, practical and results oriented. I have concretely strengthened my leadership skills and my working style.

I left the course with an action plan that I am implementing and tracking. And the extra bonus was getting to know so many interesting and accomplished women. Highly recommended!" Motivated by the positive feedback, the Leadership, Women and the UN programme has been expanding its geographical reach and increasing the number of yearly editions. Thus, in 2018, we are happy to bring it closer to our cherished audience in Vienna, Turin, Geneva and Cairo.

A woman even here: The story of Nadia Mahmoud from Iraq

Baghdad, 10 March 2019 - Nadia was only 16 when she grabbed her toddler and fled her house in Huwajja, Iraq, while five months pregnant. ISIS had taken over their town two years earlier and, on this fateful night, persistent bombing drove Nadia and many other families out from their houses in the middle of the night.

"I was afraid I was going to miscarry, and I soon ran out of milk for my son," Nadia recalled, "After five hours of walking, we heard ISIS fighters set up a trap to capture us and we knew they would kill those who are caught. So, I turned around and went home. Our fear got the best of us."

Growing up, Nadia had pictured a very different future for herself. She had a single, simple dream: to become a school teacher. But the fighting forced her out of school. One year after ISIS's arrival, she was married off to an older man.

"I was forced. I was just a child, only 15 years old. I didn't want to be married," Nadia said as anger flashed briefly across her young face.

Eight months into the marriage, her husband was taken by ISIS and she never heard of him again. She was already pregnant when he disappeared. She was married again soon after, this time as a second wife. She was 16 when she became pregnant for the second time and had to embark on that first failed attempt to flee her home.

Soon after, she decided to make one more attempt to reach Debaga camp for the internally displaced- a 15-hour walk. She left with her toddler and her husband and many more families from Huwajja. Halfway to Debaga, they stopped, too scared to move forward and unable to turn around. They set up an impromptu encampment in the middle of nowhere where they stayed for a few months.

"There was no food and no water, and our children got sick," Nadia said, "Most families were ruined."

Nadia was getting closer to her due date. So, Nadia's family decided to make a final push for Debaga despite the fear and they finally made it to the camp.

Upon arriving in Debaga, Nadia went to the UNFPA reproductive health clinic where she delivered her second child: a daughter she named Sewar. She also frequents a safe-space for women and girls in the camp where she learns sewing and has a chance to socialize with other mothers.

Nadia is one of the millions of women and girls in the Arab region whose lives, dreams and plans for the future were unexpectedly interrupted by wars they didn't start. In such situations, Nadia's predicament is not a rarity. Girls are more likely to leave school than boys their age when disasters strike. They are also 90% more likely to drop out of school than girls who live in conflict-free countries.

Child and forced marriage rates tend to rise in humanitarian emergencies as families pressure their daughters to marry for protection or to alleviate the

economic hardship that is a staple of conflict-torn communities. The medical complications of pregnancy and childbirth come hand in hand with child marriage. Such complications are the leading cause of death for adolescent girls aged 15-19.

Pregnant women on the move and in difficult-to-reach areas run a higher risk of maternal mortality and morbidity. Overall, a woman dies every 3 minutes from pregnancy and childbirth complications in humanitarian emergencies. This means over 500 women losing their lives every day for mostly preventable causes.

Four years after fighting first broke out in her small town, the 18-year-old Nadia now finds it difficult to speak of the future.

"I don't know how to describe my dreams to you," Nadia said, "Life in the camp is sometimes good and sometimes not, but I dream of going home."

In 2018, UNFPA reached 742,469 people with reproductive health services and provided support to 296,773 to survivors of gender-based violence through 76 maternal health facilities and 108 safe spaces for women and girls.



Iraq participated at the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

New York, 13 March 2019 – Iraq participated at the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

During the session, Dr. Thikra Alwash, Head of Iraq delegation at the 63rd session (and Mayor of Baghdad), chaired the round table discussion “Good practices and policies for planning, provision and implementation of social protection public services and sustainable infrastructure including promotion of women representation in various sectors”.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council. 63rd session (#CSW63) took place on 11-22 March 2019 in New York.

Dr. Thikra Alwash met with Ms. Pramila Patten, United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, at the UN headquarters. They discussed the mechanism of implementing the joint communiqué 2016.

On the margins of the 63rd session a side event was organized at the Headquarters by the Permanent Missions of Germany and Iraq to the United Na-

tions, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, the office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in Iraq and the Grace Initiative, where under the theme of “Iraqi women at the helm of rebuilding, peace and stability”, participants discussed how the Govern-

ment of Iraq, Member States and the United Nations could work towards the implementation of the national action plan pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the joint communiqué between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence.



Baghdad Mayor: I hope women occupy 50% of all positions



New York, 16 March 2019 - "Iraqi women have been subjected to many setbacks in order to obtain their rights, but in every setback, they proved to be strong and able to rise again," said Mayor of the Iraqi capital Baghdad Thikra Alwash, pointing out that Iraqi women are always ambitious and able to do a lot.

The statements of the Iraqi official came during an interview with United Nations News on the sidelines of the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, where she chaired the delegation of her country participating in these meetings. Baghdad Mayor, who also serves as the Head of the Higher Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women, pointed out that Iraq participated with a distinguished delegation including legislative and executive authorities as well as civil society organizations.

The current session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women focuses on social protection systems, access to public services, sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Alwash said the theme of this year's session is in line with the fact that women's economic empowerment is achieved only through enabling her access to social welfare systems consistent with their environment, as well as the establishment of appropriate infrastructure to enable them to access the necessary economic resources.

She said it is the Iraqi constitution that helped women to be distinct. "The Constitution, in most of its paragraphs, addresses the issues of gender equality, rights, empowerment and care of women," she added. "It ensured a minimum of 25% of seats in the House of Representatives for women. So, we have eighty-three women MPs in the Iraqi parliament and this is a very excellent number at the Pan-Arab and regional levels."

Alwash said that the Iraqi woman has always been the initiator, noting that "the first woman minister in the Arab world and the Middle East was Iraqi." Baghdad Mayor pointed out that the national strategy against violence and poverty ensured women some of their rights to enable them to rise again, noting that Iraqi women need international

support not only at the material level, but at the level of training on how to reach the decision-making stage.

Ms. Thikra touched upon the impact on Iraqi women by the "economic blockade and many wars, the most recent of which was the vicious attack against humanity" that Iraq experienced, pointing out that ISIL control over some Iraqi cities had a significant impact on Iraqi women and increased the number of women in need of welfare systems due to the displacement of a large number of families and the vulnerability of women to violence and the increase in poverty.

She added: "We have women who are victims of terrorism and sacrificing women just like the Iraqi soldiers who fight ISIL, those who became breadwinners of their families and thus became the father and mother in the family." The Iraqi official expressed her hope that this conference will help her country to get rid of ISIL legacy.

She mentioned Iraq's participation in the Levant Conference with Lebanon and Jordan, where the World Bank, with the assistance of the Canadian government and UN Women, funded an ambitious five-year programme that increases women's participation in the labour market to 19-25%, while it is currently stands at 14.5%, a very low percentage, according to Ms. Thikra.

By UN News

Iraq Ninewa Plains and Dyala Women Peace Group launched

Baghdad, 17 March 2019 – Thirty-eight women from Ninewa Plains joined the launch of Ninewa Plains Women Peace Group as one of the community mechanisms to promote peace in the area, led by UNDP's SIRI project

in collaboration with the Supreme Committee for Cohesion and Community Peace/COMSEC.

Ten days later, 31 women from different backgrounds in Diyala attended the activation workshop of Diyala Women

Peace Group to agree on the new vision, objectives and activities - led by SIRI project in collaboration with Supreme Committee for Cohesion and Community Peace/COMSEC. The activity was facilitated by UNDP Iraq.



Helping women in Kurdistan region of Iraq to find jobs



Erbil, 21 March 2019 - "Having a job makes me feel better emotionally and financially." "There is no one to help me find a job and I have family responsibilities. That's why I am unemployed." These two statements from two young women encompass the major sentiments regarding women's employment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI): women want to find a job, but they face many barriers to getting one, according to our recent World Bank pilot project.

The statistics

To delve into the background, the female labor force participation rate in Kurdistan is one of the lowest in the world at 14% (as measured in 2015). KRI women have been profoundly impacted by the financial crisis, political instability, and ongoing conflict nearby. The unemployment rate significantly increased in 2015, particularly among young women, reaching 69% for those aged under 24 (compared to 24% for men) and 36% for women aged 25-34 (compared to 11% for men). Of those unemployed women, more than 1/3 third hold post-secondary school degrees, compared to 25% of unemployed men.

And of the women who are employed,

almost 80% are employed in the public sector, with only about 1 in 100 working-age women working in the private sector. More than half of non-working women (54%) want to work. About 10% have worked before, but many stopped working because they were laid off.

Piloting solutions

To combat all these challenges, the World Bank team helped the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to launch the first family-friendly policy competition for private sector companies. Because legislative reforms take time, the intervention was designed to raise awareness and incentivize companies to adopt the proposed family friendly policies. A selection committee composed of academia and experts in labor market and gender evaluated the applications and awarded 7 companies for their efforts to adopt the policies. This type of incentive has been done in several countries around the world, including the UK, Australia, and the UAE. It works in many countries where women are unable to break through a certain sector or industry. The awards typically vary from financial to social recognition.

The World Bank also partnered with Rwanda Foundation which maintains an online jobs portal for KRI and provides face to face job search training to job seekers. Students and other job seekers were recruited from universities and job fairs to register on their portal (called Rwanda Foras portal), and employers in KRI were invited to post new opportunities each month. The intervention consisted of providing a phone coaching support to existing female job seekers for six weeks. While attrition was high, those that

participated in the coaching intervention exerted more effort in their job search. Job seekers who engaged in three or more coaching sessions spent 4 more hours per weeks searching for a job. Formal job search channels such as online job portal and job placement centers are still not widely used by job seekers. Many continue to rely on personal contacts (family and friends) to find a job, limiting their options to a much smaller pool.

Moving forward

The Kurdistan Region Government is committed women's economic inclusion. The government's most recent reform framework, the KRG Vision 2020, sets out several policies to boost women's economic participation and to support girls' education. These were the policies included: expanding business opportunities for women by enabling work-from-home schemes, promoting childcare centers, and ensuring equal opportunity under the law. The KRG Vision 2020 also calls for ensuring labor market intermediaries (ensuring training, assistance, and financial programs) take into consideration issues that are unique for women.

The World Bank pilot project in KRI also provides 15 actionable recommendations to reduce the barriers, among them are updating and enacting the draft Labor Law, ensuring effective implementation of the laws, repeating the yearly award for companies, increasing visibility of women in the private sector through communication campaigns, establishing childcare support program, and supporting expansion and enhancement of formal job channels and labor market intermediaries.

Workshop for Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics in Iraq commences in Baghdad



Baghdad, 23 March 2019 - A three-day targeted skills-building technical workshop, planning and bonding activity for the 22-member Women's Advisory Group (WAG) for Inclusive Reconciliation and Politics in Iraq, commenced today in Baghdad. The workshop, which runs until 25 March 2019, is organised by the office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Senior Gender Advisor and the United Nations Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA) Iraq and Gender Teams, with facilitation support provided by a Senior Mediation Adviser from the UN Standby Mediation Team/Mediation Support Unit.

The Women's Advisory Group (WAG) on Reconciliation and Politics, was established in October 2018 with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The Group is expected to lobby for the advancement of women's role in politics and making their voices heard. Women con-



tinue to be underrepresented and remain excluded from political and decision-making processes in Iraq despite their active role in society.

The Group comprises 22 members who have been selected in their individual capacities for their skills and experience. They include human rights de-

fenders, media experts, former politicians and civil society activists, and represent a variety of interests, political backgrounds and regions.

On the second day, participants engaged in a vibrant group discussion on women's inclusiveness in the political process.



Women Advisory Group met in Baghdad to discuss the priorities, planning and activities of the group for 2019

Baghdad, 25 March 2019 – The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, participated today in a dialogue with the members of the Women Advisory Group (WAG) to discuss the priorities, planning and activities of the group for 2019. The SRSG called on the WAG to be bold, persistent and patient in its fight for gender equality, noting that “Iraqi women must not wait for men to include them in political and decision-making processes and appoint them to leadership positions”. Rather, they must mobilize popular support through outreach, engagement and the use of social media, as well as exert political pressure at the highest political levels. The SRSG reiterated her personal commitment to support the WAG’s priorities with the strong support of her two deputies and UNAMI.

The interactive dialogue followed a three-day skills-building workshop that brought together the WAG members with the political, electoral and communication components of the Mission. The sessions were facilitated by a member of the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers, with support from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and UNAMI.

During the discussions WAG members highlighted their concerns regarding the absence of women in the Cabinet and decision-making and leadership roles, while emphasizing the urgency for legislative reforms to widen the space for women in political processes. They consolidated their views on a



draft annual workplan for 2019-2020 which included priorities to advance the Women, Peace and Security file. The WAG, inaugurated with the support of UNAMI in January 2019, is a political inclusion mechanism which

aims to ensure that the voices, concerns, expertise and experiences of Iraqi women are included in political processes, based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, respect for diversity and non-discrimination.



Empowering women in Iraq through Gender Equality Tool Seal



Baghdad, 5 April 2019 - Gender mainstreaming is the cornerstone of development and peacebuilding, it occupied a very important part in SDGs and Agenda 2030. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had developed an assessment tool to track gender equality in the public institutions, in order to create a baseline and to prioritize the work for the coming years. This tool is divided into six parts related to tracking progress on gender equality goals: Framework, capacities, enabling environment, partnership and engagement, laws, policies and programmes and results and impact.

A workshop was held on Public Sector Gender Equality Seal in Dec. 2018, in addition to two consultations meetings with the Women Empowerment Directorate in the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministries and the Ministry of Planning (MoP), to choose the public institutions which will be assessed. As a result, the Women Empowerment Directorate was chosen as an implementer for the Gender Equality Tool, due to its mandate in empowering women in Iraq, and for being the umbrella for gender units and departments all over the ministries, which can be used to implement the tool.

Deputy Minister of Planning, Dr. Maher Johan, stressed the importance to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 agenda, particularly SDG 5 which states on achieving gender equality and empowering women, and SDG 16 which states on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and also agreed on selecting MoP as a sample.

UNDP in cooperation with Women Em-

powerment Directorate and MoP conducted a workshop on 7th Jan. 2019 in Baghdad, attended by 39 representatives from the gender units of line ministries. The workshop presented the Tool of Gender Equality Seal in order to enhance the capacities of Women Empowerment Department to implement the tool in Public Sector, and discussed the importance of Gender Statistics as well as it presented the gender mainstreaming into the national development plans and strategies. It was mentioned by the Deputy Country Director Mr. Vakhtang Svanidze that: “UNDP chose Iraq to be part in this pilot as we believe that the Government of Iraq had taken critical steps towards gender equality and women empowerment in different levels, in addition to its efforts to implement the sustainable development goals and leaving no one

behind. This pilot is an opportunity for Iraq to share its work globally, and advance gender participation within public-sector institutions”.

This workshop was part of the efforts to integrate SDG 5 into policies and plans, UNDP cooperation with gender units on the Gender Equality Seal Tool which has been developed by UNDP to measure Gender Mainstreaming within institutions will create solid working places.

Gender mainstreaming is considered as one of the main pillars of the mandate of gender departments, in coordination and follow up with gender units and departments within Iraq’s ministries and provinces. this tool will be the bedrock for true and genuine work to empower women in Iraq.

By Sundus Abbas, UNDP Iraq



UN Women, Office of the President of the Republic of Iraq sign MoU to promote gender equality, empowerment of women

Baghdad, 17 April 2019 – UN Women in Iraq and the Office of the President of the Republic of Iraq signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 15 April 2019 providing a framework of cooperation in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The MoU, signed by UN Women Representative Dina Zorba and the Iraqi President's Adviser for Gender and Civil Society, Ms. Khanim Latif, provides for cooperation in technical fields, research and advocacy.

UN Women and the Office of the President will cooperate in promoting enabling frameworks for the realisation of women's rights as well as government-wide mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment. The MoU works also to promote sustainable institutional capacities to ensure Iraq's alignment with its international human rights commitments.

In particular, the MoU seeks to ensure a gender-based response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on building the capacity of women representatives to perform their role in the political and decision-making spheres. Furthermore, it provides for harmonising policy approaches in the areas of national reconciliation, peace building, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

The MoU also aims to strengthen the database for women's issues in order to inform and guide evidence-based advocacy. The effort includes enhancing the process of regularly producing gender



statistics and cooperation in all stages of research, in addition to improving access to research findings and data by users, including women.

UN Women and the President's Office will also collaborate in strengthening the momentum for the advancement of women's agenda in Iraq through joint advocacy and outreach efforts.

The two sides will work on informing and influencing the national discourse on the elimination of legislative, social and economic barriers for women's realisation and recognition of their rights, including in the areas of women's economic empowerment, participation in

the decision-making process, ending gender-based violence and promoting women's active participation in the political sphere.

In addition, the two sides will advocate for the establishment of a mechanism for women that is capable of coordinating the issues of women with the aim of ensuring the political, social, cultural and economic empowerment of women towards achieving gender equality.

The signing ceremony was attended by Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Marta Ruedas, and advisers to the Iraqi President.



President of the Republic of Iraq receives UN Resident Coordinator, UN Women Representative following the signing of MoU on cooperation in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment

Baghdad, 17 April 2019 – H.E. President of the Republic of Iraq Mr. Barham Salih received on April 15, 2019 the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Marta Reudas, and UN Women Representative in Iraq Ms. Dina Zorba, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UN Women and the President's Office. The MoU provides a framework of cooperation in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Ms. Ruedas, who is also the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), expressed UN support for efforts to integrate women into the political process as well as other spheres of life, underlining that "strong political interventions" are required at the highest political levels to ensure that first steps are taken to ensure the meaningful representation of qualified women in the political process.

Ms. Zorba said she was encouraged by the President's keenness to push for the empowerment of women at the political, social and economic levels, including better representation of women in government posts.

Ms. Zorba called for a special quota for women in the executive authority as applied to the legislative authority.



Under Iraq's Constitution, 25 percent of seats in the Council of Representatives are allocated for women.

The UN Women Representative in Iraq also emphasised that more efforts be exerted to empower women economically by supporting various initiatives facilitating women entrepreneurship and offering grants and other types of support.

The President of Iraq's Adviser for Gen-

der and Civil Society, Ms. Khanim Latif, underlined the importance of the MoU in paving the way for more vital cooperation in various areas with focus on long-term initiatives of economic empowerment of women rather than just on short-term projects.

Earlier, Ms. Latif and Ms. Zorba signed the MoU providing a framework of cooperation in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Foreign Minister inaugurates training course for Women Leaderships Development of Iraqi Parliamentarians

Baghdad, 24 April 2019 - Foreign Minister Mohamad A. Alhakim inaugurated the Leadership Development training program organized by the Foreign Service Institute in the Ministry. This training course comes within the framework of the Ministry's efforts to carry out support programs and empowerment of women in Iraq, especially in the development of leadership and personal skills.



Awareness-raising sessions about the dangers of early marriage and of violence against women held in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 March 2019 - UNICEF, in collaboration with Women Rehabilitation Organization, organized two awareness-raising sessions about the dangers of early marriage and of violence against women. Over 650 women and girls took part in the discussions, made possible by generous funding by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).



Colours. Missing. Cinderella.



Baghdad, 4 March 2019 - Three simple, independent words; three powerful film titles which were screened in Baghdad on Sunday, 3 March 2019 at Art City at the launch of the 3x3 short film festival. The 500+ audience included renowned film directors, musicians, actors, artists, youth activists, government officials, and representatives from the United Nations, the diplomatic corps and civil society, one truly felt like one was at a gala premier Oscar event. The atmosphere was one filled with excitement, glitz, curiosity and anticipation in viewing a selection of over a dozen short films.

The screening of select films launched the three-day 3x3 film festival hosted by the Baghdad Foundation of Cinema and Arts, in partnership with the Human Rights Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). With submissions of over 840 films globally, 30 of which generated

from Iraq, 24 films were specifically relevant to minorities and human rights issues in Iraq. The human rights films were made by Iraqis in Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, Missan, Mosul, and Najaf, specifically for this year's 3x3 Film Festival. Each of the human rights films had a female writer, director or lead character.

In her opening remarks, Danielle Bell, Chief of the UNAMI Human Rights Office noted that "these 3x3 films highlight contemporary challenges faced by minorities in Iraq and wider human rights issues, including disappearances, discrimination, violence against women, child abuse and poverty, and show the impact of the horrors inflicted by ISIL. They are not just stories. The films depict the reality of so many Iraqis".

Ms. Bell added, "these films portray loss and human suffering but also the resilience, beauty and strength of Ira-

qis; they convey powerful messages of great importance to Iraq as it transitions from conflict to peace. "In this vein, Dr Hikmat Al-Baydani, Head of 3 minutes in 3 days Film Festival, poignantly noted that "Real stories are more powerful than imaginary ones; and this is powerfully illustrated in this year's 3x3 short film festival".

The productions showcased in the 3x3 Film Festival conveyed messages concerning the importance of the right to culture and freedom of expression exercised in Iraq. With female and male directors, producers and actors, the films demonstrated the passion by women, men and children in the film industry who are all telling compelling stories that would touch the hearts and minds of all Iraqis and highlight critical issues for minorities in particular and human rights issues in general.

With a public viewing planned for Sunday, 10 March 2019 at the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), the films will also be screened country-wide in the coming weeks, to encourage dialogue and provoke action by the government, communities and individuals to strengthen the protection of human rights in Iraqi society.



Films portray loss and human suffering as well as the resilience, beauty and strength of Iraqis, says UN Human Rights Chief in Iraq at the 3 x 3 Film Festival



Baghdad, 07 March 2019 – The United Nations in Iraq commended Iraqi filmmakers, directors, actors, musicians and artists for the production of twenty-four short films covering human rights issues in Iraq, as part of the 3 By 3 Film Festival held in Baghdad 3 to 5 March 2019.

The films were screened during the three-day festival, with each film illustrating the impact of discrimination against minorities, violence against women, conflict atrocities, access to education or other human rights concerns in a three-minute film produced entirely in Iraq.

The Festival, organized by the Baghdad Foundation for Cinema and Arts at Art City, with support from UN Human Rights Iraq, is named “3 By 3” as it runs for three days and only shows three-minute films. The Festival had two separate categories: Short films about minorities and human rights made by Iraqis; and all other short films, including foreign ones. Out of a total of nearly 900 films entered, twenty-four human rights films qualified for entry to the Human Rights and Minorities category and were screened throughout the festival, of which six were commissioned by UN Human Rights.

The UNAMI Human Rights Office in Iraq worked closely with the Baghdad Foundation of Cinema and Arts to make human rights and minorities a central theme of this year’s festival. Under the rules of the competition, each film was required to have a female writer, director or lead actor; pertain to minorities or human rights; and not promote sectarianism or hatred.

“My Music”, an animation film directed by Mortada Al-Ameri, won the Gold

Prize in the Human Rights and Minorities category of the festival. It highlights the right to culture by telling the story of a musician who tries to drown out the sounds of war through music, playing a piano amidst heavy gunfire. “The Black Lens”, a chilling account of the impact of corruption and impunity on Iraqi society, directed by Hussein Abu Shama, came second, while “Give Me a Chance”, a beautiful tale about how a clever boy overcomes poverty and discrimination to gain an education, directed by Omar Yassin, won Bronze. In her remarks at the launch of the Festival, the Head of the UN Human Rights Office in Iraq, Ms. Danielle Bell, said that “the films highlight contemporary challenges faced by minorities in Iraq and wider human rights issues, including disappearances, discrimination, violence against women, child abuse and poverty, and show the impact of the horrors inflicted by ISIL. They are not just stories. The films show the reality for many Iraqis. They portray great loss and human suffering but also the resilience, beauty and strength of Iraqis. These are powerful

messages of great relevance to Iraq as it transitions from conflict to peace”.

The Festival was adjudicated by a panel of three independent and renowned Iraqi and international judges: the prominent Iraqi musician and human rights activist Naseer Shamma, a UNESCO Artist for Peace; Intishal Al-Timimi a well-known Iraqi figure in the international film festival circuit; and Ms. Asli Kislal, an Austrian actress and film maker.

On 10 March 2019, the 3x3 short Film Festival culminated in Baghdad with a screening at the Iraq High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR). Over 300 participants attended the screening at the IHCHR and voted in a people’s choice selection of the top three films - in first place came Cinderella, followed by My Music and in third place, Black Lens. These films portray loss and human suffering but also the resilience and the strength of Iraqis, conveying powerful messages about issues of great importance to Iraq in its transition from conflict to peace.

On 4 April 2019 the UNAMI Human Rights Office awarded film grants to the directors of the top three films on minorities and human rights as chosen by an independent panel of judges at the recent 3 By 3 Film Festival in Baghdad. These grants will be used to support their next film projects.

A Certificate of Excellence and Appreciation was presented to Dr Hikmat Al-Baythani for his outstanding contribution to the Minorities and Human Rights Section of the 3 By 3 Film Festival. Other certificates were presented to film makers and actors including both the director and the lead actor in Cinderella, a film that has consistently ranked as the most popular film according to the results of People Choice voting by audiences in screenings in Baghdad and Anbar governorates.



Human rights and minorities related short movies showcased all over Iraq

Iraq, March- April 2019 - Twenty-four short films covering human rights and minority issues in Iraq, which were shown at the 3 By 3 Film Festival held in Baghdad 3 to 5 March 2019 were projected all over Iraq at the sessions organized by the UNAMI Human Rights Section in cooperation with local partners.



The tour started in **Fallujah** on 26 March 2019 where civil society activists, community and tribal leaders, representatives from the Iraqi Human Rights Commission (IHCHR), journalists and media representatives, and government officials convened at a joint discussion with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office at the Mayor's office.

The group engaged in in-depth discussions on human rights concerns including enforced disappearances, persons disabled through conflict, and women's and girls' issues including child marriage.



In **Ramadi**, on 27 March 2019, participants stressed local human rights concerns including enforced disappearances, persons disabled through conflict, the needs of and potential risks posed by children indoctrinated by ISIL, the need for greater protection of the environment and the impact of pollution on the health of local residents, prolonged detention of detainees without charge or trial, drug use in Ramadi and its impact, including among school children, the right to housing, the need for greater protection of freedom of expression, and greater freedoms for women

and girls in Ramadi.



On 8 April 2019, over a hundred participants attended the 3x3 short Film Festival screening at **Al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad**.



On the same day, about one hundred students of **Cihan University in Duhok** took part in the 3x3 Film Festival. After the screening students engaged in a discussion with an expert panel including the Director of the Dohuk Office of the Kurdistan Region Independent Board of Human Rights, Dler Abdullah, the Head of Aland Organization in Dohuk, Sherzad Pir Mousa, and Captain Sajida Ahmed, from the Office of Combating Violence Against Women in Dohuk. The films sparked discussion about the need for greater protection of minorities, accountability for ISIL crimes, especially against minorities, women's rights in the home, in the workplace, and in government, and the right of all children to a quality education, including displaced and refugee children in camps.



On 11 April 2019 over 110 students, human rights activists, and NGO staff working on minority rights joined UN-

AMI HRO at **Suliamaniyah Polytechnic University** for the screening of the leading Iraqi short films on minorities and human rights. The films inspired a vibrant panel discussion and Q and A session. Amal Jalal (KRG Women's Council), Manzar Ali (Minority rights activist), and Shno Osman (Womens NGO) raised a range of human rights concerns including: the impact of the war against ISIL on education; denial of basic rights to girls and women in the Kurdistan Region and federal Iraq, including by child marriages conducted by courts and religious leaders; measures needed to protect minorities including an end to politicization of minorities; the need for religious scholars to promote coexistence; the necessity of reviving mandatory education; the importance of promoting positive aspects of traditions and harmonizing traditions with human rights.



"Don't wait for government to act on human rights. It lacks resources. The community can do a lot." This was the call from a local human rights defender to participants at the Human Rights Film Festival in Muthanna Governorate, that was held on 14 April 2019 in **Samawa**.

Hosted by the Muthanna branch of the Iraqi Human Rights Commission, with technical support from the Muthanna Cinema Club, 90 Film Festival participants, mostly women, including members of Civil Society, the artistic community, high school teachers, and staff from the Ministry of Health and the Iraqi Human Rights Commission viewed the top short films on Minorities and Human Rights from the 3By3 Film Festival 2019. The films triggered a vibrant discussion of human rights priorities for Muthanna. While numerous speakers emphasized the need for greater access to employment, especially for women, and domestic violence against women and children, there were also calls to stop pollution and environmental harm which undermine the right to health and are widely be-

Human rights and minorities related short movies showcased all over Iraq (continued)

lieved to be causing a spike in cancer. Other human rights concerns raised by participants included child labour, forced marriage, child marriage, sexual violence against women and children, violations linked to drug abuse, barriers to persons with disabilities enjoying their human rights, and harmful traditions that prevent women from enjoying freedom of movement and exercising their right to work. One speaker noted that a talented painter couldn't display her work due to family restrictions. Another emphasized the importance of human rights awareness among those who supervise education.



In **Nassriyah, Thi-Qar**, on 15 April 2019 over 65 participants from civil society, the Sunni Endowment, Popular Mobilisation Movements, the Jurists Union and the Iraqi Human Rights Commission viewed the leading short films from the 3By3 Film Festival.

In discussions after the film screenings, panelists highlighted human rights concerns in Thi-Qar including widespread domestic violence, harmful traditions which undermine enjoyment of human rights by women, constraints on freedom of speech, poor quality education for children, the ongoing exodus of minorities, and lack of human rights awareness raising and promotion of human rights in society.

A woman human rights defender noted that Iraq has gone through eras of dictatorship and injustice and the accumulation of circumstances has left Iraqi society with a human rights deficit.



Sabbean and Christian minorities, tribal chiefs, women human rights defenders, Civil Society, and staff from the Iraqi Human Rights Commission, Martyr's Foundation, Cessation Court of Missan, human rights NGOs, and Iraqi Security Forces attended the Short Film Festival on Minorities and Human Rights in Missan Governorate, held in **Amara** on 16 April 2019.

During a discussion forum following the screening of the films, many of the 70 participants highlighted human rights concerns in Missan Governorate - the dominance of tribal norms and the impact on human rights. One speaker highlighted the tendency of many citizens to put tribal affiliations and loyalties before Iraqi law which undermines non-discrimination and equality before the law. Another noted the failure of the State to protect its citizens, especially minorities, from human rights violations. Others pointed out that reliance on tribal solutions was due to the failure of state institutions to prevent violations and halt impunity.

While praising the concept of a film festival highlight human rights violations in Iraq, one panelist from the Fine Arts college noted that the cinematography and performances in the films were good but some of the ideas could have been developed further. Another participant noted the importance of the films in highlighting human rights problems and social phenomena in Iraq. Meanwhile, a tribal sheikh said the movies reflect the reality in Iraq but expressed confidence that things will improve.

A female human rights defender on the panel noted that Missan is fortunate to have peaceful coexistence. An NGO employee affirmed this comment and claimed that it was the norm across Iraq before ISIL. Another person emphasized that sectarianism is relatively new and affects Iraqi society by undermining dignity and respect for all. One participant called for law reform to consolidate and support the values of human rights in society.



At the **University of Basra**, on 17 April 2019, 170 participants including students, NGOs, civil society, members of Christian and Sabbean minorities and the African descent community, academics from the University Fine Arts Department, and the head of the Ministry of Culture in Basra viewed the best short films. Hosted by the Fine Arts Department at the University of Basra, the event included a vibrant panel discussion and question and answer session with participants raising a range of human rights concerns including those relating to the actions of armed groups and tribes which cause many problems but cannot be challenged by civil society due to the power imbalance. Panelists included representatives of the community of people of African descent, the Sabbean community, a professor from Fine Arts Department and the manager of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights Basra office.

A female NGO staff member noted that women and girls who should be enjoying all of their rights are being subjected to forced and early marriages. A Sabbean woman noted that various films reflected the suffering and violations experienced by Iraqis, including violations of the right to life. Another participant stressed that some militias and tribes are preventing Iraqis from enjoying their rights and freedoms. Others noted that minorities have suffered excessively due to violence in Basra and other areas in Iraq. One student stated that the situation is chaotic due to the tribes who are filling a vacuum left by the failure of state authorities to do their job.

Some participants noted that the human rights concerns are well known but solutions are needed, stating that Human rights are legal guarantees and we should not have to rely on NGOs and INGOs to obtain them. Others expressed the view that Government authorities and officials are not acting to protect and promote the human rights of those they are supposed to serve but are acting in their own interests.

Solutions to these human rights problems need to come from the rule of law. For one speaker, the necessary sea-change begins with ourselves. We need a plan and collective effort. Female students stated that they cannot prevent forced and early marriages and called on men to join them and stand up for the rights of girls and women together. They stated that without the promotion of human rights, awareness

Human rights and minorities related short movies showcased all over Iraq (continued)

raising, cooperation and efforts by all, the future for Iraqi people will be no better. Students emphasized the inability of many graduates to exercise their right to work in their area of qualification, especially women due to very few job opportunities and discrimination in favour of males.

As at other screenings, votes cast by participants revealed that “Cinderella” was the most popular Iraqi short film among Basra viewers.



On 23 April 2019, about one hundred students of the **Polytechnic Institute in Kalar District** took part in the 3x3 Film Festival organized by the UNAMI Human Rights Office. After the screening students engaged with an expert panel including the Dean of the Polytechnic Institute, Dr. Chia M. Hassan, the Director of the Garmiyah Office of the Kurdistan Region Independent Board of Human Rights, Mr. Xabat Rasheed, and the Director of Talented Women Organization, Ms. Shno Osman. The films sparked discussion about the need for greater protection of minorities, women’s rights in the home, in the workplace, and in government, and the need to prosecute crimes committed by ISIL.

On 23 April 2019 160 participants, 40% of them women, including civil society, students, university professors, and media, celebrated the **Najaf** short film festival on minorities and human rights with UNAMI Human Rights Office.



Panelists noted that the short films reflected the reality in Iraq. Human rights concerns highlighted by the panel and the audience included forced marriage, child marriage, lack of access to education and health services in both rural areas and cities, and failure to take steps needed to enable persons with disabilities to exercise all their human rights.

Concerns were also raised about the impact of drug use on society. UNAMI Human Rights Office continues to screen the best short films on minorities and human rights (from the 3By3 Film Festival) across Iraq.



Students of the **Halabja Technical College for Applied Sciences** in Halabja Governorate took part in the 3x3 Film Festival organized by the UNAMI Human Rights Office on 24 April 2019. After the screening at the Halabja Technical College for Applied Sciences campus in Halabja, some of the 90 students who attended engaged with an expert panel including the Ms. Erad



San, Education Specialist, Ms. Soma Yassin, women’s rights activist and lawyer, and Dr. Fahmi A. Aziz, a psychiatrist, writer and civil activist. The films sparked discussion about the need for greater protection of minorities, women’s rights in the home, in the workplace, and in government, and the need to prosecute crimes committed by ISIL.



At the **University of Babil**, on 28 April 2019, 100 Fine Arts students and academics, the human rights section of Babil University, NGO staff, artists, and the Babil branch of the Iraqi High Commission of Human Rights (IHCHR) joined UNAMI HRO in celebrating the Minorities and Human Rights Film Festival.

In advance of the screening, the Dean of the Fine Arts Department emphasised that Iraq’s young generation want peace and reconciliation. The UN Human Rights Chief for Iraq, Ms. Danielle Bell, agreed and highlighted the important role of youth in peace building and social cohesion, noting that human right films may provoke much needed discussion on sensitive topics affecting Iraqis. This exchange of views may build trust, transparency and peaceful coexistence. Babil IHCHR highlighted human rights concerns in Babil including unemployment coinciding with crime and drug abuse.

The festival tour continues.



Discussion on Iraq's fulfilling of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 11 March 2019 - A roundtable discussion convened by UNAMF's Human Rights Office in Baghdad on 11 March 2019 brought together the National Reconciliation Commission in the Prime Minister's Office and the Human Rights Directorate in the Ministry of Justice as well as the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights

and representatives of minority communities. The meeting is in line with UNAMI HRO's continuing efforts to support the Government in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

A working group on the rights of minorities will be created to discuss issues

relating to the minorities, including recommendations to prioritize enactment of a Law criminalizing racial discrimination, the preservation and promotion of minority languages, and efforts to remove discriminatory civil documentation for some of the minorities.



Training on human rights investigations in Tikrit

Tikrit, 3 April 2019 - The Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) conducted today a training session in Tikrit on "Human Rights Investigation: Principles and Practical Guidance" with staff members of the Iraqi Independent High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) - Salah al-

Din office. The two-hour session was aimed at increasing the understanding of the participants on the principles to be observed in the conduct of human rights investigations. The training is part of a series of HRO trainings planned for 2019 to benefit IHCHR staff.



SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert visited the site of a mass grave that was unearthed near Samawa

Samawa, Iraq, 14 April 2019 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, together with President of the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Barham Salih, and the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Ms. Katharina Ritz, visited today the site of a mass grave that was unearthed near Samawa in Al-Muthanna Governorate in southern Iraq.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said such an event was a testament of Iraq's transformation since the days of the dictatorship.

"It is remarkable that a few decades ago the president was dealing with his people in such a way we are finding out here today, and today we are here with President Barham Salih and the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to deal with the horrific events of the past, to do justice."

Photos by UNAMI and courtesy of the Office of the President.



UNESCO hold the consultation meeting on Voluntary National Review (VNR) of Access of Information and Journalists Safety

Baghdad 15 April 2019 - UNESCO, in partnership with the Iraqi national Committee for the Safety of Journalists and issue of Impunity, and the Free-pressUnlimited organized a consultation meeting, on the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of SDGs 16.10.1 &2, to present the updated efforts for the preparation of a VNR and discuss challenges such as data availability and provide the opportunity for the UN system and international actors of media development as well as the CSOs to further consolidate its support for the production of the VNR and integration of the 2030 Agenda.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Qasim Hawal, the Special Adviser of PM, for Media and Culture, who stated, "on behalf of the Prime Minister, I encourage the Iraqi committee for safety of Journalists to undertake the voluntary national reviews (VNR), as a testament to the strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda at the national level". In his opening remarks, Mr. Hawal, noted the significance of having both the government and CSOs participants to share experiences and discuss challenges faced in the review process. He added "the government of Iraq is seeking to present the VNR of Iraq at the 2019 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development of the 2030 Agenda".

Mr. Kamel Amen, the representative of the Ministry of Justice, and the mem-

ber of the Safety Committee said in his speech "On behalf of the committee members, we seek to finalize this report before the end of this month so that we can launch it on the World Press Freedom Day 2019, and then submit it officially to the United Nations to be presented in New York on time".

"It's an important step for Iraq to hold meetings that gather both Iraqi government and civil society representatives to discuss the safety and protection of journalists and access to information on the context of the reviewing the VNR of Iraq," said Boris van Westering from freepressunlimited,

The members of the national committee of safety of journalists review the re-

port and covered the overview of the process that will lead up to the 2019 VNR, including holding an additional preparatory meeting next week with the respective national committee.

It was stated that the tentative deadline for the submission of the VNR would be 3 May 2019. The report, still in draft form, examines a range of topics addressed in the VNR, including awareness raising, involvement of stakeholders, institutional mechanisms to implement the 2030 Agenda, incorporation of the SDGs into national frameworks, means of implementation and capacity building needs regarding access to information and safety of journalists.



UNAMI Human Rights Office conducts training on fair trial guarantees in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 17 April 2019 - The Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) conducted the fifth and final training session for the staff of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR)-Kirkuk Office. The HRO gave

a one-hour presentation on "ICCPR Article 14: International Fair Trial Guarantees", which was followed by a plenary discussion. The training was attended by 12 staff members, including six women.

During the session, the HRO empha-

sized that the protection of human rights while countering terrorism is an obligation of States; and that the protection of human rights is a condition for an effective counter-terrorism strategy.



UNAMI Human Rights Office conducts training on national and international fair trial rights

Kirkuk, 23 April 2019 -- On 22 April, the Human Rights Office (HRO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Iraqi Bar Association-Kirkuk Chapter jointly conducted a training session on "Understanding national and international fair trial guarantees." Ten new practicing lawyers, including five women, participated in the training, which was followed by an interactive plenary discussion. The training is the first of a series of training sessions lined up this year for members of the Iraqi Bar Association in Kirkuk.

The training included a presentation on the rights of an accused person under Iraqi law and procedure, which was delivered by a recognised criminal law expert, local lawyer Muyad Obaid Alezzi. It also included a presentation by the HRO on the international fair trial guarantees as provided for in Article 14 of the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iraq is a state party.

The training stressed that the protection of human rights while countering terrorism is an obligation of States, and that the protection of human rights is a condition for an effective counter-

terrorism strategy. It was also demonstrated that all counter-terrorism measures must comply with States' international human rights obligations, including the right to a fair trial. This is essential in ensuring the proper administration of justice.



UNITAD

UNITAD working with Government of Iraq to commence exhumation of mass grave site at Kojo, Sinjar Region

Baghdad, 14 March 2019 - Tomorrow, UNITAD (United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL) will support the work of the Government of Iraq in conducting exhumations related to victims of Da'esh/ISIL crimes. This will be the first exhumation in the Sinjar region and will take place in the village of Kojo.

Evidence suggests that hundreds of villagers from Kojo - men, adolescent boys, and women perceived to be past child-bearing age - were murdered by ISIL fighters in August 2014, while more than 700 women and children were abducted. Women and girls over the age of 9 are understood to have been forced into sexual slavery, where they suffered a wide range of violations; boys over the age of 7 are said to have been forcibly recruited and made to fight as part of ISIL.

The Mass Graves Directorate within the Martyr's Foundation and the Medical Legal Directorate under the Iraqi Ministry of Health will lead the exhumation and the retrieval of forensic evidence. This process will be conducted with the guidance and support of UNITAD. Those exhumed and any other evidence recovered will be removed from the site for forensic analysis. This

effort constitutes part of the investigation of Da'esh/ISIL crimes in order to identify those most responsible. It will also serve the very important function of identifying the victims so that their remains can be returned to their families for burial in accordance with their wishes, and with full respect for their religious or cultural practices.

Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team Karim A. A. Khan QC stated:

"Friday 15 March 2019 constitutes an important moment: The first of many grave sites in Sinjar which contain the remains of Da'esh/ISIL victims will be exhumed. UNITAD recognises the patience and resilience of the survivors and their families, who have waited so long for this process to begin. The road towards accountability is a long one, and many challenges lay ahead. Notwithstanding this, the spirit of cooperation between the survivor community and the Government of Iraq is to be applauded. UNITAD's priority throughout this process will be the collection of evidence in a manner that meets international standards with full regard to the rights and interests of survivors and the families of victims."

The exhumation will commence with a memorial ceremony led by Yazidi reli-

gious leaders, followed by speeches from senior Government figures and representatives of the Yazidi community.

UNITAD takes this opportunity to commend the efforts of the Government of Iraq for the support and cooperation it has extended to UNITAD throughout this process.

Kojo, 15 March 2019 - Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team Karim Khan pays tribute to survivors and families of victims of the 2014 massacre of Yazidis at Kojo, Sinjar at memorial ceremony for the fallen ahead of commencement of exhumation of mass grave.



Government of Iraq, UNITAD conclude first Sinjar mass grave exhumation in Kojo village

Baghdad, 21 March 2019 – UNITAD (United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL) announced this morning the completion of the first exhumation of a Yazidi mass grave in the Sinjar region, in the village of Kojo. UNITAD reports that the victims' remains and associated evidence have safely arrived at the Medico-Legal Directorate in Baghdad.

The exhumation was conducted by the Mass Graves Directorate within the Martyrs' Foundation, the Medico-Legal Directorate under the Iraqi Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal of the Kurdistan Regional Government, guided and supported by UNITAD's team of forensic and legal experts.

The exhumation process was preceded by a memorial ceremony in Kojo, attended by H.E. Dr Mahdi Al-Alaq, the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, alongside other senior level government representatives. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad, herself a survivor of the Da'esh massacre and mass abductions at Kojo, and a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations, also spoke, calling for stability in the Sinjar region.

Following the memorial service, His Holiness Baba Sheikh Khurto Hajji Ismail and senior clergy led the several hundred attendees, many themselves survivors of Da'esh crimes and relatives of those killed or abducted, in a religious ceremony at the grave site, which concluded with the release of white doves, the universal symbol of peace.

In line with UNITAD's mandate to support the wellbeing of those affected by



these crimes, a psycho-social support unit was made available to grieving attendees.

Having first confirmed the absence of incendiary or explosive devices at the site with the support of MAG International, the investigation team excavated the site, successfully exposing the remains of up to 30 individuals. The precise number will be confirmed following forensic analysis at the Medico-Legal Directorate in Baghdad.

Concluding the five-day exhumation process, the remains were extracted from the site and stored in a specially adapted secure vehicle for transportation to Baghdad.

UNITAD Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team Karim A. A. Khan QC stated: "UNITAD extends its sincere gratitude to the crime scene investigation and forensic teams of the

Government of Iraq. Their work during the exhumation process, guided by UNITAD specialists, was completed in line with international best practices, and their commitment to this work, has been exemplary."

The next phase of the investigation is the forensic analysis of all evidence collected at Kojo, with a view to advancing UNITAD investigations of Da'esh crimes. As an important part of this process, UNITAD hopes that the bodies and remains recovered may be identified and then returned to their surviving family members for burial in accordance with their wishes and their cultural or religious beliefs.

Special Adviser Khan, addressing the local community, stated: "You have already waited a long time. And I'm sorry to say you will have to wait longer. Because the road to real justice is a long one."

"On the occasion of Newroz, Kurdish New Year, we look ahead to the coming twelve months and pledge that independent investigations required will continue, so that the demands of justice and the requirement of accountability in fair trials can be achieved. At all times, UNITAD will ensure that the views and concerns of the survivors and families of victims, will be at the centre of our work so that they, the people of Iraq and the international community, may realise accountability for the heinous crimes they have endured, which may amount to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity."

UNITAD will return to Sinjar region to support ongoing investigations into Da'esh crimes before the commencement of Ramadan.



Government of Iraq, UNITAD, united in ongoing exhumations in Sinjar, Iraq

Baghdad, 31 March 2019 - UNITAD (United Nations Investigative Team for the Promotion of Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL) confirms ongoing forensic and technical support for the teams of the Government of Iraq, announcing the continuation throughout April of exhumations of gravesites located in the village of Kojo, Sinjar Region, Nineveh.

Performed by the Mass Graves Directorate (part of the Martyrs' Foundation) headed by Mr. Diyaa Karim Tu'ma, and the Medico Legal Directorate (under the Ministry of Health) headed by Dr. Zaid Ali Abbas, the next set of exhumations will expand the ground-breaking work conducted in the village during March 2019, the site of the massacre of hundreds of Yazidi men and women in August 2014.

Mr. Mohammed Taher Al-Tamimi, General Director of the NGO Directorate and Chairman of the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Operations Room acts as the focal point for the Government teams across the process, synergising cooperation and ensuring that best practices are adhered to at all times. He commented:

"We are proud to say that the first exhumation operation in Kojo was delivered successfully, in line with all legal requirements and international best practices, and in coordination with the specialists from UNITAD. The efforts of our team were tremendous in managing this process, which is of great

concern to all Iraqis. As we move forward with the next phase, we will continue to work with our partners to deliver accountability for our Iraqi brothers and sisters."

UNITAD Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team Karim A. A. Khan QC, stated:

"UNITAD is delighted with the spirit of cooperation, commitment and professionalism displayed by the teams from the Government of Iraq, led by Mr. Mohammed Taher Al-Tamimi. This next phase of exhumations in Kojo shows that the national and interna-

tional communities are united in support of accountability for Iraqis of all faiths, and all communities."

The UNITAD team will include the head of its forensic unit as well as the senior lawyer responsible for Sinjar investigations.

The next phase of exhumation work will be coordinated with the assistance of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) with which UNITAD has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to conduct further exhumations, in line with recognised international standards.



Special Adviser Khan meets with the Iraqi PR to UN al-Uloom to discuss ongoing cooperation in pursuit of accountability for Da'esh crimes

New York, 24 April 2019 - United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh (UNITAD) Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team, Karim A. A. Khan QC, met with Ambassador Mohammed Bahr al-Uloom, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, along with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Nadia Murad Basee, to discuss ongoing cooperation in pursuit of accountability for Da'esh crimes.



New season, new clothes

Baghdad, 26 February 2019 - There are more than 3 million Iraqis living in poverty, made worse by the recent war in Iraq. As their savings and financial potential dwindle, many families are struggling to provide winter clothes for their children.

In response to this need, UNICEF Iraq helped to protect displaced children from the cold winter by distributing more than 161,000 sets of winter clothing this year.

Winter clothes prices are usually high, we do not have the money to buy them, the content of this box, the clothes in here, are very useful.

Each bag is good for one child and it contains boots, a winter jacket, a sports suit, a scarf, gloves, socks, and a hat. In the picture, above, ten-year-old Fahima, who is originally from Sinjar, opens a box containing new winter clothes in Qaida IDP camp in Dohuk.

"I was sad when I saw my daughter wearing old clothes in this cold. Now in

these boxes there are beautiful clothes with bright colors", Farah's father explained

UNICEF works with partners to ensure that every child in Iraq is warm. More than 161,000 winter clothing kits have

been distributed to displaced children across the country so far, with the generous support of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Swedish Committee.

By Anmar Rfaat, UNICEF



IOM's shelter team rehabilitates houses for a safe return of IDPs

Baghdad, 27 February 2019 - When Hasna returned to her home she found her place had been severely affected during ISIL's occupation of Khan Daari in Abu Ghraib district. Her house had no windows, no doors, no sanitation, no electricity, and a damaged roof.

Hasna is an 81-years-old widow and has a frail health; she has a weak heart, high blood pressure and diabetes, and no source of income or family support.

"When I returned home after the city was retaken, most of the houses in my neighborhood were destroyed and some were badly damaged, including mine. There were water leaks everywhere because of damage to the roof, and there was mud all over the place," said Hasna.

With funding from the Government of Germany, IOM's shelter team fully rehabilitated Hasna's house, repairing the roof, toilet, and walls.



Iraq: "Internally displaced persons must be presented with options beyond life in a camp" – Humanitarian Coordinator

Baghdad, 4 March 2019 - Although the humanitarian context in Iraq has transitioned into a new phase, vulnerable people continue to face immense challenges. Six million people were displaced during the conflict against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 2014 to 2017. While more than 4 million people have returned to their communities, approximately 1.8 million people remain displaced, and 54 per cent of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been displaced for three or more years. The prolonged nature of their displacement has led to increased vulnerabilities among IDPs; in 11 districts throughout Iraq, displaced persons are facing a very high severity of needs.

Approximately 11 per cent of the roughly 4 million returnees are in locations



Iraq: “Internally displaced persons must be presented with options beyond life in a camp” – Humanitarian Coordinator *(continued)*

where living conditions are not considered to be adequate, dignified and safe. While significant efforts are underway to reconstruct infrastructure and restore basic services across the country, it will take years to rebuild Iraq. Almost 138,000 residential buildings were impacted by the conflict.

Changing the course of action

Humanitarian partners are adjusting their way of working to adapt to a new landscape, as the country transitioned from being a nation gripped by the armed conflict to one where normal life is slowly but surely resuming. And protracted displacement is one critical area the current response aims to address.

"Iraq's approximately 1.8 million remaining IDPs must be presented with options beyond life in an IDP camp", said the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, "and the international community—in partnership with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government—must begin preparing for this eventuality.

However, it is becoming more obvious each day that certain groups will need extra support if they are ever to make the transition back to their communities—among these groups, families with perceived affiliations to extremist organizations are among the most vulnerable".

Sulaymaniyah Governorate, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, hosts approximately 150,000 IDPs, over 90 per cent of whom live outside of traditional IDP camp settings. IDPs outside of camps do not enjoy the same level of support from humanitarian partners as those in camps, and largely rely on the generosity of host communities. Increased support to out-of-camp IDPs is one of the priorities of the 2019 Iraq HRP.

Education is a priority

On 26 February, Ms. Ruedas visited Sulaymaniyah and met with the Governor of the province to examine firsthand the needs of the IDP community, discuss how to help those who are willing and able to return to their areas of origin, and consider possibilities for

integration for those who want to stay in Sulaymaniyah. She visited the Ashti IDP camp together humanitarian service providers working on health, education and gender issues.

One humanitarian priority for both in-camp and out-of-camp IDPs in Sulaymaniyah is improved access to educational services. There are not enough teachers in Sulaymaniyah for schools which cater to IDP children; many IDP schools have only one or two teachers who receive a salary from the government; other teachers are supported directly by IDP families through the collection of monthly economic “incentives,” which has financial and protection implications for IDPs. In 12 out-of-camp schools, IDP parents also pay the rent for the school building because it is not a government-owned facility. Such circumstances are one of the consequences of protracted displacement, as host communities try to contend with unexpected population increases.

Access to education remains a critical issue across Iraq, with an estimated 2.6 million children out of school. "The humanitarian community has an obligation to ensure that minimum standards are maintained, and camps with poor infrastructure in remote locations which host a limited number of families are not efficient or effective at serving the needs of IDPs", concluded Ms. Rueda. "Thus, camp consolidation and the transfer of IDPs to larger camps with better service provision - including schools - is one of the goals of humanitarian actors in Iraq in 2019".



New UNHCR representative in Iraq visited Hassansham camp for internally displaced in East Mosul

Mosul, 11 March 2019 - Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh, new UNHCR representative in Iraq visited Hassansham camp for internally displaced in East Mosul. "We work with partners to support better living conditions and sustainable return", Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh said to representatives of 5,400 residents living in the camp.



UNHCR Iraq welcomes Japan's announcement of a further USD 13 million in funding to support Iraqi IDPs and returnees and Syrian refugees in Iraq

Baghdad, 18 March 2019 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency welcomed a generous contribution of USD 13 million from the Government and people of Japan to protect and assist Internally Displaced People (IDPs), returnee families, and Syrian refugees across Iraq. Japan's funding will help UNHCR work with local stakeholders and partners to support the targeted communities with cash assistance, quick impact projects, legal assistance, and psychosocial prevention and response activities in response of sexual and gender-based violence.

Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR representative in Iraq said 'Japan's generous contribution demonstrates commitment to supporting Iraq's transition out of emergency and pave the way for solutions.' Gharaibeh also added 'it will also support UNHCR's efforts to reshape its strategic priorities to feed into the transition to stability while addressing the

needs of Iraqi IDPs, returnees, and Syrian refugees across Iraq.'

With Japan's support, UNHCR will be able to launch various quick impact projects for the benefit of around 18,000 individuals in 2019. Up to six quick impact projects are expected to improve and expand service facilities in out of camps situations across Iraq. Furthermore, up to 6000 individuals will receive legal assistance services thanks to these funds. The additional funds from Japan will help UNHCR in providing monthly cash assistance for more than 6,953 vulnerable IDPs families and 700 refugee families across the country.

H.E. Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, expressed Japan's commitment to providing necessary services to the vulnerable people, he said, "Japan has recently decided new assistance package for Iraq amounting to 63 million US Dollars including this project as

contribution to IDPs, returnees and Syrian refugees in meeting their basic needs. With this package, total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis has reached 500 million US Dollars."

The Government of Japan has been one of UNHCR's most important contributors in the last years. Thanks to the generous contributions of Japan, thousands of IDPs, returnees and Syrian refugees in Iraq have benefited from enhanced assistance in past years.

Today, more than 1.8 million Iraqis remain internally displaced. Returns of IDPs to areas of origin increased at a steady rate in 2018 and is likely continue in 2019, but many among the returnees are facing constrained access to basic services and security. Iraq also continues to host a large Syrian refugee community of around 252,526 individuals.

OCHA Iraq visited out-of-camp IDP families in Mesirik village

Erbil, 18 March 2019 - OCHA Iraq visited today out-of-camp IDP families in Mesirik village, in Dohuk. The families highlighted their need for food and cash assistance and confirmed that they have not received any type of humanitarian assistance during the last two years. The displaced families have no plan to return to their areas of origin in the near future due to security conditions in their home districts. Per Mesirik local authorities, around 1,000 IDPs families live in Mesirik village; the majority are from Mosul, Zummar and Sinjar.



UNHCR provides emergency assistance to flood affected IDPs in Anbar

Baghdad, 18 March 2019 - Recent storms destroyed shelters for displaced Iraqis in Anbar Governorate. UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) immediately responded with emergency tents and supplies for over 450 families.



IOM launches Funding Appeal to address most urgent humanitarian needs in areas of displacement and return in Iraq

Erbil, 29 March 2019 - Five years after the onset of the ISIL crisis and the subsequent massive internal displacement, IOM Iraq is launching its funding appeal for emergency assistance in the amount of USD 41.4 million.

Although the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has gradually declined since 2015, there are still around 1,750,000 Iraqis living in displacement as of February 2019, due to significant obstacles to return such as damage to houses; lack of livelihoods and basic services; perceptions of insecurity in areas of origin; and mental and psychosocial distress. Around a third of the current population of IDPs, over 530,000 persons, is still living in camps, which require critical support. IOM's funding appeal is aligned with the 2019 United Nations' Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Iraq, which estimates that approximately 6.7 million people are in critical need of support. Nearly 65 per cent of those are concentrated in Ninewa, Anbar, and

Salah al-Din, the governorates most severely affected by the recent conflict. IOM will focus its humanitarian support in Iraq on three groups of concern: IDPs who remain in displacement both within and outside camps, vulnerable host communities in areas of displacement and return – where services are overstretched – and IDPs who have returned to their areas of origin but whose basic humanitarian needs are not being met.

In 2019, IOM plans to maintain its life-saving assistance to IDPs in camp settings through the provision of Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) support, providing primary health services, monitoring and addressing protection and psychosocial needs, supporting Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services, and supporting camp co-ordination and camp management (CCCM) of IDP camps and informal settlements.

The appeal also includes a request for the continuation of IOM Iraq's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

which provides real-time reliable quantitative and qualitative data on displacement and returns.

"We highly appreciate IOM's efforts to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to displaced families in and out of camps as well as support them upon return their communities of origin. We look forward to our continued cooperation in 2019," said Naseer Abdel-Sattar, Executive Director of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre (JCMC) of the Government of Iraq.

"The protracted displacement crisis is one of the critical challenges that needs our focused attention, as many displaced people still depend entirely on the provision of humanitarian assistance. The local resources and capacities are already overstretched and pushed to the limit. IOM has been one of the key partners to provide life-saving assistance to the displaced people inside and outside the camps. We value the continued support and cooperation with IOM to support the most vulnerable people," said Hoshang Mohamed, the Director General of Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC) in Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government. "Funding for humanitarian assistance is crucial to uphold the basic needs and dignity of vulnerable Iraqis in displacement and areas of return. It will prevent a reversal of the gains made to stabilize areas that have been most severely affected by the conflict," said Gerard Waite, IOM Iraq's Chief of Mission.

"Through partnership and collaboration with other humanitarian partners, the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government and local NGOs, we hope to address the most critical humanitarian needs while seeking durable solutions for those in protracted displacement," he added.



UNFPA provides dignity kits to floods victims

Baghdad, 4 April 2019 - The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iraq distributed 301 dignity kits to women and girls affected by the recent flood in Fendi of Alam district and Qadriyah and Albo Saleh Al-Hasan of Sumoom area in Salah al-Din, as well as in Khurnabat, Howedir and Al-Mustafa areas in Diyala. In some areas, the team transported the dignity kits by boat because of the high level of water. Distribution was also supported by local government offices and Mukhtars.

On 5 April 2019, UNFPA in Iraq supported the distribution of 75 dignity kits in Khan Ali Liwalwa area, Baquba, in Diyala. Women and girls who received the kits were from low-income farmer households, whose lands were affected by the flood due to the proximity to Diyala river.

Dramatic photos continue to emerge from the central governorates of the effects of heavy rains and flooding. OCHA Iraq is continuously monitoring the situation.



UN-Habitat conducts vocational training sessions for community members including women in Zanjilli, West Mosul, to support their livelihood

Mosul, 12 April 2019 - Under the project “Support to Reconstruction and Peacebuilding of Liberated Cities in Iraq” generously funded by the Government of Japan, UN-Habitat is working with Peace Winds Japan to conduct vocational training sessions for community members including women in Zanjilli, West Mosul, to support their livelihood. Fifty (50) community members, including 10 women, have successfully completed their training courses. After graduation, they will gain on-the-job training in the construction industry to practice the knowledge and skills obtained during the sessions.



How to handle relief goods in the aftermath of a natural disaster workshop held in Erbil



Erbil, 14 April 2019 – “Gard Your Airport” workshop was held between 14 and 18 April 2019 in Erbil. UNDP in Iraq and Deutsche Post DHL shared knowledge and experience with 30 airport staff from Erbil and Sulaymaniyah international airports as well as employees from relevant government agencies, ministries and civil protection units on how to handle relief goods in the aftermath of a natural disaster. To make post-disaster airport management less chaotic and airport staff better prepared to facilitate relief, it is critical to get prepared before disaster happen. This workshop was organized and facilitated by UNDP’s Environment, Energy and Climate Change (EECC) programme in partnership with DHL.

UN Strategic Prioritization Retreat held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 15 April 2019 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General and UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Marta Ruedas, European Union Ambassador,

Mr. Ramon Blecua, and NGO Coordinating Committee of Iraq Executive Director, Mr. Aaron Moore, at the launch the UN Strategic Prioritization Retreat. The event brought together

government, civil society, international partners and the UN System to discuss the priorities of United Nations for 2020 – 2024 in support of Iraq’s development objectives.



IOM is supporting IDP families with rental assistance to improve their socio-economic condition

Kirkuk, 16 April 2019 - "I cannot describe the joy my children felt when they were able watch the rain falls through the window without being surrounded by mud. For the last three years, we lived in a tent and were worried every single time it rained. The tent did not protect us from the elements, and we were in a pitiful situation" said Firas, 34, father of two.

Firas' family and 164 other displaced families who lived in a camp for displaced Iraqis in Kirkuk were left without shelter when the camp was closed down. IOM, with funding from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), is supporting these families with rental assistance to improve their socio-economic condition and to allow them to prioritize other needs including health and medication, food, and livelihood opportunities.



"Thanks to the cash for rental assistance, I was able to leave the camp, rent a house in Kirkuk, and start a business by renting a store next to my

house where I sell chickens. Now I can support my family and meet all their needs" added Firas.

Kirkuk Acting Governor met with the Humanitarian Community in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 16 April 2019 - While meeting the humanitarian community in Kirkuk today Acting Governor, Rakan Sai'd Ali Radwan al-Jubouri, outlined the local government key priorities in support of IDPs in 2019.

Much like the Humanitarian Response Plan 2019, they included more focus on restoration of basic services including Shelter, Health, WASH, education and electricity to support safe and dignified return of IDPs to their areas of origin; rehabilitation and reconstruction of about 130 villages that were destroyed during the conflict and rebuilding the livelihoods of the returned IDPs.

He expressed appreciation for the tremendous work the humanitarian partners have carried out augmenting government effort to support IDPs in and out of the camps.

He pledged continued government support to facilitate humanitarian work in the post-conflict transition towards durable solutions for the IDPs.

Announcing improved access and secu-

rity situation, he requested the humanitarian partners to expand geographic coverage of the project sites.

Humanitarian partners requested for better coordination within the government structures to better facilitate their work. In support of IDPs unwilling or unable to return, because condi-

tions are not conducive in their areas of origin, it was mutually agreed Laylan 1 and 2 camps in Kirkuk will remain open until the conditions are assessed conducive for all IDPs to return.

By Aziku Santus, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UN OCHA



New studies reveal state of protracted displacement and prospects for local integration in Iraq

Erbil, 19 April 2019 — IOM Iraq recently completed two sets of complementary studies that examined the factors behind protracted displacement in Iraq, as well as the prospects of displaced Iraqi families integrating their host communities.

The first part of the study had a dual focus, analyzing both the main districts of origin and displacement, thereby identifying the obstacles to return for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and assessing how they are faring in areas of displacement and return.

The findings reveal that for 41 per cent of IDPs, Mosul and Sinjar (Ninewa) are the districts of origin, while a quarter originate from the districts of Al-Hawiga in Kirkuk, Baiji in Salah al Din, Falluja and Ramadi in Anbar, and Telafar and Al-Ba'aj in Ninewa.

New studies reveal state of protracted displacement ... *(continued)*

Over six million Iraqis have been internally displaced since the ISIL conflict erupted in 2014, with slightly more than 1.7 million remaining in displacement.

While 61 per cent of these IDPs are currently considered to be in protracted displacement, meaning they have been displaced for over 3 years, nearly all of them are at risk of long-term displacement. Indeed, as the study shows, IDPs are not (or only very slowly) moving out of their districts of displacement (less than 15% since May 2018) and nearly all planned on staying in displacement for at least the next 12 months.

The main reason cited by IDPs to remain in displacement is destruction of their houses in their communities of origin; more out-of-camp (52%) IDPs reported this as an obstacle than IDPs residing in camp (38%).

The second study, jointly implemented

by IOM Iraq, the Returns Working Group (RWG) and Social Inquiry, explored the extent and likelihood of local integration of long-term displaced families in Sulaymaniah and Baghdad governorates.

“Determinants of IDP Integration into Host Communities in Iraq” examines the case on two fronts: the experience and perceptions of IDPs in their location of displacement, as well as the host communities’ experience. It identifies factors that make IDPs feel more integrated in their host community and, vice versa, what makes host community more likely to accept them.

The overall study shows that an IDP’s economic situation is a major factor that affects their integration. For instance, IDPs with savings during their time of displacement are more likely to feel integrated in a host community.

“We cannot develop effective strategies

for durable solutions to displacement if we do not understand why many Iraqis remain in displacement, and we cannot facilitate these durable solutions if we do not understand what factors can facilitate or block the return or integration of the displaced population,” said Marta Ruedas, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq. “These studies conducted by IOM and its partners are extremely timely as the United Nations’ Country Team in Iraq is in the process of advising and assisting the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to provide dignified, sustainable solutions for the many Iraqi families that remain in displacement.”

“UKAID is pleased to have supported IOM Iraq with these two innovative studies that shed further light on how to unlock protracted displacement in Iraq,” said Jim Carpy, Representative of the UK’s Department for International Development in Iraq. “The key findings and recommendations will inform programmes and policies aimed at advancing durable solutions to displacement.”

“Research studies like these are instrumental for humanitarian and development actors alike, to ensure sustainable integration of IDPs in their communities of origin and return,” said Gerard Waite, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission. “We are pleased to have contributed to an increased understanding on the debate of durable solutions in Iraq, and we look forward to supporting the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government in this endeavor.”



Humanitarian Community appeals for US\$701 million to reach 1.75 million Iraqis with assistance

Baghdad, 29 April 2019 - The humanitarian community in Iraq is appealing for US\$701 million this year to support 1.75 million highly vulnerable people, including a million internally displaced persons, struggling with the legacy of conflict and mass-displacement that engulfed the country from 2014 to 2017. The 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan was launched at a conference on the return of displaced persons in Baghdad today, alongside, and in complement to, the Government of Iraq’s humanitarian plans for 2019.

“Humanitarian needs in Iraq have evolved since the end of large-scale military operations in late 2017,” said Ayman Gharaibeh, the acting Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. “We are beginning to see a return to normal life

in many parts of the country, but millions still need help to recover after years of conflict and trauma.”

The focus of humanitarian operations in Iraq has shifted from providing immediate assistance to those fleeing vio-



Humanitarian Community appeals for US\$701 million to reach 1.75 million Iraqis with assistance *(continued)*

lence, to a response that addresses the diverse and nuanced needs of vulnerable people in Iraq's post-conflict transition.

Comprehensive assessments and strengthened data analysis identified 6.7 million people as requiring humanitarian assistance in 2019. The 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan has prioritized 1.75 million people for assistance over the next year.

"The most urgent needs are in areas where hostilities have destroyed local infrastructure and led to a breakdown of public services and community cohesion" said Mr. Gharaibeh. "Many communities generously welcomed families displaced during the crisis but are struggling to cope with this added population pressure in the long-term."

Out of the six million people displaced during the 2014 to 2017 crisis, over four million people have since returned to their homes, while some 1.74 million people remain displaced today.

The Plan will guide United Nations agencies and NGO partners in delivering humanitarian aid to 500,000 men, women, and children living in IDP camps; 550,000 displaced Iraqis living

in out-of-camp environments; 500,000 returnees; and 200,000 Iraqis who live in vulnerable host communities.

"We expect the need for humanitarian assistance to persist in areas that were most directly impacted by major military operations," said Mr. Gharaibeh. "Our clear focus in 2019 is on helping all vulnerable returnees and displaced people resume a normal life in safety and dignity. This also means continuing assistance to displaced people for whom returning to home areas is not an option, until alternative, sustainable

solutions can be found."

The 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan includes the activities of 94 humanitarian partners, delivering assistance in 30 priority districts across ten Iraqi governorates. In 2018, 2.9 million people were reached with humanitarian assistance in 107 districts. The reduced scope of the response this year, compared to 2018, reflects the changing context and nature of needs in Iraq, and a planned transition from humanitarian relief towards recovery and durable solutions.



Stabilization and Development

A youth leadership and creativity camp held in Namroud

Qaraqosh, 28 February 2019 - "We were displaced in Erbil for three years. When my family finally decided to return to Qaraqosh, we arrived to find that everything had been destroyed, burned, and plundered. The town was completely empty, streets full of rubble, and there were no signs of life. The dynamic felt strange, which had a negative impact on my emotional state and mental health because I grew up in Qaraqosh and I am attached to it as my place of origin, and because of my neighbors and close friends.

It was very difficult at the beginning, but my parents helped me to overcome my mental health problems through their continuous support. In addition, my regular participation in IOM community center activities to bring life back to the community helped me to meet new friends and become more confident and stronger. Sometimes we volunteer in cleaning campaigns and planting trees in public areas," said Nadine, 15 years old.

Nadine was one of 80 secondary

schools' students from Qaraqosh between 13 -18 years of age who participated in a youth leadership and creativity camp in Namroud. The camp, led and facilitated by 20 youth volunteers, aimed to build the interpersonal skills

and individual resilience of participants and empower youth to lead change within their communities.

These activities are supported by USAID - US Agency for International Development.



The People of Japan stand by women in Iraq with a US\$ 1.3 million contribution to UNFPA

Baghdad, 03 March 2019 – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) extends its gratitude to the Government and People of Japan for the generous contribution of US\$ 1,339,285 to increase access to reproductive health services and strengthen the response to gender-based violence across Iraq.

While the country moves towards the reconstruction and resilience phase, the need for humanitarian assistance persists, and services established by UNFPA during the crisis need to be sustained in areas of internally displaced persons and returnees, and camps for refugees.

This new commitment will ensure increased access to emergency obstetric and newborn care (EmONC) as well as regular reproductive health services through the financing of 21 reproductive health clinics across the country. The contribution will also go towards providing survivor-centred case management and psychosocial support to gender-based violence survivors at the UNFPA-supported women centres, capacity-building of service providers as well as community mobilisation for gender-based violence prevention.

Expressing Japan's commitment to providing necessary services to the

vulnerable people, including women and children, H.E. Mr Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq said: "Japan has recently decided a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to US\$ 63 million, including this project as a contribution to the reproductive health and gender-based violence sectors. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches US\$ 500 million."

"A timely intervention is critical for preventing maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity," said Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, acknowledging the generous contribution from Japan. "This new funding will enable UNFPA to provide timely and quality response to the reproductive health needs and gender-based violence-related issues in six governorates across Iraq."

The Government of Japan has been a



key partner to UNFPA, contributing a total of US\$ 10,552,085 million over four years in support of the Fund's interventions and services to women and girls across Iraq.

As of 1 February 2019, UNFPA had only received 29 per cent of the required funding, a total of US\$ 6.4 million out of the US\$ 22 million required for its humanitarian interventions in the country targeting 700,000 individuals through reproductive health services and 400,000 persons with the gender-based violence response.

Support for Iraq stabilization continues with EUR 2.4 million contribution from Italy

Baghdad, 03 March 2019 – The Government of Italy has contributed an additional USD 2.7 million (EUR 2.4 million) to UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) supporting communities affected by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), taking its total contribution to USD 12.9 million.

"Iraq was officially declared free from ISIL just over one year ago, but that doesn't mean efforts to stabilize the country are over," says Mr. Gerardo Noto, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. for Iraq. "Now is not the time to be scaling back funding for a programme that has helped almost three million displaced Iraqis return home."

"It's very heartening to see countries like Italy acknowledging this and reaffirming their commitment to helping communities across Iraq rebuild their lives. We are grateful for this support and we look forward to continue serving the people of Iraq," adds Mr Noto.

"Italy maintains its commitment in supporting Iraq's stabilization efforts to provide basic services to the newly lib-

erated areas," says Italian Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Bruno Pasquino.

"This fourth contribution to the FFS is a testimony of the full engagement of Italy for the people of Iraq, as a qualified partner in various fields, from the provision of services to the rehabilitation of infrastructure and to the capacity-building activity in favour of the Iraqi Security Forces," adds Ambassador Pasquino.

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism.

The Facility currently

has more than 3,100 projects underway in 31 liberated cities and districts, helping local authorities to quickly rehabilitate essential infrastructure. More than 95 percent of all stabilization projects are done by the local private sector employing local labour.



UNHCR donates 2 waste collection trucks to the Hawija municipality to support rehabilitation efforts

Hawija, 3 March 2019 – UNHCR Iraq Deputy Representative, Ms. Christine Matthews, visited Hawija where she was received by the city council. The visit aimed to follow up on UNHCR quick impact projects in Hawija and to donate 2 waste collection trucks to the municipality to support rehabilitation efforts.



First comprehensive labor market survey concerning the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Iraq presented in Baghdad

Baghdad, 6 March 2019 - Tomas Reyes Ortega, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Iraq, took



part today in the presentation of the first comprehensive labor market survey concerning the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Iraq. This is one of the outcomes of the EU financed project "Reforming TVET in Iraq" that is implemented by UNESCO. This project has brought together the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Prime Minister Advisory Committee and the TVET Higher Committee.

In his remarks, Mr. Reyes Ortega un-

derlined the importance that the EU attaches to TVET as part of a lifelong learning process which can provide Iraqis with knowledge, know-how, skills and the competences required on the labour market, and the importance of developing a sound private sector in the country, echoing the words of the Deputy Minister of Planning, Mr. Qasim Enaya, who also attended the event. Mr. Reyes Ortega acknowledged the work of all parties involved as the project, which started in 2015, comes to an end in June. TVET will continue to be very present in future EU financed projects in Iraq.

The National Data Platform for Reconstruction and Development: an innovative tool to promote sustainable recovery and resilience launched online by the Government of Iraq and UN-Habitat

Baghdad, 11 March 2019 - The Ministry of Planning and the Council of Ministers Secretariat, together with UN-Habitat, today publicly launched the National Platform for Reconstruction and Development. For more than one year, UN-Habitat has been working very closely with the Ministry of Planning to develop and finalize the Platform, with generous funding support from the Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund, which is a multi-donor trust fund.

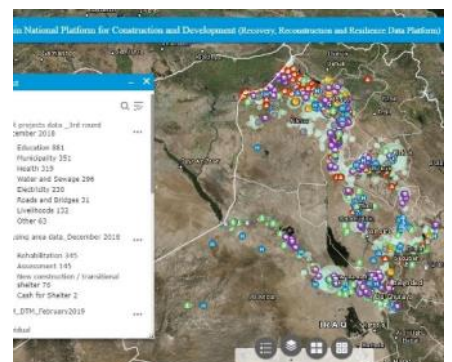
The Platform provides up-to-date key information on reconstruction and development projects. It is a web-based GIS data system that contains analytical reports, statistical data for projects, as well as interactive maps of projects locations. By sharing project information, the Platform will enable relevant actors to avoid duplication and

coordinate for better planning. Now accessible to public and with interactive window, the Platform will also allow the Government of Iraq to receive feedback from its citizens on the reconstruction and development projects, helping to build trust between the Government and people.

H.E. Dr. Mahdi Al-Alaq, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, stated that "the Platform will advance delivery of the commitments made at the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq". H.E. Dr. Noori Al-Dulaimi, Minister of Planning, commented that "through the Platform, projects will be managed in a transparent manner and monitored by the international community". Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-

General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, stated that the Platform provides an overview of the projects implemented, and enables evidence-based planning and decision making.

The Data Platform is accessible at: <https://mnpd.gov.iq/>



Denmark further increases support to stabilize liberated areas in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 March 2019 – The Government of The Kingdom of Denmark has contributed an additional DKK 50 million (USD 7.7 million) to UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which finances initiatives for rapid stabilization of areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This brings Denmark's total contribution since 2015 to DKK 296 million (USD 46 million), making it

the 6th largest donor of the programme.

UNDP Head of Stabilization, Dr. Mohammed S. Mudawi, said: "Enormous progress has been made across the liberated areas. Millions have returned home and communities are getting back on their feet. However, with the rate of people returning home slowing significantly, UNDP is prioritizing areas with the most severe return condi-

tions. As such, this generous contribution comes at precisely the right time".

The Danish Ambassador, Mr. Gert Meinecke, said: "We congratulate the Government of Iraq and the UNDP for the FFS which has been very instrumental in facilitating the return of millions of internally displaced persons in Iraq to the at-risk areas liberated from ISIL. Denmark remains committed to supporting the FFS and encourage all parties to continue find solutions for the remaining 1.8 million internally displaced people in Iraq".

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the emergence of violent extremism. Almost 2,500 projects are either completed or underway, helping local authorities to quickly rehabilitate essential infrastructure and basic services. More than 95 percent of all stabilization projects are carried out local companies, supporting the local jobs and the stimulating the economy.



Restoration of 15,000 homes underway in Mosul, largest in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 March 2019 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is rehabilitating 15,000 houses in West Mosul, bringing the total number of houses in its stabilization portfolio to more than 30,000 – the largest of its kind in Iraq.

The project in West Mosul covers 29 neighbourhoods that were hardest hit during the fight to liberate the city from the Islamic State, including the Old City where the militants declared their caliphate. It will enable 90,000 people to return home.

"This rehabilitation project is a critical step for families wanting to settle back into their homes in Mosul after three years of turmoil and hardship," says Head of UNDP's Stabilization programme, Dr. Mohammed Siddig Mudawi.

"We know it works. Through our successful projects in Ramadi and Fallujah, as well as Bartella and Bashiqa in the Ninewa Plains, we've witnessed first-hand the transformative impact that our housing rehabilitation work has had on communities," he adds.

Priority for housing is given to the most vulnerable – female-headed households, households run by a minor, people living with a disability, and house-

holds where the breadwinner has not had employment in the last three years.

Essential elements such as rebuilding and plastering walls, securing windows and doors, undertaking electrical work and restoring sanitation are incorporated into the rehabilitation, plus additional items for people living with a disability, such as ramps and seated toilets.

Neighbourhoods were selected in consultation with the provincial government and Mayor's office based on numbers of returnees and level of damage sustained. All housing repairs are

agreed to by the homeowner and the local Mukhtar prior to commencement, and work is monitored by government-appointed committees.

Rehabilitation of the first group of houses will be complete by end of March. The entire project is scheduled to be completed by November 2019.

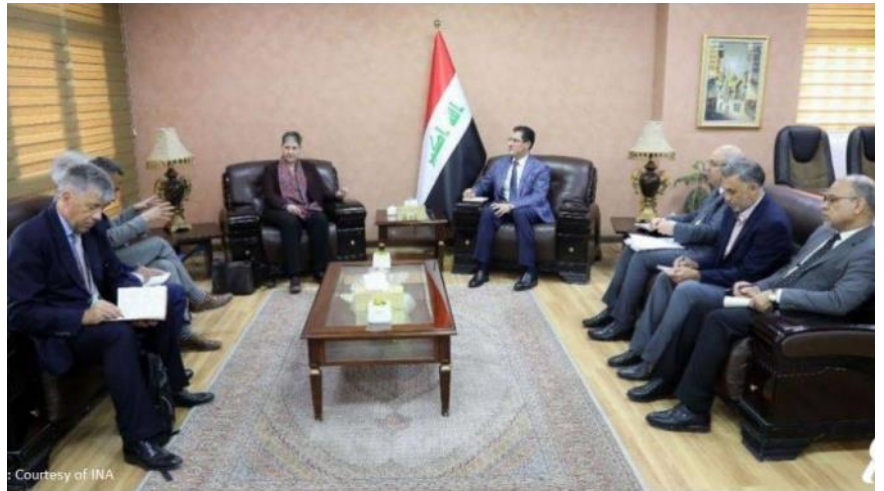
Approximately 800 stabilization projects have been completed or are underway by UNDP in Mosul, including restoring water and electricity networks, rebuilding educational institutions and healthcare facilities, and providing employment for locals to clear rubble from streets.



UN Resident Coordinator discusses Basra with Minister of Planning

Baghdad, 14 March 2019 - Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, met today with Iraq's Minister of Planning, Nouri Sabah al-Dulaimi, in Baghdad to discuss cooperation in the southern governorates. They agreed that water, electricity, and jobs are key priorities in Basra, and collective efforts are needed to improve service delivery.

Ms. Ruedas emphasized that there is a need to strengthen the private sector to create more employment opportunities. She also offered to extend the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) quick-impact reconstruction programme, the Funding Facility for Stabilization, into the southern gover-



norates if the Government chooses to put funds into these projects.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.

IOM Iraq provided agricultural training on how to run greenhouses as businesses

Erbil, 15 March 2019 - Through an access to land agreement with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources in 2017, IOM Iraq provided agricultural training on how to run greenhouses as businesses, for Syrian refugee, displaced Iraq and local community members in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The program aims to enable beneficiaries to produce agricultural products in order to support their families. The program was funded by the US Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).



A practical training workshop on Geographic Information System (GIS) Cloud Services and Multi-User management held in Karbala



Baghdad, 24 March 2019 - UNDP's Iraq IPSM Project coordinated a practical training workshop on Geographic Information System (GIS) Cloud Services and Multi-User management, aims to develop centralized and distributed databases for the various department in Karbala governorate.



Peace education in Iraq: laying a foundation for sustainable development

Basra, 14 March 2019 – Strengthening the capacity of universities across Iraq to contribute to the achievement of SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, UNDP Iraq, national NGO, Iraq Al-Amal and the UNESCO Chair for Peace Studies at the University of Innsbruck, together launched a new national curriculum - “Diploma Programme for Peace and Conflict Studies”, which will be piloted in October 2019.

With the endorsement of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR), the curriculum was drafted with the participation of 14 academicians from Baghdad, Tikrit, Anbar, Mosul, Kufa, Babylon, and Basra universities, and designed to admit graduate students from any BA Programme. Admission of the first cohort of the two semester programme will be determined through evaluation by an academic board.

In Iraq, a country with a conflict-torn history, from colonialism to the regime of Saddam Hussein, the foreign invasion of 2003 and the rise of ISIS, reoccurring conflict has contributed to the creation of a status quo that sees many communities traumatized and divided. This curriculum is the first step toward a theoretical understanding of peace and non-violent conflict transformation; and lays the ground work for community engagement by educated practitioners.

Jamal Aljawaheri, Executive Director of Iraq Al-Amal, explains, “Peace Education is cost-effective and sustainable. If we are able to educate the leaders of tomorrow in ideas of peaceful coexistence and conflict transformation, these ideas will permeate into communities and in time, lessen the burden of military and police costs associated with on-going violence and the security currently required to keep others safe. Keeping in mind, this must be well informed and context specific ideas of peace and conflict.”

UNDP Iraq and Eastern Menonite University previously collaborated on Peace Education in Iraq, having been instrumental in the establishment and capacity development of the Iraqi Universities Consortium for Peace Studies between 2016-2017, which has since advocated for the integration of peace studies into the higher education systems in Iraq.

Subsequently, the partnership with the University of Innsbruck has enabled the training of 23 Academicians (6



women) on conflict assessment/analysis, dialogue, negotiation and facilitation, which will further enable the effective delivery of the new Diploma curriculum.

“In an economy that knows the value of people, we know how to communicate with each other, we know how to cooperate with each other, we feel the empathy for the suffering of the other but also the joy of the other – and that’s what peace studies is about, that’s why we need it in universities. I think in many societies we have lost this ability, and peace studies can contribute a lot to their recovery – I think Iraq is a place where people long for that,” described Wolfgang Dietrich, UNESCO Chairholder for Peace Studies at the University of Innsbruck.

In 2018, UNDP and Iraqi Al-Amal also supported 11 academicians and experts (4 from Iraq, and 7 from the region) to develop the first-ever Arabic language Peace Lexicon, which has since been adopted nationally as a key strategic tool for peace education. With over 263 key terms relating to peace and conflict, this lexicon will enable academics

to share common ground when communicating about peace and conflict in Iraq, especially in the implementation of the new curriculum.

Dr Mohammedsiddiq Mudawi, Head of Stabilization, UNDP Iraq, commented on the enthusiasm of attending academicians, all anxious to see the results of the pilot Diploma in October at Baghdad University, “For the first time, academicians from different fields of study – psychology, law and sociology, are coming together to explore the idea of Peace Studies, which is indeed still in its infancy in many Iraqi Universities. The fact that we could gather so many academicians not only to develop the curriculum together, but to embrace it at today’s launch, is a testament to the enthusiasm and passion of Iraqi society and their desire to achieve a peaceful co-existence.”

The development and launch of the Diploma Programme for Peace and Conflict Studies Curriculum and Arabic Peace Lexicon was made possible with generous funding from the Government of Japan.



UN Environment assessment visit to Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 26 March 2019 - UN Environment and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq completed a rapid assessment of destroyed villages in Multaqa, Kirkuk, Iraq to better understand the nature and extent of damaged settlements. The delegation was welcomed by the Head of Multaqa Sub-District, Hassan Abd Al-Naseef, who explained that 26 out of 36 villages comprising some 9,400 houses in his Sub-District were completely destroyed. Abd Al-Naseef pointed to the school he attended as a child, a landmark building in a verdant countryside with a red roof, which collapsed onto the classrooms. “It deeply saddens me that the next generation of children now has to take classes in a trailer, rather than in a school”.

In October 2017, the last vestiges of Kirkuk Governorate were liberated from ISIL. There is great concern over how to deal with the colossal volumes of debris created by the conflict some of which may be contaminated with unexploded ordinance, booby-traps and other hazardous materials, including as-



bestos and chemicals.

“We are here to discuss with local authorities realistic options for debris removal that is appropriate for Kirkuk’s specific rural context. It is important to come up with cost-effective solutions that will help facilitate the return of displaced communities and avoid unplanned debris disposal that can create serious health and environmental risks and burdensome economic liabilities in the future”, said UN Envi-

ronment Programme Manager, Hassan Partow, member of the visiting delegation.

Upon observing the level of destruction first-hand, Martijn Dalhuijsen, the liaison for UNAMI’s Development Coordination Office in Kirkuk, said that he looks forward to work with all key stakeholders, including the Government and NGOs, to plan an integrated debris removal management strategy.

Debris recovery planning processes have been initiated in Mosul (February 2018) and Ramadi (November 2018) which have included setting-up recycling centers thanks to technical advice from UN Environment in partnership with the local Government, UNDP Stabilization Fund, IOM, UN-Habitat, universities and the Ministry of Health and Environment. We would like to replicate this best practice in Kirkuk and convene a technical workshop on Debris Management with the help of UNEP, Kirkuk University, the Government of Kirkuk, the authorities in Affected Areas, UNMAS and UNAMI.



UNDP and EU discuss lessons learned from stabilization projects

Brussels, Belgium, 26 March 2019 - UNDP Iraq was in Brussels to discuss lessons learned from stabilization programs in Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Nigeria with the European Union partners. Photos of UNDP activities in these countries were on display in the Parc Royal.



UN-Habitat handed over three new urban settlements of durable core houses to vulnerable returnees

Baghdad, 26 March 2019 - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) officially handed over today a total of 286 durable core houses in three sites located in Ramadi, Fallujah and Karma, Anbar Governorate. Aiming at achieving the full realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, these sites were developed under the project titled “Gender-Sensitive Durable Shelter Support for Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq”, generously funded by the Government of Japan.

During the conflict with ISIL, more than 29,000 houses were completely destroyed. Most of the owners of these destroyed houses were left without meaningful support to address their lack of housing, making it difficult to return. Under this project, UN-Habitat constructed durable core houses to accommodate vulnerable returnees whose houses had been completely destroyed. The three urban sites were planned, designed and developed through close community engagement and provided with basic services and infrastructure including roads, electricity, water and sewage networks. These core houses are designed and constructed in such a way that returnees can expand the living space either horizontally or vertically if and when they wish to do so.

The project represents significant contribution to integrate urban planning and physical interventions for post-conflict recovery and resilience as the development of the core houses to accommodate vulnerable displaced people who lost their homes is one of the key pillars of the “Housing Reconstruction Strategy”, which has been developed by the Government of Iraq and UN-Habitat to provide guidance for housing reconstruction and development in conflict-affected areas.

Mr. Jasim Mohammed, Deputy Governor of Anbar, expressed his hope to make Iraq a peaceful country with support from the United Nations and the international community, and ensured that the governorate will provide basic services including electricity, water and sanitation services to the beneficiaries of the project after the handover.

His Excellency Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, said that “I would like to extend my appreciation to all the people involved in this project. I sincerely hope houses constructed by this project will ease difficulties of vulnerable returnees. It is noteworthy that water



and piping materials produced by the Japanese company “Higashio Mech Fit Co. Ltd.” are used in the housing units. In addition to this project, Japan has recently decided a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 63 million, which includes an UN-Habitat project as a contribution to rehabilitate war-damaged houses and establish low-cost housing units to accommodate vulnerable returnees.”

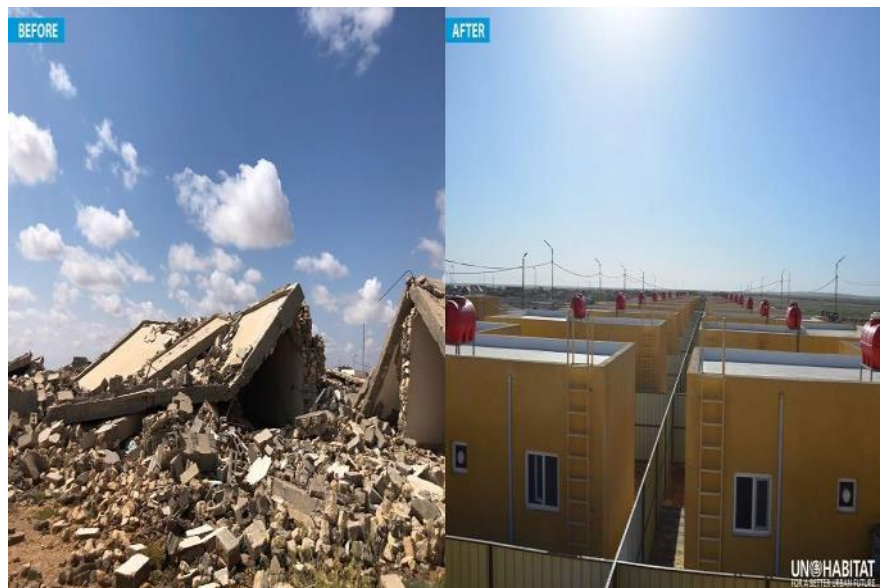
Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, praised the resilience of the population evident in the progress made in reconstruction so far and underscored the importance of this project as a model for the rest of Iraq, providing support to victims of fully destroyed houses. Ms. Ruedas also thanked the Government of Japan and the Governorate of Anbar for their sup-

port and affirmed the commitment of the United Nations to work in Anbar through collaboration with the governorate counterparts.

“The new core-house settlements in Ramadi, Falluja and Karma were planned by UN-Habitat as cities extensions where vulnerable returnees will have access to basic services and livelihood opportunities to enable the returnees to rebuild their lives”, stated Dr. Erfan Ali, Deputy Regional Director of UN-Habitat.

They are built on sites that are adjacent to city centers, with access to services and livelihoods so that it is easier for the returnees to rebuild their lives.

UN-Habitat is tackling some of the causal issues of conflict and supporting peaceful return through its continuous efforts in addressing Housing, Land and Property rights of returnees in Iraq.



A delegation from Iraq benefit from Egyptian experience in support to legal aid and dispute settlement in family courts

Cairo, Egypt, 27 March 2019 - A delegation from Family Reconciliation Centers in Kurdistan Region in the Republic of Iraq came to visit Egypt for a study tour in order to profit the Egyptian experience that was successful. Those centers that exist in 6 cities and towns (Erbil, Sulaimania, Duhok, Garmyan, Raparin and Soran) are operating as a part of Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women (DCVAW).

The goal of these centers is to provide the needed services to survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) to achieve justice through guiding them through the laws and procedures. Also, they provide consultation to those who do not want to register a complain but need legal, social and psychosocial guidance to resolve their problems.

The delegation is composed from the heads of the six Family Reconciliation Committees who are seeking to learn how the reconciliation services are provided to the domestic violence cases in Egypt so that they can add to their knowledge and experience to Family Reconciliation Centers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In 2008, UNDP Egypt in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) have started to introduce the Legal Aid Offices (LAOs) in Family Courts as well as strengthen the mediation function of Dispute Settlement Offices (DSOs) with support from Sweden's International Development Agency from 2014.

The goal of establishing Legal Aid Offices is to provide free legal advice for all family cases; provide free legal assistance for family cases which do not require the lawyers' signature such as (visitation rights, custody, alimony, inheritance); raise legal awareness among citizens with regards to Family Courts; provide information on the documents required for litigation processes and help litigants complete the necessary judicial procedures; support the submission of settlement requests; and women's access to their alimony in the shortest time possible.

The legal aid offices in Egypt supported more than 1 million cases, out of which 68% were women cases between 2009 and 2018, and employees from Legal Aid Offices and employees from Dispute Settlement Offices attended more than 30 trainings in order to know how to deal with litigants. Also, 240 judges from family courts participated in seven roundtable discussions to enhance the efficiency of handling cases.

The Iraqi delegation came to visit the



family courts located in Cairo and Alexandria and observed legal aid offices, dispute settlement offices and family prosecution office in order to profit from the Egyptian experience that was successful. They want to learn how to reconcile amongst family members when there is a dispute, so they came to learn from the Egyptian experience in order to implement the good practices in their center when they are back to Iraq.

Also, they had the opportunity to visit at the Women Complain Office of the National Council for Women and a shelter for women managed by the Ministry of Social Solidarity during their visit in Egypt to know about Egypt's efforts on social services and protection to victims of gender-based violence.

They wanted to learn how Egyptians were able to handle family disputes, investigation for family disputes and violence against women. Also, they wanted to see how the family courts are functioning and the legal aid systems to

help people in Egypt to get support.

Ezzulddin Abdullah Yaseen, Legal Consultant Supervisor of the Family Reconciliation Centers in KR-I said "I found the study tour to Egypt extremely useful and informative. I especially admired the new data base system used by the Egyptian Family Courts that enables the justice system and the case owners to have access to all the relevant documents to any case from any Justice facility anywhere in the country. I think this would be a great project to be implemented in Kurdistan to reduce paper work and accelerate procedures as they are known to take months."

This is a good example for sharing experience between countries in the Arab region leveraging knowledge and advocating for change through connecting countries. Moreover, it is helping us to achieve better results and realize the #NextGenUNDP vision.



EU-funded programme launched in Iraq to support recovery and stability through local development



Basra, 28 March 2019 – The European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) continue to work together to help the people of Iraq in their pursuit of recovery and stability. On 28 March 2019, representatives of federal and local authorities, community leaders, non-governmental organizations, businesses, academia, as well as implementing partners, gathered in the city of Basra, South of Iraq, to launch a new programme.

With EU funding of €47.5 million over 4 years, the programme aims at supporting the implementation of local priority actions, derived from the Provincial Development Plans and the Sustainable Energy Action Plans developed under the Local Area Development Programme (LADP II), that address the top priorities of each governorate and pilot ways to translate policy into practice. In addition, supporting the decentralization of powers from central to local authorities, including through the development of institutional capacities, the optimization of revenue generation systems, peer-to-peer partnerships with EU local authorities, the empowerment of civil society to advocate for local development causes, mobilization of additional resources, and improvement of donor coordination will be part of the activities.

Minister of Planning at the Federal Government of Iraq, Dr. Nouri Al Dulaimi, said: “Iraqi communities are eager to recover after years of conflict and instability. And, we are doing our utmost to address their needs. Development at the local level is a step in the right direction. We are grateful that the EU, UNDP and UN-Habitat stand right

by us in this difficult time.”

Governor of Basra, Mr. Asaad Al Eidani, stated: “The people of Basra and other governorates across our country have rightful demands. They need adequate public services, plenty of jobs, and all the help they can get to build a better life for them and their children. We are committed to working closely with our government, local communities, and partners to maximize the impact of this new EU-funded programme and may be replicate with our own funds.”

Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Ambassador Ramon Blecua, said: “The European Union is strongly committed to assist the Government of Iraq in its efforts to shape a more inclusive and accountable local development. This new EU-funded program will ensure better services and livelihoods opportunities for the Iraqi population, responding to the urgent needs affecting Basra and other Governorates across the country.”

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitari-

an Coordinator, Ms. Marta Ruedas, reiterated: “Creating job opportunities, improving living conditions, upgrading public services, and integrating eco-friendly practices are some of our top priorities when it comes to local development in Iraq. Women and youth are an integral part in this process. The EU support represents a lifeline for communities struggling to make ends meet, as well as to promote good governance at the local level.”

Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, a.i., Ms. Yuko Otsuki, thanked the European Union for its generous contribution to the urban recovery in Iraq, and stated: “UN-Habitat will implement priority urban recovery activities, such as the rehabilitation of housing, schools, and public spaces, repairs to secondary infrastructure, job creation, skill enhancement, and revenue generation.” Ms. Otsuki assured that UN-Habitat is committed to continue working, to promote recovery, resilience and reconstruction in Iraq.

The programme will help the Government of Iraq to strengthen the efficiency of the country’s institutions and renew the social contract between citizens and the state. It revolves around improving the ability of selected governorates to efficiently manage local government and public services. Economic growth and job creation are prioritized, with a focus on green projects involving youth and women, in addition to enhancing the living conditions of returnees and in conflict affected areas.

Building upon the momentum created by the recently concluded LADP II, the programme will be implemented in the following nine Governorates: Anbar, Basra, Duhok, Erbil, Missan, Ninewah, Salah al-Din, Sulaimaniyah, and Thi Qar.

The programme fact sheet can be downloaded through the link: <https://bit.ly/2Wlw17e>.



Japan provides an additional \$5.4 million for UN-Habitat's Reconstruction and Peacebuilding Programme in Iraq

Baghdad, 03 April 2019 - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) welcomes an additional contribution of USD 5.4 million from the Government of Japan to support reconstruction and peacebuilding in Iraq through the rehabilitation of war-damaged houses and construction of low-cost housing units in key liberated cities.

More than one year from the declaration of the military victory over so-called ISIL in 2017, more than 1.7 million people are still displaced in Iraq. The rehabilitation of severely damaged structures and rebuilding of fully destroyed houses are extremely costly and require robust engineering expertise. IDPs with their severely damaged or fully destroyed homes are still in dire need of support.

Through the additional funding UN-Habitat will be able to continue its community-based interventions and the rehabilitation of "severely damaged" houses and the construction of low-cost housing units to accommodate vulnerable returnees whose houses are "destroyed." Returnees and members of affected communities will be trained on skills required for the works and recruited under the project to support rebuilding their livelihoods. Approx-

mately 2,500 returnees are expected to benefit from this project, and priorities will be given to vulnerable households including female-headed households, those with elderly, infants and children under age 6, or physically impaired.

His Excellency Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq said: "Japan has recently decided a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to US\$ 63 million, including this project as a contribution to the housing sector. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches US\$ 500 million."

UN-Habitat is grateful to the people and the Government of Japan for their

continuous generous support which allows integration of the New Urban Agenda and physical interventions for post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. The development of sites for low-cost housing units designed to accommodate vulnerable displaced people who lost their homes is one of the pillars of the "Housing Reconstruction Strategy" recently developed by the Government of Iraq and UN-Habitat to enhance and accelerate housing reconstruction and development in conflict-affected areas.

With a contribution of approximately \$50 million since 2015, the Government of Japan has been a vital partner to UN-Habitat's Iraq Programme.



UNDP in Iraq and GOAL Global support youth to advocate for social change and a brighter future

Duhok, 3 April 2019 - One year after liberation from ISIL, youth in Misureek are determined to advocate for social change and a brighter future.

Eager to promote a multicultural and peaceful society, UNDP Iraq, GOAL and University of Duhok - UoD have been working together to foster social cohesion in Misureek, Duhok.

Through this partnership, 20 young

boys and girls – inc. IDPs, Syrian refugees and Host community members, received training on aspects of social cohesion inc. advocacy, and conflict resolution. These youth then designed eight events, hoping to spread messages of peace and bring together people from across the community. One of these events, was a young women's volleyball tournament.

"When I play volleyball, I feel strong. We played like men. We are showing our community that we can do everything, if we have the opportunity to do it," Vian Qasim Muhammed, 16 years, IDP volleyball player from Mosul.

"This is the first volleyball match for girls happening in public. We wanted to conduct this initiative particularly to advocate for women's participation in public life through their engagement in sports. This tournament will just be the starting point," Sarbast Abdulkhaliq, 24 years, volunteer from Misureek.

"The Misureek volunteers are determined to increase the awareness of the vital role of women in the peace and social cohesion of our society," Gharib Mustafa Ibraheem, 27 years, University of Duhok - UoD, Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies, Youth Coordinator.

This project is part of UNDP Iraq's Misureek Area Based Recovery Project that is implemented by GOAL with generous funding from the Government of Japan.



Building capacities of Iraqi negotiators in trade in services

Amman, Jordan, 4 April 2019 – As part of its continuous effort to support the modernization of trade policies in the Arab countries towards the creation of a Pan Arab market, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States organized a workshop on trade in services for the national team of trade negotiators of the Government of Iraq.

The training represented a first step toward the design of technical commitments for the accession of Iraq to the Arab Agreement in Trade in Services. In 2018, UNDP in collaboration with

the Government of Morocco, had supported the team with an on-the-job training in trade in goods under the framework of South-South cooperation. Fifteen officials and negotiators from seven ministries and governmental agencies in charge of trade in services attended the training and actively engaged in technical discussion on the content of the WTO General Agreement in Trade in Services and the Arab Agreement in Trade in Services. Officials of the League of Arab States also participated to the training in assisting

the Iraqi delegation.

The training equipped Iraqi officials with adequate knowledge and technical skills in the development of national policies toward their forthcoming participation to the Arab Agreement on trade in services. Participants were provided with substantive understanding of modalities of negotiation of trade in services, in line with international practices. Best practices from the region have also been highlighted through practical exercises, interactive exchange of views among national policy makers and dedicated sessions to discuss ways forward.

The training was delivered by UNDP experts and Mr. Khairedine Ramoul, Economic Affairs Officer at UNCTAD, in a joint partnership to support Arab countries to align trade policies and practices to multilateral platforms of global trade within their economic diversification programmes.

Iraqi officials, participants from the League of Arab States and UNDP expressed high appreciation to the support provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to Arab countries and to the LAS for the promotion of regional economic integration and cooperation.



Karbala University taking steps into E-Transformation

Erbil, 9 April 2019 – As part of the continues support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to the University of Karbala, a workshop has been conducted for the period 1 to 5 April on the e-learning modules,

gathering twenty senior officials and academics from Karbala University, as part of the technical support provided by the Public Sector Modernization (IPSM) Programme to the e-learning units of Karbala University.

UNDP through IPSM Programme has introduced the e-learning approach to two institutions in Iraq; University of Karbala, and National Centre for Management Development and Information Technology (NCMDIT) within the Ministry of Planning (MoP).

DG of the Continuing Learning Center, Prof. Ahmed Hadi Al Yasari said: “this workshop is very important as it is conducted in conjunction with the launching of the e-learning development plan of Karbala university for the years 2019-2022. The implementation of this plan requires vital efforts and cooperation between the two parties to make Karbala University an advanced university in e-learning, thus improving the quality of education”.

As a result, a team of management and situation analytics specialized in e-Learning has been established in Karbala university, the team will work to explore the best options for transferring into the e-Learning system, depending on international practices provided during the workshop and presentations of global experiences including some of the well-known Egyptian and British universities.



With support from Japan, WFP helps people rebuild lives and livelihoods after years of conflict in Iraq



Baghdad, 10 April 2019 - The Government of Japan has contributed US\$9.2 million to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to enable it to transition its programmes in Iraq from primarily humanitarian to more development-related assistance. As WFP faces a shortage of resources in Iraq, this timely donation from Japan will help address the food insecurity of internally displaced families and enhance the resilience of returnees and

local communities.

“Japan has provided an overall assistance package for Iraq of US\$63 million in 2019, including this particular contribution to food security,” said H.E. Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq. “With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches US\$500 million.”

Of the funds given to WFP, US\$7 mil-

lion will be used to assist some 200,000 displaced people with food and cash transfers to meet their food needs. An additional US\$2.2 million will provide livelihoods opportunities for 13,000 returnees and vulnerable members of local communities. Cash transfers have the added value of injecting liquidity into the local economy.

“In 2019, WFP is shifting to more sustainable solutions, coupling its emergency response for displaced communities with livelihoods programmes that encourage self-reliance rather than dependence on humanitarian assistance,” said WFP Iraq’s Representative, Sally Haydock. “We can only do this through strong partnerships with governments such as Japan and other humanitarian stakeholders.”

In line with efforts to break the cycle of food and nutrition insecurity, WFP is working to provide assistance to vulnerable people in Iraq in a more holistic manner. Asset-rehabilitation activities contribute to the country’s stabilisation, support dignified and voluntary returns, and help people rebuild livelihoods undermined by years of conflict.

Japan, IOM partner to address drivers of instability and fragility in displacement and return locations in Iraq

Baghdad, 9 April 2019 - Iraq is at a critical juncture, emerging from a brutal conflict with ISIL and a long history of internal conflict, which has resulted in massive displacement and a setback in the country’s economic and social development. Today, Iraq grapples with the cumulative effects of past conflicts on its development, which has left the country vulnerable to the recurrence of conflict.

Earlier this month, IOM and the Government of Japan launched an innovative project that aims to address the drivers of instability and fragility in locations of displacement and return in Iraq. Offering a timely response to the challenges facing Iraq, this project will support the Government of Iraq to tackle the drivers of instability in both the security and development domains, thereby building more resilient communities and improving trust and confidence in government institutions.

In close collaboration with local government authorities and community leaders, IOM will establish community policing forums (CPF) to improve communication and trust between community members and law enforcement agencies on local security and development issues; roll out social cohesion and peace-

building activities to strengthen local capacity to resolve conflict peacefully; and support small and medium sized enterprises to address the critical lack of job opportunities. A particular focus will be on engaging self-demobilised former combatants who, with the end of active combat with ISIL, are now seeking to re-establish their lives in their areas of origin.

“In the words of UN Secretary General Guterres, prevention of conflict is not merely a priority, but the priority”, said IOM Chief of Mission in Iraq, Gerard Waite. “In many of its key policy documents, the Government of Iraq recognizes the linkages between security and development, which is often referred to as the security-development nexus.



This project will support the Government to operationalize this nexus by simultaneously and holistically addressing economic, social and security drivers of fragility in vulnerable communities.”

The project will build on the rich history of cooperation between IOM, the Government of Japan, and the Government of Iraq. In 2018-19, with the support of the Government of Japan, IOM trained local government and civil society partners on ways to mitigate tensions and rebuild relations in communities in areas of return. IOM also partnered with different Iraqi universities to better understand Iraq’s cycle of conflict and violence and identify ways in which the cycle can be broken.

Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq said: “Japan has recently decided a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 63 million, including this project as a contribution to achieving a peaceful society and economic development in Iraq under a new approach of integrating security and development initiatives. With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches USD 500 million.”

Creativity flourishes as Mosul's Fine Arts College officially opens

Mosul, 10 April 2019 – The newly-rehabilitated College of Fine Arts at Mosul University was officially opened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Government of Iraq. The College, rehabilitated by UNDP with financial support from the United States Government through USAID, offers third-level art courses ranging from music, theatre, painting, and sculpture, and will benefit 600 students from across Iraq.

The renovation work included plastering and repainting the classroom walls, repairing doors and windows, replacing the roof and restoring electrical systems.

During ISIL's occupation of Mosul between 2014 and 2017, the College suffered extensive damage and subsequently closed. Artworks were destroyed and strewn across the campus, as art-making was believed to contradict Islamic State ideology.

"Mosul once sat at the epicentre of Iraq's cultural identity, so the reopening of this college is a significant milestone for local communities," says Head of



UNDP Stabilization, Dr Mohammed-siddig Mudawi.

"Art as a form of expression has allowed people of Mosul – many of them students who have been born into years of conflict – heal from the atrocities faced under ISIL. It's wonderful to see a rejuvenation of this artistic talent here at the College," adds Dr. Mudawi.

Joey Hood, Chargé d'Affaires of the US Mission in Iraq, says: "Through the United Nations Development Program Funding Facility for Stabilization, the United States is rehabilitating 14 buildings here at Mosul University, including

the College of Fine Arts, where I am proud to see that students are once again in class."

The ceremony included a theatrical performance by art students as well as an art exhibition in the College's refurbished courtyard.

The College rehabilitation project is also supported by the Government of Canada, which funded the rehabilitation of water pump station on campus. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) has funded the supply of furniture and equipment for the College.

UNIDO, Japan to boost economic resilience and long-term stability for IDPs and returnees in Iraq

Mosul, 12 April 2019 – The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Government of Japan are teaming up to foster the social stabilization and economic resilience of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees in the Nineveh Governorate of Iraq. This is one of nine new projects implemented by UNIDO which Japan has recently agreed to fund, totalling US\$5.8 million.

The Nineveh Governorate hosts the highest number of IDPs and returnees out of all Governorates in Iraq. The families and individuals returning to their towns often face a lack of livelihoods, social cohesion and security. With the highest countrywide poverty rates linked with unemployment and food insecurity, hardships are exacerbated for IDPs, returnees, and host communities alike. UNIDO and Japan have therefore partnered to harness the productive capacities of IDPs and returnees through entrepreneurship and technical skills upgrading, as well as to contribute to institutional capacity-building to ensure long-term and sustainable assistance to civil society.

"There is an urgent need to revive the local economy and generate employment opportunities for conflict-affected

people and communities, in particular IDPs and returnees, in order to ensure livelihoods and social stability for all," said UNIDO Project Manager Noriko Takahashi.

Stavros Papastavrou, UNIDO Project Manager, added that: "In the Nineveh Governorate of Iraq, there is a tremendous need to support the re-establishment of the most vital components of civil society and to restore the technical capacities of governmental institutions with an overall goal to foster socio-economic revival in a sustainable way."

The project aims to revitalize micro and small enterprises that were operational before the crisis, establish new income-

generation activities, and provide technical skills training for youth. In addition, the upgrading of vocational training centres and national institutions will ensure long-term institutional capacity-building contributing to the overall resettlement and stabilization of the local economy.

Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq said: "Japan has recently decided on a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 63 million, including this project as a contribution to enhancing employment and food security. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches USD 500 million."



Japan provides support to restore critical services in Iraq's newly liberated areas

Baghdad, 14 April 2019 – The Government of Japan has awarded close to USD 4 million to the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to implement a project aimed at enhancing the living conditions and safety of the Iraqi population living in the newly liberated areas.

The project, “Restoring access to critical urban services in liberated areas,” focuses on restoring access to critical urban services. It is expected that over 100,000 people who live in the newly liberated areas in Anbar, will benefit from the project that will be implemented in coordination with the local authorities and partners. The project will respond to the immediate needs of the communities in providing equipment for solid waste management, rehabilitation of urban water facilities and roads, and provision of renewable

energy solutions for critical infrastructure such as health facilities, schools, other public buildings or streets.

H.E. Mr Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq said: “Japan has recently decided a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to US\$ 63 million, including this project as a contribution to improvement of the living conditions of the returnees in Anbar governorate by restoring access to critical urban services such as water and sanitation, transport, energy and solid waste management. With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches US\$ 500 million.”

Usman Akram, Director of UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman said, “we are proud to support returnees and vulnerable host communities in newly liberated areas through innovative en-



ergy solutions and solid waste disposal, in partnership with the Government of Japan. Restoring access to critical urban services in liberated areas, where most of the related damage has occurred, is essential in order to ensure that returnees are provided with decent living conditions.”

UNOPS has been active in Iraq since 2004, delivering close to 50 projects worth over \$260 million, and supporting more than 500 projects implemented by Iraqi civil society organizations.

UNESCO launched an Assessment report of the labor market and skills analysis in KR-I with the Central Government

Erbil, 15 April 2019 - UNESCO with support of the European Union and in partnership with the Ministry of Planning in Iraq and KR-I, the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) and the Kurdistan Regional Statistics Office (KRSO), launched an Assessment report of the labor market and skills analysis covering seven economic sectors and the informal sector. This report is based on a survey that was conducted by CSO & KRSO in 2017 and covered 7 economic sectors in the private sector in addition with some focus group discussions which have been implemented with relevant ministries and organizations.

The twin aims of the reports are, firstly, to inform education policy and priorities at secondary and tertiary levels, especially competency-based curriculum development for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the development of training and opportunities for unskilled and/or unemployed people (with emphasis on women and youth) to enter the labour market and participate in formal and informal economic activity and, secondly, to build the capacity of stakeholders to survey businesses and analyze employer demand in order to determine the best use of funding and target relevant TVET provision to better meet the demand of the labor market.

The seven economic sectors were determined in consultation with the project’s stakeholders and were based on growth

potential and sectors conducive to fostering youth employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. These sectors include agriculture, construction, hospitality, information and communications technology (ICT), manufacturing, transport and storage, and wholesale and retail trade; and cover the governorates of Baghdad, Basrah, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Najaf, Sulaymaniyah and Wasit.

It’s vital for the economy of Kurdistan region of Iraq to assume reform in the applied laws and regulations that allow a healthy growth in the private sector through making the necessary changes in vocational and technical learning taking into consideration the needs of this sector in terms of skills and expertise, said Dr. Ali Sindi, Minister of planning in KRG during the opening speech of the launch event.

The Senior project Officer for TVET Reform Project in Iraq Mr. Rory Rob-

ertshaw, said, “the hope of these reports is to strengthen baseline information on the demand and supply of skills in the labour market in order to more efficiently and effectively inform all TVET stakeholders, including the private sector, in taking the appropriate next steps in reforming the TVET system – which is vital to the growth of the country’s economy during such a critical juncture.”

The Assessment of the Labour Market & Skills Analysis is a component of the larger TVET Reform Project, funded by the European Union and in partnership with the government of Iraq and KR-I. The Project’s objectives are to improve the overall TVET governance system with modern, demand-driven curricula along with improving the capacities of TVET stakeholders and the paths of TVET graduates into the labour market.



EU-funded programme “Supporting recovery and stability in Iraq through local development” Steering Committee translates policy into practical actions



Erbil, 17 April 2019 – The Steering Committee of the programme “Supporting recovery and stability in Iraq through local development” held its first annual meeting in Erbil, on 17 April 2019. The programme is funded by the European Union (EU) with €47.5 million over 4 years and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

The Steering Committee endorsed the programme’s workplan, identifying key priority projects to be implemented in nine Governorates: Anbar, Basra, Duhok, Erbil, Missan, Ninawah, Salah al-Din, Sulaimaniyah, and Thi Qar. The projects derived from the Provincial Development Plans and the Sustainable Energy Action Plans, developed under the flagship Local Area Development Programme (LADP II) that concluded in mid-2018. The programme revolves around supporting the decentralization of powers from central to local authorities, including through the development of institutional capacities, the optimization of revenue generation systems, peer-to-peer partnerships with EU local authorities, and the empowerment of civil society to advocate for local development causes.

Minister of Planning at the Federal Government of Iraq, Dr. Nouri Al Dulaimi, said: “Today, we endorsed a robust workplan addressing local priorities, such as decentralization, job creation and public services, in areas where needed most. With this endorsement, we renew our commitment to work closely with our strategic partners towards making sustainable, inclusive local development a reality.”

Minister of Planning at the Kurdistan Regional Government, Dr. Ali Sindi, noted: “Our past joint efforts under the EU-funded LADP II produced the Provincial Development Plans and the Sustainable Energy Action Plans. We are glad to be building upon this achievement, with the support of UNDP, to move to the next level of executing sustainable energy, environmental action and climate change adaptation initiatives.”

Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Ambassador Ramon Bleuca, said: “The European Union continues to show its commitment in supporting local development in Iraq. The Steering Committee meeting held today, was a great opportunity to agree all together on concrete actions to be implemented at local level in the next months. I am happy to see this new programme in full implementation mode and look forward to its quick results, so to deliver services and livelihoods opportunities and make a difference in daily life of the Iraqi population.”

Officer-in-Charge of UNDP Iraq, Mr. Vakhtang Svanidze, said: “Under this EU-funded programme, we will do our utmost to help Iraqis in their pursuit of effective local governance for improved living conditions to all, especially the most vulnerable. This is of paramount importance to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Iraq in the long run.”

Head of UNDP Office in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), Ms. Isabela Uribe, reiterated: “I am more than glad that we are going local with practical solutions touching people’s daily life. Thanks to the generosity of the EU,

with ample cooperation of the federal and local authorities and the hard work of UNDP and UN-Habitat, an inclusive, transparent and cutting-edge approach to local development is going to place citizens in the driving seat of a new social agenda.”

Under the new programme, UN-Habitat will contribute to the stability and socio-economic development of Iraq by improving living conditions and enhancing service delivery at the local level, through urban recovery investments and job opportunities in conflict-affected areas, and revenue generation in five governorates. Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, a.i., Ms. Yuko Otsuki, stated that “immediate interventions will prioritize urban recovery activities, such as the rehabilitation of damaged housing and schools, repairs to secondary infrastructure through job creation and skill enhancement, and involving youth in the redesign and recovery of public spaces.”

A decision-making body, the Steering Committee is comprised of Iraq’s Minister of Planning, Dr. Nouri Al Dulaimi, Kurdistan Region’s Minister of Planning, Dr. Ali Sindi, as well as the Governors of the aforementioned Governorates where the programme will be active. Members also include UNDP and UN-Habitat as implementing partners, along with the EU Head of Delegation and Delegation Cooperation Section as donor representatives.

Governorate representatives signed the Charter of Principles that sets out an agreed upon framework between each Governorate, UNDP and UN-Habitat. The framework defines roles and responsibilities and will govern the implementation of the programme.



Kurdistan Regional Government signs a Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR Iraq to support the national social protection and promote the inclusion of refugees in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 17 April 2019 - The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, which aims at strengthen their strategic partnership with a view to include refugees into regional, municipal and urban services in the KRI.

The MoU was signed on 16 April 2019 in Erbil by his Excellency Dr. Rekawt Hamarashed, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in KRI, and Mr. Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR representative in Iraq.

During the signing ceremony, UNHCR and MoLSA committed to continued collaboration in upholding the rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and affected communities, including through improved access to services.

The MoU builds on the existing operational partnership between UNHCR and MoLSA, and focuses on key areas of intervention, namely provision of social and protective services to children and youth, including in state-run centres, economic inclusion of refugees through access to vocational and self-reliance activities. It also includes preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence. The aim of the

MOU is to commit to continue upholding the rights of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other persons of concern to UNHCR.

Mr. Gharaibeh said that “UNHCR hopes that the strengthened cooperation with MoLSA and the consolidation of existing services and support to government institutions will benefit both refugee and host communities, and contribute to KRI’s development goals.” Continued support from the international community to enforce government service institutions will enhance their capacity to deliver quality ser-

vices to displaced populations and the communities hosting them, and is an important approach to support the KRI so that they can continue to host IDPs and refugees. Support to refugee hosting countries is a key element of the Global Compact on Refugees, a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, which was affirmed by the UN General Assembly after two years of extensive negotiations.

KRI hosts the largest refugee community in Iraq, with 272,999 refugees hosted across the three governorates.



Business skills training held in Dohuk

Dohuk, 17 April 2019 - IDPs, Syrian refugees and host community members living in Misureek, Duhok, participated in business skills training hosted by GOAL, with support from UNDP Iraq.

After completion, each individual – along with a further 197 – will receive asset recovery support, purchasing the necessary equipment and supplies to start or recover their own businesses.

Aminah (left) lives with her three sisters and parents in a rental home. Unfortunately, both her parents and siblings are unable to work.

“My family used to run a cow breeding business in Zumar. But during the ISIL crisis, we lost our business, our source of income and had to flee. Today, no one is earning an income for the family, so I will start cow breeding here in Duhok.

I’ve learnt about planning and also, how to attract customers – I will sell a high quality of dairy product, like yogurts, and through networking and word-of-mouth recommendations from

neighbors and community members, I will receive more customers.”

“When I was at college, I used to work at a vegetable shop. This training will allow me to pursue my dream of start-

ing-up a vegetable shop of my own. I’ve learnt how to develop a business plan and had the opportunity to brainstorm different ideas on how to start-up businesses with other participants.” Rama-



DSRSG Ruedas: “I strongly believe in the need for private sector development and the need for creation of sufficient jobs through the private sector.”

Erbil, 22 April 2019 - The Erbil Chamber of Commerce & Industry welcomed the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Marta Ruedas to open a recent forum titled, “Private Sector Development: All Towards Diversification of Local Economy” – the second in a series sponsored by UNDP Iraq, aimed at creating an action plan that will enable improved engagement of private sector in sustainable economic growth for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

“I strongly believe in the need for private sector development and the need for creation of sufficient jobs through the private sector. It’s a fundamental necessity across the country. I don’t see a way to move forward successfully in

sustainable development, without dealing with the development of the private sector across the entire country.”

This project is part of an on-going partnership with the Erbil Chamber of com-

merce & industry, made possible with generous funding from the Government of Japan.

Photo courtesy of the Erbil Chamber of commerce and industry



Strengthening the institutional framework and SDGs localization at local levels



Erbil, 23 April 2019 - SDG Localization is a crucial process in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in a way that “leaves no one behind” in Iraq. It implies all stakeholders and institutions - government at the sub-national levels as well as non-state actors such as civil societies, academia, and marginalized groups - have the fundamental role to play in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the SDGs at their respective levels.

UNDP organized a workshop to support three governorates and KRG (Basra, Karbala, Anbar, and KRG) on agenda 2030 targets localization according to the social needs and priorities. This step comes after the Government of Iraq has taken advanced steps towards the implementation of the SDGs targets in Iraq through its National Development Plan (NDP 2018-2022) goals. The work-

shop brought representatives from 3 governorates and KRG facing different development challenges as well as representatives from the Ministry of Planning, National VNR Team, National SDG 16 Team, Central Statistical Bureau, and experts from UNDP Regional Hub Office.

The two-day workshop (February 12-13th, 2019) was organized in Erbil and was engaged by 27 professional representatives from the pilot governorates and MOP on a better understanding of SDGs localization in general with a significant focus on SDG 16 (effective institutional and coordination mechanism) – based on their contextualization in the context of Iraq along with relevant experiences within the region and beyond. The event helped governorates representatives assess their state of play in SDG localization and discuss the formulation of an effective institutional framework and enabling an environment for a more inclusive society. During the Workshop, experts from the Regional Hub in Amman (Ms. Tomoko Vazeer) and from Algeria Country Office (Mr. Sebastien Vauzelle) have familiarized participants with key dimensions and lessons learned from SDGs localization in the region; drawing upon UNDG corporate tools and guidance and pilot international experiences. In addition to that, institutional and vertical and horizontal coordination mechanism were discussed at different levels of government

and non-government actors. Thus, allowing to foster policy coherence between national and local development planning and SDG implementation, including country examples on the SDG reporting structures between the local/national authorities and lessons learned.

Governates representatives of (Sustainable Development Unit - MOP, CSB, National SDG 16 Team, and National VNR Team) have presented their institutional framework for SDGs localization and implementation in term of linkages with local development plans and targets, effective engagement of society and vulnerable groups, progress to date and lessons learned, and accountability mechanisms and reporting processes for SDG implementation at local levels. Some challenges are highlighted, such as how to create integration between existing initiatives and new initiatives, usefulness/validity of the indicators, and stakeholder engagement to achieve collective vision, incorporation of the private sector, formulation of effective urban plans, and community level initiative to address climate change, such as recycling of waste.

The National VNR Team Member (Dr. Hasan Alzobadee) has given deep insight on the reporting mechanism and guidance at sub-national levels with a significant highlight on including a particular section in the Iraq VNR report - 2019 about SDGs localization at

Strengthening the institutional framework ... *(continued)*

sub-national levels. Detailed SDGs reporting guidance at the local level was presented as the pilot governates will prepare their local SDGs reports in next. An expert from UNDP-Algeria office has shared Algeria experiences in both SDG localization and SDG 16.

During the workshop, key elements that can help and/or hinder the SDGs localization at a local level have been discussed through four working groups where MoP representatives facilitated all of the working groups. Despite the difference in the state of play in SDGs

localization and implementation of SDG 16+, and preparation for drafting local level SDG report, the participants were able to share their experiences and challenges toward SDGs ownership and localization. Data gap remains a major challenge at both the national and local levels, and coordination with the Statistics office as well as innovative ways of collecting data need to be pursued, together with an assessment of the available data.

After the governmental representatives have appreciated the UNDP Country

Office effort and support, the UNDP country office representative (Sundus Abass, SDG Project Manager) has expressed the country office plans to support the subnational governates towards the strengthen the concept and principles of SDGs localization and effective institutional coordination mechanism toward implementing Agenda 2030 in Iraq with a significant focus on leaving no one behind principles.

By Sundus Abbas, SDGs project manager, UNDP Iraq

UNDP recently discovered hundreds of books untouched by ISIL at Mosul University's main library

Mosul, 23 April 2019 - "UNDP recently discovered hundreds of books untouched by ISIL at Mosul University's main library. The books are being transferred to a temporary learning space for students while the main library is being rehabilitated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)".

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space for students while the main library is being rehabilitated by the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)".



UNDP organized in Baghdad a workshop on institutional performance management and audit-related issues

Baghdad, 25 April 2019 - To enhance the Public Institution of the government of Iraq, the United Nations Development Programme organized a workshop on institutional performance management and audit-related issues.

Twenty-five senior staff from the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Electricity, and the Ministry of Trade participated and re-

ceived practical exercise and peer to peer exchange knowledge on the public sector performance assessment.

This workshop is part of a joint programme between UNDP – IPSM Programme and the Council of Ministers Secretariat (CoMSEC) to provide a series of seminars on the Institutional Performance Management targeting 24 Iraqi Ministries.



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq recently reached a major milestone

Baghdad, 27 April 2019 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recently reached a major milestone – with over 2,000 stabilization projects now completed in Iraq since mid-2015, UNDP work has impacted the lives of Iraqis. All this work was done with the aim of supporting people displaced by the conflict to move back home. To date, 4.2 million people have returned, with another 1.7 million still displaced.



UN-Habitat and UNDP upscale support on housing rehabilitation and secure tenure for the returnees in Sinjar

Sinjar, 25 April 2019 – Today, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) handed over 502 rehabilitated houses and Occupancy Certificates to returnees in Sinjar District, Ninewa Governorate. Extensively damaged during the ISIL occupation, these houses were rehabilitated as part of a larger project funded by the Government of Germany through UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP). A total of 1,064 houses were rehabilitated in Sinjar over a two-year period, with 1,501 Occupancy Certificates distributed to Yazidi returnees.

In the Sinjar area, Yazidis are an ethnic and religious minority group who, for decades, have been subjected to discriminatory policies that have denied their housing, land and property rights. Compounding this marginalization, these groups were particularly targeted for persecution and violence by ISIL. Through this project, damaged houses were rehabilitated and the need to restore residents with their rights for tenure security were addressed, which are essential to facilitate the dignified and sustainable return of IDPs and peaceful reconstruction of the Sinjar area. Yazidi returnees who had previously not been awarded official documentation for their residence, received Occupancy Certificates to verify occupancy rights of their homes.

The project was technically supported by the Global Land Tools Network (GLTN), adopting a community-based approach that directly engaged returnees and community members in the rehabilitation activities and verification of occupancy. 684 members of the Yazidi community (44% women) were employed under the project, encouraging the social and economic empowerment of conflict affected communities.



In recognition of the targeted persecution of Yazidi people during the ISIL occupation, Mr. Mohammed Al Tamimi, Director General, NGOs Directorate of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, thanked partners for their support in helping to rebuild this community, stating 'On behalf of the people of Sinjar, I thank UN-Habitat and the Government of Germany, through UNDP, for rehabilitating the homes of Yazidi families.' Mr. Dawood Jundi, Ninewa Provincial Council Member for Sinjar and representative for the Yazidi Community, added that 'this project enables Yazidi people who had been forced to flee during the conflict, to feel reconnected with their land.'

Mr. Ali Omer, Deputy Governor of Ninewa, stated that the community in Sinjar has suffered severely for decades and were never granted ownership of their houses and lands. He reiterated his gratitude to all partners who supported the Yazidi community and people in Sinjar.

Ms. Yuko Otsuki, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, a.i. also highlighted the importance of awarding residents with Occupancy Certificates for the first

time, 'Recognising the housing and occupancy rights for the Yazidis for the first time in modern history, is a groundbreaking achievement and a necessary tool for prompting more returns to the area.'

Embassy of Germany in Baghdad stated that: "Germany continues to support the Iraqi government in its stabilization efforts in the liberated areas. Housing rehabilitation, like this UN-Habitat project, is one important element. Other conditions for a safe and dignified return of IDPs include security, sound administration and livelihoods."

Mr. Zubair Murshed, Programme Manager a.i., ICRRP, UNDP Iraq reiterates this sentiment, "The destruction of communities – and specifically housing – is a major obstacle for IDPs when deciding whether or not they can or should return to their former villages and cities. This partnership with UN-Habitat has not only seen the rehabilitation of houses but has also helped to rebuild a sense of community by enabling the safe return of over 13,302 Yazidis, and engaging hundreds more in the rehabilitation process itself.'



Photo: UN-Habitat Iraq



Denmark provides an additional \$4 million to Security Sector Reform in Iraq

Baghdad, 4 March 2019 – The Government of Denmark will contribute an additional 27 million Danish Kroner (approx. USD 4 million) to advance Security and Justice Sector Reform in Iraq in the coming years. This support will be managed and facilitated by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UNDP Security Sector Reform/ Rule of Law Programme provides advice and assistance to Government of Iraq's Security Sector Reform Programme through partnerships with the Office of the National Security Advisor, Ministry of Interior, Higher Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice, Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee, Iraqi civil society organizations and, other international donors.

The Danish grant will, among others, be used to support implementation of the Local Police Road Map, for development of quick impact projects to improve police - public partnerships, and for mid-level management and, related specialized trainings to Iraqi police officers in close collaboration between Danish National Police, UNDP and the Ministry of Interior. Denmark has supported Iraq's security and justice sector reform efforts since 2015.

Danish Ambassador Gert Meinecke said "Denmark maintains its commitment to supporting Iraq's transition to

stability, security and recovery".

While visiting a mid-level management training course at the Ministry of Interior, the Danish Ambassador expressed hope that the trained Iraqi Police Officers will provide a safer and more secure day-to-day environment for the people of Iraq. "The strengthening of local police is important in the transition from 'green to blue' security". added Ambassador Meinecke.

Mr. Vakhtang Svanidze, Officer in Charge of UNDP Iraq said "I would like to thank the Government of Denmark for its generous contribution of 27 Mil-

lion Danish Kroner which comes in addition to the in-kind support of the Danish police advisor and, expert trainers". "Improving key public security services such as policing and justice services in the liberated and, other areas will be a key determiner to Iraq's transition to stability and, maintain safe returns" added Mr. Svanidze.

UNDP is very grateful to the Government of Denmark's committed and generous contributions to UNDP Security Sector Reform/ Rule of Law Programme in Iraq.



Iraq: Empowering Women criminal justice officials in the national counter terrorism response

Erbil, 7 March 2019 - After ISIL's military defeat at the hands of the Iraqi army in 2017, terrorism and violent extremism continue to pose challenges to the country. While undertaking efforts to deal with the aftermath of terrorist attacks, bringing perpetrators to justice, and providing support to victims and survivors, it has been widely acknowledged in the country that it is important to empower women in the ongoing peacebuilding process and the criminal justice response to terrorism offences.

On 7 March 2019, UNODC ROMENA organised a large stakeholders' meeting to launch a new programme on 'Strengthening the Capacity of Women Professionals Working in the Counter-Terrorism Sector,' in Erbil. The meeting brought together around 40 representatives from Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Ministries of Health, Labor and Social Affairs, Interior, Justice, and Education, parlia-

ment, judiciary institutions, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), UN Women, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the Women Empowerment Organization to gather the views of all sectors involved in the planned programme.

For the past 5 years, UNODC has been implementing various counter terrorism projects in Iraq in collaboration with governmental bodies, nongovernmental entities, members of parliament, prosecutors and judges, amongst many others. Throughout conducting a wide number of activities, UNODC data has shown that most of the delegations had been male, leading to the proposal of the programme. Therefore, efforts build upon past calls for further empowerment of women's indispensable role in counter terrorism efforts.

The meeting's attendees appreciated the proposals and initiatives put forward by UNODC and highlighted the past related efforts done towards wom-

en's inclusion, such as the National Action Plan developed by Iraq on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325, on women, peace, and security.

The meeting led to multiple rich discussions and encouraged stakeholders to identify some probable barriers to women accessing decision making posts and obtaining budgets for the women and peace agenda. Stakeholders further stressed to the necessity of including female perspectives and points of view while conducting studies on women.

Many participants clarified that women have long played roles in peace and security as activists, peacekeepers, and fighters. Nadia Murad, Nobel Prize winner and UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, was a key example for empowered women.

Prison reform, drug use prevention, youth involvement, and mental health awareness were also among the issues

Iraq: Empowering Women criminal justice officials in the national counter terrorism response *(continued)*

highlighted, requiring dedicated attention and support.

The expected outcomes of the programme are empowered female officials with an enhanced knowledge and capacity in international cooperation on terrorism-related matters, support to women professionals working within the Iraqi criminal justice system and law enforcement in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to cope with emerging terrorism challenges. The expected results would demonstrate a stronger capacity of women policy makers through trainings and awareness campaigns on the most imminent challenges posed by terrorism that threaten peace.

The programme responds to the UNODC/UNOV Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and is directed by the common



universal legal framework against terrorism developed by the international community. This framework is comprised of the 19 universal legal instruments against terrorism along with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The implementation of

these conventions, protocols and resolutions is informed by the guidance provided by the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy along with United Nations General Assembly Resolutions. The programme is funded by the United Kingdom.

Iraqi Ministry of Interior adopted SOP for Criminal Investigations

Baghdad, 21 March 2019 – On 18 March 2019, the Senior Deputy Minister of the Interior, Dr Aqeel Al-Khazaali, endorsed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Criminal Investigations. These internal regulations for criminal investigations are meant to make crime management more reliable and efficient. The adoption of the SOP on Criminal Investigation aligns with the implementation of the Local Police Service Road Map also recently adopted by the Ministry.

The SOP had been prepared for over a year by an internal ministerial criminal justice committee and an interdisciplinary working group consisting of interior ministry officials, representatives of the Higher Judicial Council, the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the National Security Advisor and with technical assistance from the security sector programme of UNDP. The SOP allows a unified criminal justice approach in Iraq and is meant to become the governing practice to conduct criminal investigations in an effective and proactive manner. Its purpose is to raise the performance of the police in investigations and make their professional actions in criminal investigations more accountable to investigating judges; also to make the evidence produced during their investigations more likely to be credible in further judicial proceedings. The SOP requires various departments of the Ministry of the Interior, in particular the Patrol Police, local police stations, the Anti-Crime Section, the Federal Investigation and

Intelligence Agency (FIIA) and the Criminal Forensic Directorate to cooperate while respective police investigators shall take up lead responsibilities. As the Senior Deputy Minister of the Interior Dr Aqeel Al-Khazaali writes in the foreword of the SOP: “Being committed to follow this SOP will enhance our national security status both directly and indirectly by countering all types of crime. Such a response from the police will also be well noted by the public. The Ministry of the Interior highly recognises the importance of public trust in police conduct which entails the cooperation of citizens by providing information to solve crimes.”

The head of the criminal justice committee of the MoI, Major General Ziad Taha Ali Al-Abbasi added that “with the introduction of the SOP the police assume a key role in the investigative process which puts the police in the position to implement warrants and directives from investigating judges based on agreed standards of practice.” “To become truly effective, the SOP will require general acceptance and the increased capacity of police departments that play key roles in criminal investigations. All major departments involved in investigations must raise their level of skills and be ready to streamline practices to be able to meet the requirements of the SOP,” stated Andreas Kirsch-Wood, Senior Criminal Justice Advisor of UNDP who participated in the expert group meetings and advised the Interior Ministry, the judiciary and other stakeholders during the

SOP drafting process.

UNDP-Iraq reaffirmed its commitment to the members of the ministerial criminal justice committee and the interdisciplinary working group to continue its support to make the implementation of the SOP a potent instrument to fight crimes. Since many police directorates and departments will be directly affected by changes in the investigative process, operation plans must be adapted, equipment reviewed and added, and training be conducted for lead investigators, operation room duty officers, major incident managers, first responders and others. Many other international partners have expressed an interest in this area of work.

UNDP is grateful to Germany and Denmark for their generous funding to carry out this important work in Iraq.



Working group consulting Senior Ministry of Justice on investigative processes.

Germany provides an additional USD 1.14 million to advance criminal investigations and local police service in Iraq

Baghdad, 21 April 2019 – The Government of Germany will contribute an additional USD 1.14 million to advance criminal investigations and local policing, that are identified key priorities within the Government of Iraq's ongoing Security Sector Reform Programme. This support will be managed and facilitated by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UNDP Security Sector Reform/ Rule of Law Programme provides advice and technical assistance to Government of Iraq's Security Sector Reform Programme through partnerships with the Office of the National Security Advisor, Ministry of Interior, Higher Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice, Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee, Iraqi civil society organizations and, other international donors. UNDP

is grateful to Germany for its generous funding to carry out this important work in Iraq.

The German Federal Foreign Ministry grant will, among others, be used to support implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures for Criminal Investigations and Local Police Service Road Map and, support civil society organizations to improve police - public partnerships at local level. Germany has supported Iraq's security and justice sector reform efforts since 2017.

German Ambassador Dr. Cyrill Jean Nunn said: "Security Sector Reform is one of the key pillars in Germany's support to Iraq. In that context, capacities for professional criminal investigations and local policing are of high importance. We appreciate the close collaboration of UNDP with all relevant

Iraqi authorities with the aim of improving public security services for the Iraqi people".

Officer in Charge of UNDP Iraq Mr. Vakhtang Svanidze said: "I would like to thank the Government of Germany for its generous contribution and, we are grateful to Germany for its continuing commitment to improve security and justice services in post- ISIL Iraq". "Improving key public security services such as policing and justice service provision in the liberated and other areas is a pre- requisite for Iraq's transition to stability and, maintain safe returns" added Mr. Svanidze.

UNDP is very grateful to the Government of Germany for its committed and generous contributions to Security Sector Reform/ Rule of Law Programme in Iraq.

IOM leverages Community Policing to address trafficking in persons

Erbil, 28 April 2019 – In the aftermath of the ISIL crisis, the Government of Iraq is dealing with a myriad of post-conflict challenges to rebuild the country, including creating economic opportunities, delivering social services, mending the social fabric in communities, and ensuring laws are enforced for the safety and security for all the country's inhabitants, just to name a few.

Conditions of conflict are fertile grounds for crimes related to trafficking in persons (TiP), including sexual exploitation and forced labor, the enslavement of women and girls by members of armed groups and the use of trafficked children as soldiers and street beggars.

IOM Iraq was instrumental in supporting the Government of Iraq with the development of the national counter-trafficking law in 2012. Now that the conflict has subsided, it is critical that State structures are empowered to take on this growing transnational crime. An innovative approach that IOM recently introduced is mainstreaming of the community policing approach to investigate cases of TiP.

IOM's community policing programme aims to contribute to enhanced security and stability in Iraq by facilitating dialogue between communities and law enforcement actors through Community Policing Forums (CPF) in communities affected by conflict and displacement. The programme is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

With the experience of strengthening community policing across Iraq since

2015, IOM recognizes the benefits of a community engagement in identifying and preventing crimes and addressing security concerns, including human trafficking.

IOM has supported the Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government, to establish Community Policing Forums (CPF), which are inclusive groups of diverse community members and community police officers where security-related concerns, including TiP, are discussed in a safe environment.

IOM has launched a set of trainings and seminars for 60 Iraqi investigative judges and law enforcement officers in Erbil and Baghdad to train them on mainstreaming community policing principles into the investigation of TiP cases.

The training in Erbil last week was attended by senior level community policing officers, police investigators, investigative judges and prosecutors, including the head of the Counter Trafficking Directorate and the head of Directorate for Combating Violence Against Women in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. To promote collaboration on counter-trafficking across borders, an IOM regional law enforcement expert on TiP was invited to share best practices from across the Middle East and North Africa region.

"Our directorate was newly established in 2018, and this training was really essential, especially for our new colleagues," said Lieutenant Colonel Dara Farouq, head of Counter Trafficking Directorate in the Kurdistan Region of

Iraq. "The training helped us to learn new methods of investigation, as we currently have a lot of cases related to foreign migrant workers that need these methods to be applied to rescue the victims of trafficking and bring the perpetrators to justice."

"Iraq poses a complex TiP problem as trafficking happens before and during crisis situations and across the borders," explained Placido Silipigni, head of IOM Iraq's Migration Management Unit. "We are pleased to see that the community policing approach is effective in bringing these crimes to the surface to ensure law enforcement and actors in the judiciary work collaboratively to respond to, and mitigate, these crimes."

Following the trainings, IOM will support a series of information-sharing sessions across the country that will include an investigative judge and a police officer, alongside an IOM representative, who will speak to 100 district police officers and investigative judges about TiP in Iraq and investigative approaches based on community policing principles.



Community policing forums build trust between communities and police, and contribute to community stabilization

Mosul, 10 March 2019 – IOM was happy to host a delegation from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA) and Al-Khadraa Community Policing Forum members in Mosul to showcase them how German-funded and IOM-supported community policing forums build trust between communities and police, and contribute to community stabilization.



Police station rehabilitated in Mosul

Mosul, 16 April 2019 - Abi Tamam police station in Mosul was destroyed by ISIL. Today, it's up-and-running, servicing four neighborhoods in the city thanks to rehabilitation efforts by United Nations Development Programme - UNDP with support from Germany.



Strategic Centre for Community Policing opened in central Baghdad

Baghdad, 27 April 2019 - To increase support to the Government of Iraq in the field of Community Policing, IOM - UN Migration Agency has recently opened a Strategic Centre for Community Policing in central Baghdad. IOM is currently training Community Police Officers who will staff the Strategic Centre and roll out trainings for fellow police officials on the Community Police approach, including setting up and monitoring Community Police Forums. As part of the establishment of the Strategic Centre, IOM also rehabilitated and furnished office space within the Community Policing Directorate in Baghdad.



Al Shifa Hospital complex in West Mosul - one of the biggest clearance tasks UNMAS has undertaken in Iraq

Mosul, 03 March 2019 - UNMAS, together with the United Nations Development Programme - UNDP, recently hosted a German delegation from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA) at the Al Shifa Hospital Complex in West Mosul. The hospital complex was known to be the second largest hospital in Iraq and reportedly one of Da'esh headquarters during their occupation. This site is also considered as one of the biggest clearance tasks UNMAS has undertaken in Iraq.

The delegation received an extensive briefing on current activities at the oncologic building and was able to see mechanical assets and search and clearance teams at work. This was followed by an update on rehabilitation works from UNDP representatives.

UNMAS would like to take the opportunity to thank the Federal Republic of Germany for its continuous support

towards creating a safe environment and enabling stabilization and humanitarian initiatives in Iraq.



UNMAS breaks gender barriers in Iraq

Baghdad, 8 March 2019 — On this International Women's Day and for the first time in its history, the United Nations (UN) has achieved gender parity among its senior leadership. Of 44 UN senior leadership roles, women hold 23 of these positions. Secretary-General António Guterres has made it an integral part of his mission to reach parity at all levels. This has proven to be particularly challenging, however, in field projects and operations such as in the mine action sector.

While the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) programme in Iraq can report gains, according to an informal UNMAS poll of mine action organizations in Iraq, total posts held by women decreased from 16 percent in 2017, to 12 percent in 2018. UNMAS percentages are higher but still fall short of parity.

The talent pool for candidates with qualifications for explosive hazard clearance and management has largely been filled with those with prior military experience, meaning it has been predominately male. In time, UNMAS envisions its specialized trainings will help address this shortfall in the Iraq context.

Even for programme-related positions, UNMAS finds it difficult to attract female applicants. A recent vacancy for a Senior Programme Officer is such a case: of the 263 applicants, only 22 were female. Attracting highly quali-

fied female candidates to hardship duty stations, particularly in areas where women's rights and freedoms are limited, remains a struggle for UNMAS and other UN agencies alike.

Similarly, conservative traditional values can influence local women's decisions who hesitate to push the limits based on prevailing cultural and social norms, and thereby limit their prospects for job placement and advancement.

Solving for this problem takes a two-prong strategy.

First, to achieve parity, women, men, boys and girls should have equal opportunities throughout their lives, beginning at an early age and through maturity.

Second, women should be afforded the same job opportunities as men. To ensure this, UNMAS in Iraq considers not only promotion of these opportunities, but evaluates job requirements and procedures from a woman's perspective so as to identify and address any cultural, practical, and social concerns which otherwise deter women from applying for a job.

For example, although many women would not be dissuaded from explosive hazard clearance despite its dangers, if body armour provided is only designed for men, even highly qualified women would have trouble performing required tasks.

On the job, cultural and social norms

might conflict with undertaking normal tasks, such as how and which teams conduct searches of buildings. In Iraq, UNMAS recently introduced a 'mixed team' concept, pairing women and men to work side by side, ensuring that team composition takes into consideration social norms while also empowering women in new roles.

By the numbers

UNMAS conducted surveys of 12 Iraq-based mine action organizations in August 2017 and August 2018 and found that, although the numbers of staff changed, the relative percentages of men versus women remained about the same:

August 2017:

Total staff members: 1,639

1,371 Male staff vs 268 Female staff

August 2018:

Total staff members: 1,189

1,006 Male staff vs 183 Female staff

The Reasons Why

"An inclusive and gender-balanced workforce increases the efficiency and effectiveness of mine action activities and benefits the community as a whole by ensuring a more coherent response to the different needs and priorities of women, girls, boys and men affected by contamination. A gender-balanced workforce also supports an agenda of equal rights, and programmes with more balanced staff composition report

UNMAS breaks gender barriers in Iraq

a better team atmosphere, improved satisfaction at work, and improved discipline."

Women in Mineaction Iraq



Shahad, a Community Liaison Officer working in Mosul with one of UNMAS implementing partners for over a year, imagines a city restored even as the information she collects guides clearance teams and helps determine prioritization of missions to be undertaken.

"What is of value to me as a woman and a Community Liaison Officer is that one day, in the future, I will look at the city and say I was part of this, of a survival journey for this city".

Shahad also participated in the 17th Meeting of the State Parties, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention recently in Geneva, Switzerland, where she represented UNMAS in Iraq and spoke on the subject of "Women and Youth in Mine Action: Building Stronger Communities".

"I want to involve and encourage more women to take part in the rehabilitation of Mosul; and the first step must be the clearance of the thousands of items of explosive hazards."



Shaimaa Abdullah Ahmed works with the Danish Demining Group (DDG), an UNMAS implementing partner in Iraq, providing risk education for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) at Al Salamiya Camp near Mosul. She envisions a bright future for the women and children in her community, and hopes to represent her city in advocating for their rights.

"I insisted on working in the field of risk education for IDPs because I wanted to make a difference to my communi-

ty and my country, and I aspire to keep on working in this field until the last explosive hazard has been removed from Iraq."



As a Community Liaison Officer with the Health and Social Care Organization (IHSCO) in Fallujah, **Noor** has come to know families who have lost loved ones to explosive hazards. Their stories, in turn, have helped her to deal with questions she expected in her conservative community.

"When I first started working, my family was slightly worried about the nature of my job, but that all changed once I started sharing with them details about the pain and suffering of our city.

"Considering that I am a woman living in a conservative community, I initially experienced some difficulties and criticisms from people. I was able to surpass those hurdles because I am extremely passionate about humanitarian work."

Working toward a 'safe home'

Most of the liberated area in Iraq – approximately one-third of the country – remains a 'danger zone' for returnees and IDPs alike for reason of contamination by explosive hazards. A walk home from school can be life-threatening. The importance of the timely clearance of these hazards cannot be overstated, serving as a critical first step toward a normal life and the return to a safe home for all. The UNMAS staff in Iraq have their own reasons for doing what they do, but ultimately their individual good reasons add up to a single right reason: an opportunity to contribute, to make a difference, to know no limits.



Dorra, a Tunisian national and former translator with UNMAS Iraq.

"When I was offered the possibility to join the UNMAS Iraq team, I seized the opportunity to make a change, an opportunity that is not necessarily possible for all women from the region. In the field, I have witnessed the challenges faced by aid workers, IDPs, and officials trying to overcome the crisis caused by the latest conflict, and I am happy to be part of the solution."

"During my spare time, I volunteer through an online app to help refugees and IDPs get access to free translation services that allow them to have access to aid workers, attorneys, and doctors. The conversations I am part of as a volunteer-interpreter are painful, but I am happy I can take some of the frustration away through language."



As one of the select group of women who work in mine action, **Noor** has spent her years at UNMAS cultivating a relentless professional portfolio that has impressed management, national authorities and colleagues alike.

Noor initially joined UNMAS as an Administration Assistant with the Support Services team, quickly moving up the ranks in a short amount of time. She embodies the fierce drive of a woman determined to succeed in spite of the numerous challenges, even as she is enrooted in a male-dominated work environment. Currently, Noor is the Associate Operations Officer working with UNMAS in Iraq for over three years, assisting the Head of Projects in coordinating operational activities.

"Even as a child, I vehemently rejected societal expectations that some things were meant for boys and others for girls. Now, as I work in the operations division of UNMAS, I am conscious of how very few women, especially local nationals, work alongside me, and have made it my mission to advocate for equal opportunities, and equal representation, in my line of work."

UNMAS breaks gender barriers in Iraq



Giorgia, former Gender Expert, UNMAS Iraq

“Without peace, no country and society can progress, certainly not while neglecting ‘half of the population’. One of the Iraqi women I came across during my work, Zahra, once said something that continues to echo in my mind: ‘Imagine Iraq as a beautiful bird in which men are one wing and women are the other. The bird can only fly forward if the wings flap together. But one wing is tied down. Is it really any wonder the bird is going around in circles, becoming exhausted and hitting the wall?’”



Lindsay, former Head of Programme Office, UNMAS Iraq

“The civilian women who are brave enough, and have fought hard enough, to secure a place in managing peace operations deserve the utmost respect. “Every day I think about how I can be a role model for junior staff and also inspire women to push for their chance to be a catalyst for change, and to find their seat at the management table in the United Nations. “There are many obstacles in this journey, and I am very lucky to have a male champion, who is also a role model for

other men to support women: my boss who is standing next to me in this photo. He has empowered me, challenged me and provided me opportunities like no other before him, which is crucial to create positive space for women at the table. “



Lyuba, Associate Programme Officer, UNMAS

“Ever since I found out how easy it is to create a booby trap and purposefully inflict harm on a human being in such a cruel way, I’ve wanted to work in mine action. When I tried on a bomb suit recently, my respect for explosive hazard clearance operators reached a new level... there is such a fine balance between personal safety and confidence in the skills necessary for successful operations.”



Clara, Senior Gender Advisor, UNMAS Iraq

“Globally, we are facing a crisis. Women’s representation and active participation in the peace and security sector is decreasing – and those numbers were not high to begin with. When we leave women out of peace negotiations, out of peacebuilding and out of the security and governance decisions of a nation, we lose their practical and strategic

insights that can highlight the experiences and particular needs of half the population. When women aren’t part of the conversation and the decision-making, we must recognize that we are failing.”

“The same holds true for field programmes. At UNMAS Iraq, we are ensuring that gender is mainstreamed within all our programming, from risk education to explosive hazard management, and that the recruitment for all our posts is done in a gender-responsive manner. We know that it is step by step. Nevertheless, the data is on our side: including women is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do for our effective operations and for sustainable peace and security within a country.”



Pehr, Senior Programme Manager, UNMAS Iraq

“Ensuring diversity and the inclusion of the different needs of women, men, boys and girls is key to UNMAS success, whether within its senior leadership, programme staff, or in field-based operations. For us, this isn’t something we only think about or talk about on International Women’s Day. It’s every day.”

UNMAS in Iraq would like to thank the Governments of Australia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Sweden and the United Kingdom for offering equal opportunities to women and men as well as supporting gender mainstreaming initiatives in mine action.



UNMAS Senior Manager at the American University of Kurdistan gave a lecture on “Explosive Hazard Management in Iraq – Challenges and Opportunities”

Duhok, 12 March 2019 - Senior Manager of United Nations Mine Action Service- Iraq (UNMAS) Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, visited the American University of Kurdistan where he gave a lecture on “Explosive Hazard Management in Iraq – Challenges and Opportunities” at AUK’s auditorium.

Attended by the students and in the presence of AUK Provost Dr. Nazan Numan and AUK’s Director of Center for Peace and Human Security (CPHS) Dr. Paul Philippe, Mr. Lodhammar’s lecture highlighted the Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) campaign in Iraq and the critical role it plays in stabilizing the country. Mr. Lodhammar presented case studies including explosive removal in Mosul, Al Shihabi Secondary School in Al Karma, Iron Bridge in Fallujah, and the electrical power lines providing electricity to Kirkuk. He also emphasized the role that women play in the activities of UNMAS, particularly in Risk Education for children.

Pehr Lodhammar is a former Swedish Army Officer and a prominent expert in the fields of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and Explosives Hazard Management (EHM). Prior to joining



UNMAS, he had held senior leadership positions at various international organizations; including Director of UNOPS in Kurdistan from 2007 to 2008.

“This was a very instructive lecture. The explosive removal situation in Iraq after ISIS is different than in many other post-conflict zones. Much work happens in urban environment, in the rubble, and the improvised explosive devices can look like anything and be anywhere. This is much more complicated than removing traditional land mines from a field.” stated Dr. Paul Philippe, AUK’s Director of Center for

Peace and Human Security.

Established in 1997, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is a service located within the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations that specializes in coordinating and implementing activities to limit the threat posed by mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) leads, coordinates and implements United Nations efforts to eliminate landmines and explosive hazards and to mitigate their impact on people’s lives.

Denmark grant additionally USD 11 million for explosive threat mitigation in liberated areas of Iraq

Baghdad, 26 March 2019 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of DKK 73 million (over USD 11 million) from the Government of Denmark to mitigate the threat posed by explosive hazards and enable stabilization efforts in liberated areas of Iraq. The scale, scope, and complexity of explosive hazard contamination in liberated areas is substantial, and far exceeds the existing national resources to clear them.

This multi-year contribution (2019 to 2021) from the Government of Denmark is critical to the continuation of operations and brings the total Danish support for UNMAS work in Iraq to DKK 165,500,000 (approximately USD 26 million). Through strategic partnerships and engagement of both internal and external stakeholders, and in support of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNMAS has so far cleared over 1,400 critical infrastructure sites. These include bridges, water treatment and power plants, hospitals

and schools. All littered with explosive hazards following the defeat of ISIL.

With this contribution from Denmark, UNMAS will be able to better support the safe, orderly, voluntary and dignified return of displaced communities through explosive hazard management, risk education, and capacity enhancement initiatives in support of the Iraqi government.

Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Anders Samuelsen underlined the importance of explosive threat mitigation for the return of IDPs: “We are painfully aware that the return of internally displaced persons to some kind of normal life is not possible as long as explosive hazards threaten their life and safety. That is why UNMAS’ work remains so critical.”

“Explosive hazards are found everywhere: in infrastructure, schools, hospitals, homes and under bridges. They are mixed with the rubble, and are found in rural and urban areas, sometimes visible, but often hidden, waiting for potential victims. They must all be cleared before communities are safe,”

said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, Senior Programme Manager of UNMAS in Iraq.

“UNMAS has been in Iraq for just over three years, and we still have a long way to go. We are very grateful for this generous contribution from Denmark that will allow us to continue our work in explosive hazard management and simultaneously save lives in the process,” added Mr. Lodhammar.



Japan provides additional contribution to explosive hazard management in liberated areas of Iraq

Baghdad, 28 March 2019 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) welcomes an additional contribution of USD 1,625,000 from the Government of Japan to further mitigate the threat posed by explosive hazards in support of the provision, facilitation and enablement of humanitarian and stabilization support.

“Japan has recently decided a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 63 million, which includes this project as a contribution to explosive hazard management,” said His Excellency Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Federal Republic of Iraq. He reiterated Japan’s continued support for Iraq’s reconstruction efforts, notably through humanitarian and stabilization assistance to help displaced people return to their communities.

UNMAS, working in tandem with its implementing partners, continues to maintain a weighted presence in Iraq, especially in the areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This contribution from the Government of Japan will support UNMAS explosive hazard management activities in Iraq. UNMAS implements a strategic, comprehensive response to mitigate the risks posed by explosive hazards through three primary areas: explosive hazard management, capacity enhancement, and risk education. This range of activities allows for a dynamic and adaptable approach covering clear-



ance, enhancement of existing government resources, and engagement with communities to ensure a unified response to explosive hazards.

This contribution is complemented with a risk education event for internally displaced people (IDPs) sponsored by Japan, entitled “Safe Run”. Through interactive activities and a two-kilometre run for children of families residing in the camp, the event highlighted correct behaviors to adopt when encountering explosive hazards.

“It is my sincere hope that you keep yourselves fully cautious and protect yourselves, based upon the lessons you have learned today. You are assured that your parents, authorities, UNMAS, local and international communities continue to work closely toward a world without mines so that you, your sisters and brothers can attend school and play at outside fields, being free

from getting victimized.” Mr. Katsumi Moriyasu, Consul of Japan in Erbil, talked to children in his speech at the event.

“Significant explosive contamination remains uncleared throughout the liberated areas and pose a significant threat to all members of the affected communities, with children being especially vulnerable.” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq. “Whether through direct explosive hazard management, or risk education initiatives such as this ‘Safe Run’, Japan’s generous contribution will go a long way in supporting humanitarian and stabilization efforts in the country.”

The Government of Japan is an essential contributor to UNMAS explosive hazards management activities in Iraq and has donated over USD 14.4 million since 2016.

Safe Run on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

Erbil, 04 April 2019 - In anticipation of the 2019 International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) recently held a “Safe Run” for 12-year-old kids at the Debaga camp for internally displaced people (IDP) in the Kurdish Region of Iraq.

Sponsored by the Government of Japan, attendees included the Consul of Japan in Erbil, Mr. Katsumi Moriyasu, the Risk Education Director of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), Mr. Karwan Zrar as well as the senior management of both UNMAS and the Debaga IDP Camp.

The event encompassed a three-kilometer race, the screening of risk education TV clips, a Q&A session, in addition to several speeches. Speaking at the event, Fran O’Grady, UNMAS Iraq Head of Projects, said: “For dec-

ades, the Government of Japan has been a staunch supporter of humanitarian initiatives in Iraq, epitomizing a long-standing partnership between the two countries. We, at UNMAS, are grateful for their support in helping us fulfill our mandate to create a safe en-

vironment and therefore facilitate the return of displaced communities.”

All participants received school items, t-shirts, and shoes customized with risk education messages. The first three winners were also awarded bikes as their prize.



Explosive hazards and rubble: Rebuilding life after war

Mosul, 4 April 2019 - Once Mosul was finally liberated from ISIL control in mid-2016, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) and the Government of Iraq immediately began working together to enable the safe return of displaced Iraqis to the city.

The fighting caused extensive and devastating damage to Mosul's buildings and infrastructure, which displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians. By the time the fighting stopped, the city was littered with explosive hazards and rubble to be cleared.

UNMAS and their partners on the ground deployed risk assessment teams across the city, followed by specialized teams to find and clear explosive mate-

rials.

UNMAS has cleared in the region of 46,000 explosive hazards from Mosul, including conventional ammunition, IEDs, air-dropped munitions and stockpiles of abandoned ISIL-manufactured munitions. With such a large variety of deadly items, the clearance work has been complex and time-consuming.

With an estimated 10 million tons of rubble around Mosul (as much as three times the Great Pyramid), UNDP then began the process of clearing it. A cash-for-work programme was established, providing temporary income for local people and injecting much-needed cash into the local economy.

Since then, UNDP has been working to rehabilitate social services in the city,

with over 1,000 individual projects being undertaken across both East and West Mosul.

From repairing roads and bridges, to rebuilding schools and universities, to restoring electricity and running water, UNDP and its partners have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the rehabilitation of the city.

The collaborative efforts of UNMAS, UNDP and the Iraqi government have been successful, with some 1,300 UNDP projects sites cleared of explosive hazards by UNMAS. This has helped enable over 1.6 million people to return to the province, with kids going back to reopened schools and Mosul getting back on its feet.

UNOPS and the Government of Japan support demining in Iraq



Baghdad, 7 April 2019 – A handover ceremony was held today to mark the completion of the project “Improving the Operational Capacity of Demining Authorities” in Iraq. The project was funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in cooperation with the Government of Iraq.

With the aim of supporting the efficiency of the country's demining process, the project provided vehicles, personal protection equipment, specialized equipment for tactical exercises, and land mine and unexploded ordnance detectors, worth USD 3.2 million. At the same time, more than 60 staff of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) of the Ministry of Health and Environment, the Ministry of Interior (MOD), and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) were trained in the use of the specialized demining

equipment. This has improved the operational capacity of DMA, MOI, as well as IKMAA and their respective partners engaged in mine-action to undertake demining and related activities. In addition, UNOPS collaborated with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in the implementation of this project. JICA provided a series of mine action trainings to the same set of beneficiaries through its technical cooperation, while UNMAS provided technical advice on the specification of the procured demining equipment.

The project has contributed to the improvement of the safety and security of Iraqi population by reducing the risks of landmines, with particular focus on the newly liberated areas in Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Ninewa (Mosul), Makhmur/Erbil and Dyala governorates.

“We sincerely hope that the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) of the Ministry of Health and Environment, and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) will manage and utilize provided equipment. We also hope that MOI, DMA, and IKMAA staff trained in this project will undertake demining and related activities effectively and efficiently so as to contribute to reestablishment of the normal living conditions of Iraqi people.” said Charge d’Affaires ad interim of Japan to Iraq, Mr. Akira Endo. He added, “Japan has recently decided a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 63 million, including assistance in demining sector. Japan will continue to contribute to reconstruction and development of Iraq by Iraqi people.”

“Our deep gratitude to our friends the government and people of Japan who continue to support humanitarian cause to eliminate the danger of mines on communities of Iraq. This project is another milestone in the long way of friendship between Iraq and Japan. We look forward to continue this in the form of more projects that help people of Iraq especially in liberated areas to return and settle. Stabilization of the life of the returnees is a priority and this support we witness today will further add to achieve stabilization,” added Dr. Cameran Ali, Director General of Demining Agency in the Ministry of Health and environment in the federal Government of Iraq (DMA-MOHE)

“The Government and People of Japan showed support generously over the years to Kurdistan Region Government and people. This Project comes as an-

UNOPS and the Government of Japan support demining in Iraq *(continued)*

other testament of the remarkable friendship both Iraq and Japan developed over long decades of mutual respect and understanding,” stated Mr. Siraj Barzani Head of Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) in his speech today on the closing ceremony of the project.

“The generous donor; Government and People of Japan whom we embrace

their friendship dearly. The humanitarian cause was always a priority to our Japanese friends and their support over the years speaks loud for this,” concluded MG Kadhum who delivered a speech on behalf of the Ministry of interior in which he also reiterated gratitude of GOI and people of Iraq to the Government and People of Japan.

Ms. Dara Tell, Programme Specialist

for UNOPS Baghdad added that, “we are grateful to the Government of Japan, Government of Iraq, and all our partners in this important project. We appreciate the opportunity to work together and support the efforts to improve the security and provide conditions for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the liberated areas.”

Mine Action Day marked in Baghdad

Baghdad, 16 April 2019 - The Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), together with UNMAS, recently hosted an event to celebrate the 2019 International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

Celebrations included a risk education play, the screening of risk education videos, exhibition booths from mine action operators as well as speeches from the Deputy Minister of Health and Environment (MoH&E), the Director-General of NGOs from the General Secretariat of Minister Council and UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager.

“During the past two decades, Iraq suffered many wars that led to the displacement of a substantial number of residents, thereby affecting the overall demography of the country,” said Dr.



Kameran Ali Hasan, Deputy MoH&E. “The challenges facing the mine action sector are tremendous due to the usage of explosive material in the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices, affecting Iraq considerably,” added Dr.

Kameran.

UNMAS would like to thank DMA for hosting this event, with a special thanks to the donor community for its continuous support and generous contributions to mine action in Iraq.

Healthcare

Japan donates US\$ 3.4 million to support the health and nutrition needs of children in Iraq

Baghdad, 4 March 2019 – The government of Japan has donated US\$3.4 million to provide lifesaving health and nutrition assistance for vulnerable children in conflict affected areas in Iraq. Approximately 4.2 million people have returned to their homes after fleeing the violence that erupted in 2014, however many find their homes and communities have been reduced to rubbles and essential health services overstretched.

“Across all conflict affected governorates, hospitals have been destroyed and those that are functioning are overwhelmed and struggling to meet health and nutrition needs, placing the lives of the most vulnerable children at risk of deadly diseases, including polio and measles,” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative to Iraq.

“Japan has recently decided on a new

assistance package for Iraq amounting to 63 million US dollars, including this project as contribution in health and nutrition sectors. With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis in Iraq reaches 500 million US Dollars,” said H.E. Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq said.

UNICEF is grateful to the Government of Japan in their unwavering support to vulnerable children and families in Iraq. Since 2015 UNICEF Iraq has partnered with Government of Japan to support the needs of children caught in cycles of violence.

The latest funding of US\$3.4 million will compliment Japan and UNICEF’s investment for Iraqi children by building the capacity of health workers, strengthening health systems in con-

flict affected governorates as well as providing immunization and nutrition services to nearly 1 million children and breastfeeding mothers in areas of returns as well as in the camps for displaced people.



Chances of survival for children in Dohuk see a significant improvement

Dohuk, 11 March 2019 – At Heevi Pediatric Hospital in Dohuk Governorate, the survival rate for children with acute conditions has significantly improved since WHO started supporting the pediatric intensive care unit more than 3 years ago. Thanks to the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) and the Government of Kuwait who helped to equip the unit with beds and medical equipment. Before its establishment, the survival rate of all the children admitted in the unit in 2016 was at 60%, but with the unit up and running, the survival rate increased to 75% by the end of 2018. The



patients admitted to this unit are under the care of 2 medical doctors and 3 nurses on a 24/7 basis. This helps to improve care and the outcomes of patients. The survival rates cannot entirely be attributed to the unit alone, but to a whole continuum of care, that includes a combination of clinical innovation, results show promising signs of improved chances for children at the hospital.

More than 863 children with a range of illnesses from pneumonia and acute renal failure to congenital heart disease and traumatic injuries from accidents have been treated at this busy unit in the last 3 years, with an average of 700 consultations per day in all hospital departments, approximately 60% of them are internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Syrian refugees.

Although the unit is doing well saving the lives of many children, it still grapples with a high patient's caseload, few beds and machines. Dr Nezar Baker, the hospital manager, says that more beds and space are required to match the overwhelming needs of critically ill children and newborn babies in Dohuk's only pediatric hospital. "I am thankful to WHO for its support, but the needs re-

main immensely massive in a 189-bed facility like Heevi Pediatric hospital where we contentiously record more admissions, especially during winter and summer sessions," said Dr Nezar Baker.

"Many children in the wards wait for space at the unit; the same is true for the neonatal intensive care unit. This situation sometimes forces us to put more than 2 to 3 infants in one bed, which technically and medically is not right and is unhealthy," added Dr Baker.

Similarly, the 9 incubators and oxygen machines were also provided to the hospital by WHO using funds from USAID/OFDA and European Union Humanitarian Aid. More than 203 ill or premature newborn infants, the majority IDPs, and refugees have been managed at the NICU since February to December 2018.

Both the pediatric and neonatal units were constructed with the support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and implemented by Italian Association for Solidarity among Peoples and Sassari University managed by Dohuk Directorate of Health.

WHO support for prosthetic rehabilitation centre brings hope for patients with disabilities



Sulaymaniyah, 12 March 2019 – Thirteen-year-old Jasmin from Badush village in Mosul calmly sits despondent and quiet on his wheelchair at the WHO-supported emergency orthopedic centre in Sulaymaniyah. His face bears the scars of recent injuries; his smile is mixed with joy and sadness but testifies to his hope for a better future.

"I want to be able to walk on my own again," says Jasmin, with his uncle by his side. "I want to go back to school and be a policeman so I can keep law and order in my community," he says.

"I'm doing my best to remain positive

about my situation and very much looking forward to when I will be able to walk on my own two feet again," he adds.

Tens of thousands of people have lost limbs in Iraq's 4-year crisis. Jasmin is one of the hundreds of beneficiaries who have received support from WHO and the Italian nongovernmental organization EMERGENCY. This support ensures the referral of patients from Mosul to the orthopedic centre in Sulaymaniyah free of charge.

In October 2017, an improvised explosive device went off injuring Jasmin

and killing 2 of his brothers while they played at home. His brothers died instantly but Jasmin survived although doctors were unable to save his legs. "After the explosion, I took Jasmin to a hospital in west Mosul where both of his legs were amputated. However, months later a mobile team from Handicap International visited our village and referred us to a prosthetic centre in Mosul, and eventually, we were brought to Sulaymaniyah Orthopedic unit," said Jasmin's uncle, Mahmoud.

Mahmoud adds that Jasmin lost both his parents and another brother during the Mosul conflict, and his only hope for a better future depends on his ability to regain his mobility and independence with his new prosthetic limbs.

The rehabilitation of trauma victims from Mosul is essential for proper reintegration of all war casualties back to their communities, WHO aims to ensure that no one is left behind by collaborating with EMERGENCY, who are running the prosthetics centre.

In this partnership arrangement, WHO fully funds the transfer and treatment of all patients referred from Mosul to the centre. This assistance has been made possible through funds from the German Government.

Pediatric Unit and Outpatient Department open for patients in Hawija General Hospital

Baghdad, 12 March 2019 – The World Health Organization (WHO) and Kirkuk Directorate of Health today inaugurated the Out-patient Department and Pediatric Unit in Hawija General Hospital in Kirkuk Governorate.

The out-patient department in the hospital has inflicted significant damage during the conflict in Hawija district in 2014-2017; it is now completely renovated and a pediatric unit of a number of prefabs and a 25-bed capacity ward added to support the delivery of extended pediatric health services in the facility.

The project also covered the rehabilitation of the doctors' guesthouse, supplying a wide range of medical technologies including the Emergency Room and Operation Theater equipment, in addition to the provision of more than 30 tons of medicines, medical consumables and kits of different treatment and surgical units.

"WHO will continue supporting the Ministry of Health in its endeavor to



rehabilitate the health facilities destroyed by over 4 years of fighting in many governorates in Iraq," said Dr. Adham Rashad Ismail, WHO Acting Representative in Iraq. "We are keen to ensure the full access of vulnerable population in affected areas to adequate health care services," he added.

The hospital, the only health facility in the district, will provide access to a

complete package of specialized health care services to approximately 200,000 residents including IDPs and returnees from different areas of Kirkuk Governorate.

The renovation project, which began in November 2018, was completed in a record time of four months in February 2019 with direct funds from USAID/OFDA.

WHO welcomes a generous contribution from Japan to rebuild resilient health systems in Iraq



Baghdad, 11 March 2019 – The World Health Organization WHO extends its gratitude to the Government and People of Japan for the generous contribution of US\$ 803,571 to assist in protecting health security in post-conflict Iraq by strengthening the country's ability to prepare for and respond to public health events, particularly in vulnerable populations.

While the country moves towards the reconstruction and resilience phase, the need for humanitarian assistance persists, and services established by WHO during the crisis need to be sustained in areas of internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, refugees and host communities. More than 5 million people in Iraq were internally displaced because of recent conflict in Iraq. While over 3.5 million individuals have re-

turned to their homes of origin, 10 percent remain living in IDP camps. Further, approximately 30 percent of the total recorded IDPs are living with host communities in displaced locations. The IDPs, including those in the camps, within host communities, returnees and other vulnerable people, continue to be at risk of infectious diseases.

"The overall aim is to protect health security in Iraq by strengthening the country's ability to prepare for and respond to public health events, using the all-hazards approach, as per the International Health Regulations IHR (2005). More specifically, WHO will continue to support vulnerable populations in the prevention and control of epidemic-prone diseases and emerging infectious diseases that pose a threat to people in post-conflict era" said Dr.

Adham Ismail, Acting Representative of WHO in Iraq, acknowledging the generous contribution from Japan. WHO's work will largely focus on developmental activities to build and enhance the capacity of health professionals at various levels (central, governorate, and district) in disease detection and monitoring through strengthening of the surveillance system and laboratory diagnostics and in case management for prevalent diseases to ensure appropriate patient care.

This contribution will ensure an enhanced infectious disease surveillance system and public health preparedness to enable early detection and response to disease outbreaks and other public health threats. It will also go towards enhancing the capacity of health professionals in preparing for and responding to infectious disease outbreaks as well as improving risk communication in infectious disease prevention and control. Further, it will target 3,000,000 high-risk populations, namely IDPs, returnees, refugees and host communities.

The Government of Japan has been a key partner to WHO, contributing a total of US\$ 6,075,696 million over 4 years in support of the Organization's interventions and services to the health sector across Iraq.

The Joint External Evaluation workshop held in Baghdad to assess Iraq's capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to diseases

Baghdad, 14 March 2019 – The World Health Organization (WHO) has commenced today the Joint External Evaluation workshop in Baghdad to assess Iraq's capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to diseases and to develop the country's preparedness and response action plan to manage health risks. This program was supported by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).



Vaccination campaign against measles, mumps and rubella concludes in Iraq

Baghdad, 1 April 2019 – The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with WHO, completed a 10-day vaccination campaign to immunize children aged from 9 to 59 months in Iraq against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) from 10 to 24 March 2019.

The campaign aimed to protect a large number of children and reduce the risk of severe and deadly MMR outbreaks in the country. It also forms a critical part of Iraq's ongoing work to protect all populations against MMR epidemics, in alignment with the global measles and rubella strategic plan 2012–2020.

Stressing the importance of vaccinating every child, Dr Adham Ismail, acting WHO Representative in Iraq, praised the enthusiastic approach by Ministry of Health teams and said, "We acknowledge the commitment and cooperation of the health authorities in Iraq to ensure that Iraqi children are protected with a quality vaccine which will contribute to health security and a safer world".

A subnational vaccination round against MMR has already been successfully implemented in 2 phases. Phase I was conducted between 3 and 11 September 2018 and covered 10 provinces. Phase II targeted 2 592 858 children aged 9–59 months in 9 provinces (Baghdad-Kerkh, Baghdad-Resafa, Diyala, Wassit, Diwania, Muthanna, ThiQar, Missan and Basra) over 10 days. 6490 vaccinators participated in this campaign, in addition to 646 team supervisors.

The campaign is part of the vaccination strategy to strengthen immunity against MMR. Vaccination teams went



house to house to ensure that all targeted children were covered. They visited slums, settlements for internally displaced persons and other areas in which marginalized communities reside to promote vaccination.

WHO provided technical and financial support for the operational costs of this campaign, which was monitored by independent Iraqi Red Cross Society's monitoring teams and 6 WHO Technical Officers. The WHO Baghdad office team attended the opening ceremony of the vaccination campaign at a local health centre and walked with vaccinators in the Otaifiya neighbourhood monitoring the vaccination of a large number of children.

Thanks to the strong commitment of the Government and dedication of frontline health workers, there has been a significant improvement in over-

all population immunity in Iraq as a result of the efforts made by the central Ministry of Health, Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government and Departments of Health. Vaccination is the most cost-effective public health intervention and will maintain and strengthen the population's immunity against MMR.



WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF reiterate their commitment to Universal Health Coverage for every person, anywhere, anytime in Iraq

Baghdad, 7 April 2019 – Today, as the world commemorates World Health Day with the theme, Universal Health Coverage (UHC), WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF recommit to supporting the Government of Iraq ensure that every person in Iraq has access to quality health care services, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of achieving universal health coverage by 2030.

Iraq has made considerable progress of striving to ensure access to quality and affordable health care services for its citizens over the past 25 years. The country has seen great improvement in life expectancy from 68.1 to 70.3 years; neo-natal mortality have gone down from 27 to 17% per 1000 live birth, while under five mortality has reduced from 54 to 30%. However, more needs to be done in order to build on these achievements and ensure equitable access to essential health services, irrespective of socio-economic status or geographic location.

Accessing UHC means providing access to essential quality care and protection. This entails integration of good stewardship, adequate public financing, qualified and motivated health work-

force, access to quality medicines and health products, functional health information systems and people-centered service delivery systems. WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF are working closely with the authorities in Iraq at the national and subnational levels to strengthen health systems for better service delivery.

WHO continues to support the Iraqi Ministry of Health in repositioning mobile clinics in areas with limited or no access to health care services, procuring medicines and other medical supplies, as well as developing strategies, guidelines and policies in favor of universal health care. In addition, the organization is working to build the capacity of health workers through trainings and is supporting the rehabilitation of damaged and destroyed health facilities.

Women and girls in particular are still unable to realize their sexual and reproductive health and rights and suffer from gender-based violence. Protracted displacement places an extra burden, making them unable to access reproductive health services in a timely manner, leading to life-threatening risks during pregnancy and delivery.

UNFPA continues to prioritize maternal health, childbirth and newborn care services through the support of 76 facilities to mitigate the risks of maternal deaths and ensure no pregnancy is unattended by birth attendants in Iraq. UNICEF has focused much of its healthcare work on immunization, newborn care, and nutrition across Iraq, including among vulnerable communities such as the internally displaced and hard to reach areas. Although 90% of under-fives received polio and measles vaccinations last year, only half of under ones got all the vaccinations required to ensure a healthy childhood. Without adequate immunization, Iraqi children have significantly higher risks of developing debilitating diseases and lifelong disabilities.

On this World Health Day, the UN reiterates its commitment to work with the Government to bring the country one-step closer to an Iraq where everyone has rights, choices, and access to quality health services. Together, we can contribute to ensuring that the people of Iraq are among the global one billion more people exercising their human right to have access to quality health services.

WHO sends shipment of kits and medical supplies to Missan governorate



Baghdad, 8 April 2019 – Responding to the needs of the Directorate of Health in Missan following the recent floods that hit the area, WHO, with the generous support of donors, sent a large consignment of emergency kits and medical supplies on 4 April to support the Directorate, 304 kilometers south east of Baghdad.

Missan was adversely affected by the floods which were caused by heavy rain and floods from the border with Islamic Republic of Iran. The flood water is covering a wide area of land, which has led to the migration of residents, damage to property, death of livestock and destruction of agricultural crops in many villages and marshlands.

About 328 726 populations are at risk. Cities and villages affected are: Ali al-Gharbi, al-Msharrah, Hay al-Mua'alemeen al-Jadeed, al-Salam, al-Faka, al-Btaira, al-Teeb, al-Adil, al-Maymouna, al-Uzair and al-Kahlaa. Areas seriously threatened are villages west of the Tigris River (Hor Al-Musandak) along Ali al-Gharbi, Ali al-Sharqi and Qamit. 545 families are displaced with another 2000 families threatened with displacement.

The Government coordinated multi-sectoral efforts, supervised and supported relief operations, established 5 camps, and coordinated with Iraqi Army forces and civil defense to send helicopters to evacuate people trapped in flooded areas. With the situation quickly evolving, 101 families in some villages were evacuated to a camp in a neighboring village.

“In response to the crisis, the WHO country office in Iraq has been coordinating very closely with the Missan Directorate of Health. WHO kept high level coordination and collaboration with the Directorate of Health in Mis-

WHO sends shipment of kits and medical supplies to Missan governorate (continued)

san through medical operations and specialized services.” said Dr. Adham Ismail, acting WHO Representative in Iraq. “WHO acted promptly in responding to monitoring the floods and receiving regular reports, it assessed water quality and access to clean water and monitored cases of acute diarrhea. Further, WHO has shared information with the Development Coordination Office at UNAMI and all United Nations partner agencies in Basra, particularly with UNICEF – Water and Sanitation Unit, and supported the Direc-

torate with 30 Basic Interagency Emergency Health Kit and trauma kits to cover a population of 100 000 for one month. WHO will continue its efforts in monitoring the flood and health situation in Missan,” Dr. Ismail added.

Officials at Missan Directorate of Health stressed that the shipment would save lives in the governorate and could be used by mobile clinics offering emergency health care and services to affected people. They expressed appreciation to WHO and donors for their quick response and support. The con-

signment included supplementary module pharmaceutical kits, supplementary module equipment, renewable kits, trauma profile/emergency kits, medical supplies, and basic units (without a malaria component).

The support to Missan's Directorate of Health was made possible through a generous contribution from donors and health partners, in particular, the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance.

World must work harder to secure sexual and reproductive rights for all, says new UNFPA report

United Nations, New York, 10 April 2019— The global reproductive rights movement that began in the 1960s transformed the lives of hundreds of millions of women, empowering them to govern their own bodies and shape their own futures. But despite the gains made over the past 50 years, since the establishment of UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, the world still has a long way to go before rights and choices are claimed by all, according to the State of World Population 2019, released by UNFPA today.

On the journey towards rights and choices, women and girls have faced social and economic barriers every step of the way. A coalition of civil society, activists, and organizations such as UNFPA have been helping tear down those barriers.

The efforts of the reproductive rights movements have dramatically reduced the number of unintended pregnancies and maternal deaths, and have cleared the way for healthier, more productive lives for untold millions, the new UNFPA report says.

The report traces advances in reproductive health on the anniversaries of two important milestones. It has been 50 years since UNFPA began operations in 1969 as the first United Nations agency to address population growth and reproductive health needs. It is also the 25th anniversary of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), where 179 governments called for all people to have access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including voluntary family planning, and safe pregnancy and childbirth services.

Much has been achieved since 1969,

says the report. The average number of births per woman was 4.8 then, compared to 2.9 in 1994 and 2.5 today; fertility rate in the least developed countries dropped from 6.8 in 1969, to 5.6 in 1994 and 3.9 in 2019; and the number of women who died from pregnancy-related causes has decreased from 369 per 100,000 live births in 1994, to 216 in 2015. In addition, 24 per cent of women used modern contraceptives in 1969, compared to 52 per cent in 1994 and 58 per cent in 2019.

However, reproductive rights are still out of reach for too many women, including the more than 200 million women who want to prevent a pregnancy but cannot access modern contraceptive information and services.

“Despite the increasing availability of contraceptives over the years, hundreds of millions of women today still have no access to them, and to the reproductive choices that come with them,” said UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem. “Without access, they lack the power to make decisions about their own bodies, including whether or when to become pregnant.”

“The lack of this power—which influences so many other facets of life, from education to income to safety—leaves women unable to shape their own futures,” added Dr. Kanem.

The report includes, for the first time, data on women’s ability to make decisions over three key areas: sexual intercourse with their partner, contraception use and health care. Across the 51 countries where this information is available, only 57 per cent of women who are married or in a relationship are able to make their own choices over all three of these areas.

“I call on world leaders to re-commit to

the promises made in Cairo 25 years ago to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights for all,” said Dr. Kanem. “The world will have a historic opportunity to complete the unfinished business of the ICPD at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 to be held in Kenya in November, where governments, activists and stakeholders will rally to protect the gains made so far, and fulfill the promise of the ICPD agenda, so that no one is left behind.”

The report also features 15 champions of change who have broken barriers in their own context and influenced the landscape of sexual and reproductive health and rights into what it is today.

“I salute these champions,” said Dr. Kanem. “We all have a role in pushing back against forces that would see us return to a time when women had little say in reproductive decisions or, for that matter, in any area of their lives,” she added. “The fight for rights and choices must continue until they are a reality for all.”

Facts and figures from the report:

- Number of deaths of women from pregnancy-related causes per 100,000 live births, worldwide: 369 in 1994; 216 in 2015.
- Regional modern contraceptive prevalence rate: 11 per cent in 1969; 33 per cent in 1994; 48 per cent in 2019.
- Global fertility rate, or average number of births per woman: 4.8 in 1969; 2.9 in 1994; 2.5 in 2019.
- An estimated 40 million women alive today in the region were married when they were children.
- Every day, more than 500 women and girls in countries with emergency settings die during pregnancy and childbirth.

WHO expresses sadness on death of a Mobile Medical Clinic doctor while on duty in Ninewa Governorate

Baghdad, 11 April 2019 - The World Health Organization (WHO) is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of one of its partners' medical doctors working in Ninewa Governorate.

Dr. Saad Yassin Ali passed away while managing the health services delivered by the WHO supported mobile medical clinic based in Ba'aj area west the men-

tioned governorate on 7 April 2019.

WHO extends its condolences to the family and friends of the late doctor and would like to highlight the growing dangers and tremendous risks doctors, nurses and other health care workers continue to face on the line to providing lifesaving health care to those in need and those caught up in conflict and

post-conflict settings.

WHO stresses the importance of ensuring the existence of safety measures for medical service delivery to eliminate risks and help medical staff meet the challenge of safeguarding health in hard to reach areas, displacement camps, and post-conflict zones.

The Ministry of Health, supported by WHO and UNICEF, launches the National Immunization Days campaign in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 April 2019 – His Excellency, the Minister of Health, Dr Alaa Alwan in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) Acting Country Representative, Dr Adham Ismail, and UNICEF Representative, Ms Hamida Lasseko, launched on 7 April 2019 the Polio National Immunization Days (NIDs) campaign in a health centre in Baghdad. The launch was the outcome of a strong partnership between the United Nations and the Ministry of Health (MOH) at the national and sub-national levels, aimed at ensuring that every child is protected against polio.

"I am very happy to be here. No case of polio has been recorded in Iraq for many years, vaccination campaigns and family awareness will ensure that polio will not return. We hope and seek to achieve a high rate of polio and other vaccination coverage as well as ensure the highest possible level of health for all the people of Iraq" said Dr Alwan.

During the week-long campaign, health teams went from house to house to ensure that all targeted children were covered, particularly vulnerable children in hard to reach and marginalized communities such as internally displaced persons and refugees.

WHO supervised the campaign to ensure that the quality met the highest vaccination standards, provided technical and operational support including incentives for health workers, training of vaccinators, and independent monitors for the campaign. WHO also participated in the awareness campaign run by the Ministry of Health to urge parents to vaccinate their children, including radio and video broadcasts and posts on social media platforms.

"WHO is committed to supporting health authorities in Iraq to reach every child, regardless of where they are. In this campaign, WHO's priority is to reach all children in high-risk governorates with the polio vaccine in order to protect Iraq and the future of its



Photo: WHO

children. WHO and its partners are proud of the achievements made thus far in the area of vaccine preventable diseases in Iraq," explained WHO's Acting Country Representative, Dr Adham Ismail.

UNICEF worked to ensure that vaccines are properly forecasted, stored and managed; it also provided technical support to public health workers as they developed a detailed and up to date map of target children irrespective of whether the children are IDPs, refugees, returnees or in host communities, or whether they live in urban, rural, official or unofficial settings. UNICEF also ran awareness-raising activities to encourage vaccination, including radio discussions, social media engagement and outreach with youth groups.

"We are working closely with all our partners to ensure that children are vaccinated and no child is left behind. Vaccines are safe to use and I urge all parents to take their children to health centers and cooperate with the field vaccinators" said UNICEF's Ms Hamida Lasseko.

During the campaign, more than 5.8 million children under the age of 5 years from 145 districts in over 18 governorates all over Iraq were targeted,

and 25,278 vaccinators and 2,920 supervisors participated.

The campaign was monitored independently by 290 monitors and 38 supervisors from the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) in addition to a team of 12 WHO Polio Eradication Officers.



Photo: WHO

WHO sends new shipment of emergency equipment and medical supplies to Missan

Baghdad, 23 April 2019 – To respond to the needs of the Directorate of Health in Missan following recent flooding affecting the area, WHO with the support of donors, arranged delivery of a second consignment of emergency supplies to support the Directorate. The shipment was transported on 17 April 2019 to Missan governorate, 304 kilometers south east of Baghdad. The shipment included emergency and medical supplies, inflatable boats and life jackets.

Missan was adversely affected by the floods that were caused by heavy rain. Mr Ali Dawai, the Governor of Missan, explained that the situation was critical. “We are keen to ensure this crisis



will not leave behind casualties. Financial damage is compensable but not lives – quick action saves lives.” He expressed appreciation for all support that had been provided in responding to the needs of the people.

The WHO Representative in Iraq Dr Adham Ismail provided reassurance that WHO would be available and ready at all times to support the Directorate's efforts to control post floods in relation to communicable diseases. Dr Ali al-Allaq, Director-General of Missan's Directorate of Health said that plans had been adequately reviewed, amended and updated according to the emergency. “We will continue to provide health services and ensure a strong response to emergency needs.” He thanked WHO for its continued efforts and support to regular programmes and the quick response and coordination with the emergency health team.

“WHO has maintained a high level of coordination and collaboration with Missan's Directorate of Health through medical operations and specialized ser-

vices. We acted promptly in our response to monitoring the flood situation and received regular reports. We have conducted surveillance of water quality and of people's access to clean water, and have recorded all cases of acute diarrhea. WHO has been sharing this information with all United Nations partner agencies and will continue all efforts to monitor the situation in Missan and deliver emergency supplies and offer support to health authorities,” said Dr Ismail.

A WHO team visited al-Btairah to assess the situation on the ground and noted that tents for internally displaced people had been erected along roadsides and that no camp had been established. Preventative measures were needed for vulnerable families and people needed access to clean water. Monitoring of the health situation was vital. Support to Missan Directorate of Health was made possible through generous contributions from donors and health partners, in particular the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance.

FAO – Iraq organized a technical workshop on the Crimean –Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) under the theme of “One Health”

Baghdad, 29 April 2019 - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq, in collaboration with the World Health Organization in Iraq, held a one-day technical workshop on the Crimean –Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) in Baghdad. The CCHF had been an emerging zoonotic disease – defined as a disease that passes from an animal or insect to a human - in Iraq since 1979. The workshop focused on strengthening the participant's understanding of CCHF as a severe viral hemorrhagic fever transmitted by ticks. It has been responsible for several deaths in humans, whereas it doesn't affect the hosts, mostly cows, sheep, and goats. The name of the disease refers to the places where it was first recognized as a viral disease. The CCHF workshop kicked off strong collaboration between the Government of Iraq, the technical colleges and the UN agencies under the theme of “One Health.”

“On this occasion, FAO expresses its gratitude to the Ministry of Health and Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, in particular, the Central Public Health Laboratories for their diligent efforts in diagnosing the cause of the disease, also to the World Health Organization for their continuous sup-

port to the Ministry of Health and Environment. Mr. El-Zubi said. He added that FAO is currently seeking to develop an Arabic Early Warning System for Animal Diseases, which will help to provide accurate information on all types of animal diseases in Iraq and cooperation with the public and private sectors.

The workshop included a mix of expert panel discussions and breakout session activities. Participants included scientists, experts from UN agencies, academia, and private sector, as well as

experts from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Environment and other organizations interested in CCHF in particular. The Panelists discussion focused on the scope and scale of the CCHF as zoonoses disease and best practices and mitigation measures to eradicate this fever. Following the workshop and consultations, participants agreed on several mitigation measures to help eliminate the CCHF fever and to improve existing collaboration in support of “One Health.”



Uncovering a fish epidemic that stunned Iraq

Baghdad, 5 March 2019 – On 26 October 2018, a major fish kill episode that wiped out millions of mostly caged farmed carp in Iraq's central Euphrates region sent the country into major panic. Fear spread that the fish kill was caused by a mysterious pollution that could also poison people, whilst fish farmers agonized over their losses as the source of their livelihoods abruptly vanished.

Deeming the fish kill a national security issue, Iraq's newly appointed Prime Minister, Dr. Adel Abdul Mahdi, immediately assembled a crisis team led by the Ministry of Health and Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture to investigate its causes and take appropriate remedial measures.

"The scale of the fish kill was so huge, we had excavators working for four days clearing the fish from the river," affirmed Dr. Ala Alwan, Iraq's Minister of Health and Environment, who personally inspected the situation on the ground once news of the incident broke out. "We also used oil spill booms to contain and prevent the fish from drifting downstream, especially as many fish farmers rashly dumped the dead carp into the Euphrates River," he added.

Faced with this unprecedented massive fish mortality, the Iraqi Government decided to request emergency technical assistance from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UN Environment to help determine the cause of the sudden die off.

Fish and environmental samples were collected by the Ministry of Health and Environment based on UN Environment's advice from the epicentre of the fish kill incident near Al-Musayab, Babel governorate, approximately 70 kilometres south of Baghdad. Since 2011, this area had become a thriving hub for Iraq's growing fish farming industry where a rapid expansion in the use of floating river cages to grow common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) became established. At the same time, "the high density of fish cages almost back-to-back for kilometres, coupled with extreme overstocking, contravened national regulations," cautioned Minister Alwan.

UN Environment, WHO and FAO rapidly organized for the fish, water, sediment and fish feed samples to be shipped to internationally accredited laboratories. Comprehensive chemical and microbiological tests were carried out by three different laboratories, including in Switzerland, Jordan and Italy.



For all the samples taken by the Ministry of Health and Environment, test results showed no significant contamination from heavy metals, hydrocarbons or pesticides. "Unlike water, which only gives a snapshot of environmental conditions at a specific point in time, sediment acts as a storage reservoir for contaminants," explained Dr. John Pote, Head of the Laboratory of Environmental Microbiology at the University of Geneva, who coordinated the laboratory study commissioned by UN Environment.

"Based on these results, we can therefore rule out that chemical contamination played a role in the fish kill, which should reassure the public that the farmed carp is safe to eat," he added. These conclusions were also shared by Mr. Ahmed El-Olimat, Deputy Head of Quality and Laboratory Affairs in Ministry of Water and Agriculture in Jordan, who coordinated the test of the water samples sent by WHO to Jordan. DNA tests run by the Swiss National Fish Disease Laboratory and Reference Laboratory for Notifiable Diseases found the presence of the Cyprinid herpesvirus (CyHV-3) in all fish samples examined, confirming Iraqi scientists' suspicions that the fish kill was caused by a disease outbreak. They had observed white or brown patches on the gills of afflicted fish as critical clinical signs of an infection. Furthermore, the mortality only affected farmed carp and not wild fish. Virologic analysis commissioned by WHO and FAO – in Jordan and Italy respectively – also confirmed the Swiss laboratories' findings. "WHO was very concerned about this incident which could have posed a public health risk to communities in Babylon governorate and beyond. However, after confirming that the outbreak is due to a viral infection, WHO is confident that fish consumption has no effect on human health," confirmed Mr. Mohamed Hamasha, Senior Environmental Health Expert and Mr. Soren Madison, Food Safety Adviser at WHO. "High loads of Cyprinid herpesvirus DNA in the gill, kidney and brain fish tissue revealed that the carp suffered

from the Koi Herpes Virus (KHV) disease," affirmed Dr. Thomas Wahli, who heads the Swiss Reference Laboratory for Notifiable Diseases. "KHV is a very serious and lethal disease that is known to cause almost 100 percent mortality rates in carps," he added. The Principal Virologist at the UK's International Centre of Excellence for Aquatic Animal Health (CEFAS), Dr. Richard Paley, also agreed that "while overstocking and transient water quality issues such as low dissolved oxygen levels may have stressed the fish and helped propagate the virus, given the current information, one can reasonably conclude that the root cause of this mass fish kill episode is KHV disease." With Euphrates River water temperature dropping to 23-25°C in November, an optimal environment was created for the CyHV-3 virus, which flourishes between 16-28°C. Reports of similar small-scale fish kill incidents in multiple pockets in western and central Iraq further validated the occurrence of a wider epidemic.

"The outbreak may represent development of the disease in latently infected fish due to stressor events or perhaps more likely, based on the size of the event, introduction of infected animals into naïve stocks with no previous exposure or immune protection, indicating a recent introduction", reckoned Dr. Paley.

"This is the first case of Koi Herpes Virus disease in Iraq, and it is a significant case report which will need to be notified to the World Organisation for Animal Health," underlined Minister Alwan.

"We are pleased to have been able to get to the bottom of this difficult case and intend to build on this experience to improve our environmental surveillance and diagnostic capacity, particularly for viral diseases, so that we can properly investigate such events. Meanwhile, we need to control fish farm numbers and raise farmers' awareness on the appropriate procedures to follow to prevent and rapidly contain similar outbreaks in the future," he asserted.

Designing for water sustainability in one of the world's driest regions

Baghdad, 19 March 2019 - The theme of this year's World Water Day, is Water for All. Water is a key measure of inequality and poverty and expanding access to water is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This is particularly important in the Arab region, which has 14 of the world's 20 driest countries. The region's rainfall is well below the world average,

with the average person getting just one-eighth the renewable water—that generated through the hydrological cycle—that the average global citizen enjoys. By 2030 the effects of climate change could possibly reduce renewable water by a further 20 percent.

This has consequences for poor and crisis-affected communities, who suffer the most from lack of water, and stand

to benefit the most from new initiatives to achieve SDG 6.

UNDP has scaled up its support in recent years to address this challenge. UNDP is increasing cooperation in countries, including water for communities affected by war. In Yemen more than 19 million people, close to 80 percent of the population, don't have clean drinking water and sanitation, and the country faces the largest and fastest spreading outbreak of cholera in modern history. UNDP administers the Emergency Crisis Response Project, with more than US\$300 million from the World Bank. It has been able to get water for more than two million people through more than 300 water harvesting and supply projects and building 70,000 cubic metres of water reservoirs. In Iraq, millions of IDPs are returning to homes newly liberated from the Islamic State. UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, with over US\$400 million from 20 donors, is working on some 1,000 development and stabilization projects. One focus is rehabilitating water facilities in Ramadi, Ninewah Plains, and Mosul. These and other projects are helping to get water to hundreds of thousands of people.

By Kishan Khoday, UNDP



Australia donates US\$ 6.1 million to improve access to clean water for children in southern Iraq

Baghdad, 19 March 2019 – Ahead of World Water Day on Friday 22 March, UNICEF thanks the Government of Australia for their generous donation of US\$6.1 million to support the provision of water and sanitation services for vulnerable children in southern Iraq. Years of conflict, mass displacement, climate change and underinvestment in water networks have created a water crisis that is affecting large parts of the country.

“The needs of children in the southern governorates cannot be overstated. There is an urgent need for both immediate and long-term investment in critical water and sanitation services, particularly in the worst affected governorates of Basra, Thi-Qar and Diwaniya,” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq.

“The Australian Government is pleased to be partnering with UNICEF in providing safe drinking water to the most vulnerable communities and to prevent children becoming sick from preventable waterborne diseases,” said Dr Joanne Loundes, Australian Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq.

Australia's generous contribution will enable UNICEF to work with the southern Governorates to provide access to sufficient and safe water services to 3.8 million children over the next two years. It will improve access to water in health centres and schools for 1.7 million families, as well as strengthening the government's capacity for integrated water resource management in four governorates.

Note for editors:

- In 2018 UNICEF installed five water pumps at Basra's most important water treatment plant and conducted 'quick fix' rehabilitations in four key water treatment facilities to ensure water quantity increased for up to 750,000 people.

- Educational messages on safe water and the importance of water conservation were also disseminated to more than 50,000 children in the areas worst affected by the water scarcity.



UNICEF Iraq: Together for water!

Baghdad, 27 March 2019 – UNICEF held a World Water Day celebration with over 150 volunteers from: Friends of UNICEF group, Iraqi Pharmaceutical Students, Iraqi Dental Students Association, International Federation of Medical Students Association –Iraq and Iraqi Red Crescent Society promoting the right to water for all and sharing ideas to save water. The event was supported by the Government of Germany.



It's not rubbish; UN Environment experts assist Kirkuk with debris management

Kirkuk, 29 March 2019 - Today marked the completion of the visit from the United Nations Environment Programme to Kirkuk Governorate. "After previous successful interventions in Mosul (in February 2018) and Anbar (in November 2018), the time was right to come to Kirkuk", said Hassan Partrou, UN Environment Programme Manager and head of the delegation.

The visit culminated in a technical workshop on debris management on 27-28 March 2019 at Kirkuk University. Opened by the acting Governor of Kirkuk, Mr. Rakan Al Joubouri, and the President of the University, Dr. Abbas Hassan Taqi, the workshop brought together over 140 experts from key government departments implementing debris removal efforts. Experts on demining and explosives, policy matters, the environment, universities and the mayors of the affected areas were also present.

The UN Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Refugee Agency, the International Organization for Migration, the

United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and non-governmental partners such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, MedAir and Relief International, which are supporting the government's efforts to reconstruct 116 villages destroyed in the fight against ISIS, also participated.

"While Kirkuk's huge amount of rubble may be viewed as a problem, all this debris also offers an opportunity to generate alternative livelihoods through recycling and reuse of the material", said Martin Bjerregaard, Senior Advisor on Debris Management for UN Environment. "However, debris is currently disposed of in a spontaneous and ad-hoc manner which means that this valuable recycling potential is being lost".

Participants at the workshop agreed on an integrated debris management plan, which will enable environmentally-sensitive disposal and recycling of debris to ensure residents can return to their villages and rebuild their homes

and livelihoods in a sustainable manner.

The Mayor of Riyadh District delivered a passionate plea in favour of debris management. He had lost his leg from unexploded ordnance buried in the debris. The recommendations on risk education and the safe disposal of hazardous materials, were immediately accepted. Most of the roads in these areas are still unpaved, and recycled debris forms excellent paving material. Specialized machines were requested from government departments to aid in the debris removal and from donors to purchase a small crusher to allow municipalities start the debris management.

Text by Mr. Martijn Dalhuijsen, DCO, UNAMI



Greener landscapes for a brighter Haweja

Kirkuk, 11 April 2019 - After several days of steady downpours, a group of Iraqi volunteers recently gathered under a clearing sky in the city of Haweja in Kirkuk Governorate with one aim: to weed off the surrounding areas of unwanted garbage, to spruce up the pathways with newly planted tree saplings, and to advocate for a greener, cleaner and brighter Haweja.

Mohammed Al-Jumaily, a lecturer at Haweja Technical Institute and founder of the voluntary group, notes that the idea to engage in clean-up activities in his home city was born out of sheer simplicity - the fact that a visit to the main market one morning opened his eyes to all the bits and pieces of rotten

fruit, plastic bags, empty water bottles, discarded newspapers and torn cartons accumulating in already oversized rubbish pits. "With this picture in plain sight, my friend Wasim and I decided to launch a clean-up campaign to beautify our city", Mohammed said.

The group, whose ranks have swelled from about 10 early on to number now around 150, meets periodically to host various activities ranging from clean-up activities to visiting and supporting the internally displaced living in camps. Despite years of war and calamity that Iraqis have borne, causing destruction of land and loss of life, this vibrant group of volunteers demonstrate a positive spirit with infectious

energy.

With Earth Day just around the corner, we all have a responsibility to respect our natural surroundings, embrace and nurture our flora and fauna in all its forms and species, and learn to live in harmony with the beauty of our planet.



Protecting the environment and managing water resources key to Iraq's long-term prosperity

Baghdad, 22 April 2019 - International Mother Earth Day is when we celebrate Nature's gifts and we promote and show awareness of the call to ensure the environmental security of our planet. It has increasing significance in Iraq, a country emerging from years of armed conflict which faces a host of environmental problems from an ongoing water crisis, that threatens both stability and development, to pollution, all made worse by limited awareness of what the people can contribute to the well-being of our environment.

Climate change is one of the largest threats to sustainable development globally, and its impact touches us all. Iraq is not among the major contributors to climate change, but Iraq is among the countries affected, as seen in the extreme weather of the last few years – scorching temperatures, desertification and water shortages, and the recent heavy rainfall and floods.

Iraq sits in what was once known as Mesopotamia, the land between the Rivers Euphrates and the Tigris. Historically, its people have been able to exercise their right to water. In fact, an abundance of water was a key factor in the development of Iraq's rich civilizations.

However, the water crisis is real. An exceptional season of heavy rainfall has filled dams and rivers, and flooded lands, but still, Iraq faces a water crisis in terms of both supply and quality. As we approach the hot summer season the crisis can only be expected to grow. Population growth, regional disagreements over trans-boundary water supply, poor infrastructure, outdated practices of waste and water management, increased salinization and climate change all contribute to Iraq's contemporary water problems. The consequences are felt at all levels, humanitarian, economic, security, and social.

No effort should be spared to manage this crisis and a sense of urgency is desperately needed. Equally important is to inform the Iraqi people that sustainable solutions to counter the damage done to the environment will take time and the road ahead is long and far from easy. Decades of stagnation, lack of investment and mismanagement cannot be solved overnight.

It is not enough to just rely on the power of Nature to repair the damage. We must act now. We are the guardians of our planet. Action starts at home and in the workplace through water resource and waste management, conservation measures and a green plan that



puts awareness at the forefront.

The Government of Iraq has made improving water management a priority. For this effort to be effective, sufficient allocation of resources and capacity building is required at all levels. It cannot succeed without the solid commitment of the political parties - across party lines – to deal with an issue of high national importance. Water resources are finite and increasingly scarce. There needs to be a change in our approach to this precious resource. With rights come responsibilities. Every drop of water needs judicious use at all levels. Water wastage should be socially unacceptable, and conservation promoted.

In the same vein, waste management requires awareness and action. Promoting behavioural change, rehabilitating and modernising agricultural infrastructure as well as ensuring pollutant-free, environment-friendly industry are some of the measures to stop the waste and damage. Clearly a lot more needs to be done in all sectors. But it is up to us to act, even with small but effective steps that contribute to the well-being of our environment.

Recycle and sort waste when you can. Conserve water and energy when you are able. Think before using plastic – bags, cups, trays. Think about how you dispose of batteries. Plant a tree and watch it grow. Make it a habit to switch off the lights and appliances when you don't need them. Set your air conditioning thermostat higher in summer, lower in winter. Drive less, car pool, cycle, or walk when possible. Report leaks and spills no matter how small. Just be on your own guard. Educate your family and friends about the benefits of protecting the environment. Although this country has vast natural energy resources, renewable energy provides a

clean and efficient alternative.

The United Nations in Iraq is doing its part. The UN family in Iraq provides technical support to the government on efficient water resources management. In addition, since 2017, the United Nations has provided emergency supplies of water to over two million displaced persons in Iraq, and to five million individuals in communities affected by violence and conflict. The UN also supports local governments in upgrading their water systems and sewage treatment plants.

At UN Iraq headquarters in Baghdad, we are using solar power and other energy efficient measures to achieve a 50 percent reduction of the conventional energy we use by the end of 2020. All new construction is energy efficient, using 50 percent less energy than conventional buildings, existing buildings are retrofitted to consume 30 percent less energy than conventional buildings. We use reusable bags and paper bags instead of plastic and aim for 25 percent greening of the landscape. We use recycled water for irrigation, energy efficient lighting and air conditioning, and, equally important, we have year-round awareness campaigns on energy efficiency.

The argument by some that the measures we can take individually and collectively will not make a difference is not valid. The enormity of the problem demands that each one of us do his/her part. So, start today, at this very moment, to help save Mother Earth and make it a better place for your families and future generations.

Op-Ed by Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on International Mother Earth Day, 22 April 2019

UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, met with the President of the Iraqi Sunni Endowment, Dr. Abdul Latif Al Heymem

Baghdad, 11 April 2019 - UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, met with the President of the Iraqi Sunni Endowment, Dr. Abdul Latif Al Heymem to discuss ways to reinforce an already excellent cooperation. The rehabilitation of the Al Nouri Mosque and the Al Hadba Minaret in Old City Mosul was among the main topics discussed.

His Excellency Al Heymem and Mr Fontani both expressed their willingness to work closely together to ensure that the community of Mosul could soon receive back the symbols of their historical city. Other subjects discussed included the continue institution capacity building that Unesco is providing to the Sunni Endowment centre for the preservation of ancient manuscripts, and the important work that the Sunni Waqf of Iraq is doing to strengthen inter-religious understanding among Iraqi communities.

The Director of UNESCO, accompanied by the representative of Sunni Endowment to UNESCO, Salim Saleh Mahdi, visited the Museum of the Biography of Prophet Mohamed and the Sunni Manuscripts Center.

UNESCO Representative also had a meeting with Dr. Abdul-Kareem Al-Faisal, Head of Prime Minister Advisory Commission (PMAC), and Dr. Hamid Ahmed, Deputy PMAC.

The meeting focused on the long standing cooperation between Iraq and Unesco and some of the challenges facing implementation of UNESCO's edu-

cational and cultural programmes in the country. The discussions were more focused on the various policy and operational aspects of the programme to revise the Spirit of Mosul which aims at the restoration and reconstruction its historic landmarks as a tool to foster social cohesion and community reconciliation.



UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, met the Minister of Culture and Minister of Higher Education in Baghdad

Baghdad, 14 April 2019 - The newly appointed UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, held a meeting with the Minister of Culture, Abdulameer Al-Hamdani, in order to discuss the opportunities and challenges of a strong cooperation. The Minister welcomed Mr Fontani, to the country and expressed the ministry's keen interest in working together with UNESCO on Mosul, Basra and other important sites such as Babylon and

old city Baghdad; Minister Al-Hamdani and Mr Fontani, discussed expectations from the important initiative to revive the spirit of Mosul, while alerting on some obstacles and challenges that could arise. The necessity to communicate constantly and transparently with the local communities was underlined.

The Minister of Higher Education, Qusay Al-Suhail, also acting Minister of Education and Chairman of the Iraqi

National Commission for UNESCO, also welcomed Mr Fontani to the country, and expressed the desire that the cooperation with UNESCO in higher education could be significantly reinforced, taking into account the priorities of the ministry.

Both ministers highlighted the importance to reinforce UNESCO Office in Baghdad



UNESCO and the German Government signed an agreement of the restoration and rehabilitation of the Aghawat Mosque Complex in the Old City of Mosul

Baghdad, 14 April 2019 - UNESCO and the German Government signed today an agreement to work together for the stabilization, restoration and rehabilitation of the Aghawat Mosque Complex in the Old City of Mosul, as an element to safeguard Mosul's enduring cultural diversity.

UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, and German Ambassador, Cyrill Nunn, met to discuss cooperation in Iraq, and particularly the challenges related to the initiative Reviving the Spirit of Mosul, which UNESCO is carrying out with the support of various partners, including Germany, the UAE and the European Union.

The project will include two phases. Inception and Mobilization, with the clearance of the site taking all necessary precautions with respect to the safe removal of items from potentially contaminated landscape or structures (IED's and ERW). This process will also ensure that surviving historic architectural elements of the building are carefully removed where possible either to be appropriately re-used or stored for a potential future museum / educational usage.

Documentation of the surviving structures will take place to internationally recognized standards, and detailed

stabilization and conservation plans will be drawn up in cooperation with relevant partners. Phase II – Stabilization, Restoration and Rehabilitation. This stage will move to the implementation of the stabilization, restoration and rehabilitation of the mosque and its immediate contextual landscape, based on the detailed plans drawn up

in advance. As referenced previously the overall objective (impact) is contribute to the safeguarding of Mosul's cultural diversity both in terms of human fabric and cultural heritage, conceived as a significant and complementary project to the restoration and reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and its minaret.



Abu Dhabi Culture Summit: The restoration of Iraq's Al Nuri Mosque is a symbol of hope for an embattled community

Baghdad, 17 April 2019 - Culture Summit Abu Dhabi organized by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Abu Dhabi and five global partners, including UNESCO, from 8-11 April, is a forum that convenes leaders from the fields of the arts, heritage, media, museums, public policy and technology to identify ways in which culture can build bridges and promote positive



change.

The Director of UNESCO Office in Baghdad, Paolo Fontani, was one of the speakers at the Summit on a topic related to the role of heritage in post-crisis recovery and reconstruction. The Office is currently overseeing the reconstruction of Al Nouri Mosque in the historic city of Mosul, together with its Al Hadba Minaret, as well as two churches as part of the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul Initiative". The project is funded by the UAE government.

The panel discussion revolved around the underlining idea that rebuilding heritage in post-conflict areas is at the heart of both cultural and economic revival for nations. "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" is not about buildings, in fact, it is about people." said Paolo Fontani, "By rebuilding heritage, we wish to make culture an engine for social and economic development."

The Al Nuri Mosque was one of the

most significant Monuments of the ancient city of Mosul and was a huge part of the cultural identity of the people of Mosul. The Mosque and the minaret were destroyed during the fights of 2017. Two years later, the people are still struggling daily to slowly rebuild all aspects of their lives, and reconstruct what has been destroyed, including their cultural identities.

UNESCO's obligations to protect and preserve cultural heritage has broadened to include crisis response for those who have fallen victim to global conflict and violence. The Organization views culture and heritage as a means towards achieving economic development in war-stricken areas. "Human beings require food, water and shelter in response to crises." Said Mr Fontani, "But they also require intellectual, spiritual and cultural drive that must be taken into account in recovery and development strategies."

Architecture design arts showcased in Erbil

Erbil, 26 February 2019 - A group of Architecture students recently showcased their vision of a modern Kurdistan Region through their designs and projects they displayed at an exhibition in Erbil.

Hundreds of weekend visitors toured the exhibition, held at an Erbil shopping mall on 22 February, to view projects reflecting all aspects of modern facilities ranging from designs for business complexes, sky-scrapers, shopping malls, offices, recreational centres, museums and art galleries.

The exhibitors, a group of largely Senior students from Salahaddin University, Department of Architecture, were on hand to explain their work in details to the curious and interested visitors.

The students say they wanted to show their talents while promoting Kurdish culture. "The aim of this project is to introduce local architecture design talents to the general public and this is

why we chose a public place to showcase our work," said Mr. Muhammad Surkew, a student and one of the organizers.

"Kurdish architects' talents are no less than the talents of world-famous archi-

tecs," stated Ms. Zhin Salahaddin, a third-year architecture student. "This exhibition will give us wider exposure," she said.

Text and photo by UNAMI PIO Erbil/Rashwan Salih.



Remembering United Nations personnel killed in the tragic Ethiopian Airlines crash

Baghdad, 11 March 2019 - The United Nations flag at all offices around the world is being flown at half-mast today in memory of United Nations personnel killed in the tragic Ethiopian Airlines Crash. The United Nations in Iraq extends its heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of all those who perished in the crash. May their souls rest in eternal peace.



Peace marathon held in Talafar

Talafar, 18 March 2019 - "What matters is that we are here together, trying to make Talafar a better place, nothing else," said Hussein. He and hundred

other youth (aged 15-19) took part in a peace marathon organized by the UN Migration Agency - IOM in Talafar, with support from the Government of

Japan, to promote volunteerism, active citizenship and social collaboration.



Message from the SRSG for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, to the people of the Kurdistan Region and Iraqis as a whole, on the occasion of Nowruz

Baghdad, 21 March 2019 - Nowruz is the time when many people around the world enjoy renewed hope on the first day of Spring and celebrate their culture and identity.

International Nowruz Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General

Assembly in 2010 to promote values of peace and solidarity between and within generations, communities and regions.

With this in mind, I would like to wish you - on behalf of the UN family in Iraq - a happy and prosperous celebration. I

sincerely hope that the spirit of Nowruz will continue to be present in Iraq to bridge differences and to promote a collective sense of pride and confidence in the country. After all, Iraq needs a renewed sense of patriotism to re-emerge stronger.

United Nations Secretary-General message on the International Day of Nowruz

New York, 21 March 2019 - For more than 300 million people across the world, Nowruz is about new beginnings: the arrival of a new year; the first day of spring; the renewal of nature.

For all of us, it is a chance to reaffirm our commitment to peace, human rights and human dignity; to fostering dialogue and mutual respect; to protecting the planet and building a future that leaves no one behind.

The International Day of Nowruz is celebrated in a spirit of friendship, reconciliation and harmony. I offer best wishes to all who are marking this observance. May the Nowruz holiday serve as an inspiration to us all.

Celebrating Nowruz in Karbala

Karbala, 21 March 2019 - "I am always happy when we celebrate Nowruz, but this year is special because it has been four years since we left Telafar and last celebrated Nowruz at home.

Today we celebrate this special day with our relatives and displaced families in Karbala camp for displaced people, and we want to spread Nowruz's message of hope and joy. All children are wearing the new clothes. Life moves on.

We have cooked traditional dishes and planted trees outside every caravan," said Maryam who displaced from Telafar in 2014.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided psychosocial

and social cohesion activities in Karbala camp with funds by Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance for Displaced Persons. These activities con-

tribute to lifting spirits among the displaced; the most popular activities are courses like handicrafts and sewing.



SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert expresses deep sorrow at the loss of life in the Tigris River ferry disaster

Baghdad, 21 March 2019 - Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, expresses deep sorrow at the loss of many lives after a ferry sank in the River Tigris in the city of Mosul,

northern Iraq, today.

"This is a terrible tragedy. We express our deep sorrow at the deaths. Our hearts go out to the families and relatives of the victims. It is equally tragic that this disaster occurred on the first

day of Spring when many people were celebrating the Nowruz holiday. A thorough investigation will tell us what exactly happened and why there was this loss of life."

The Secretary-General is saddened by the tragic loss of lives after a passenger ferry capsized today in the Tigris River

New York, 21 March 2019 - The Secretary-General is saddened by the tragic loss of lives after a passenger ferry capsized today in the Tigris River near the Iraqi city of Mosul. The Secretary-General extends his condolences to the

families of the victims, the Government and people of Iraq and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

This tragedy happens on the Nowruz holiday, when many across Iraq are celebrating the first day of spring. The

Secretary-General conveys the solidarity of the United Nations with the Republic of Iraq as well as its readiness to support national assistance efforts as needed.

International Festival of Flowers opened in Baghdad

Baghdad, 15 April 2019 – Under the slogan “Baghdad plants flowers and embraces creativity” an International Festival of Flowers opened last night in Baghdad’s Al-Zawraa Park.

The festival was launched by the Mayor of Baghdad, Dr. Thikra Alwash, in the presence of numerous representatives of the Iraqi authorities and the citizens of Baghdad.

On behalf of UNAMI, the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG), Ms. Alice Walpole, attended the event and took the opportunity to stroll in the evening sunshine through the park, admiring the flower displays and visiting stalls. DSRSG Walpole was impressed by the colorful displays and by the evident enjoyment of local people making family outings in the much-improved security environment.

It was also an opportunity for the Iraqi High Electoral Commission to highlight its ongoing campaign for registration for the provincial elections. At a booth on the festival grounds, IHEC distributed promotional and educational leaflets on how voters can register. Ms. Walpole, the DSRSG for political affairs and electoral assistance, commended such pro-active steps by the IHEC as the way forward in the campaign to urge voters to register in order to be able to participate in the elections.”



UN Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert congratulates Yezidis on New Year, remembers victims of terrorism

Baghdad, 17 April 2019 – On the occasion of the Yezidi New Year, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, congratulates the Yezidi communities in Iraq and abroad. It is also an occasion to remember the victims of terrorism and conflict, including the women and children who were kidnapped by the terrorist Da'esh and remain missing.

“The joy of celebrating will be incomplete without the return of the missing to their loved ones. It will remain incomplete without justice and accountability for the crimes committed against Yezidis. Efforts to win their release and bring the perpetrators of crimes committed against the community will continue unabated,” Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said.

The Special Representative said that the celebration this year and for many years to come is a testament of the Yezidis' resilience in spite of the systematic attempts by the terrorists to destroy the Yezidi community and their way of life. “The Yezidi community has prevailed and will continue to flourish in a unified, democratic Iraq that embraces all of its diverse communities.”



**United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq wishes
Iraq's Christian communities a peaceful and joyful Easter!**

بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق (يونامي) تتمنى لمجتمعات مسيحيي العراق السلام والبهجة بمناسبة عيد القيامة.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) celebrates 40 years in Iraq

Baghdad, 17 April 2019 – Under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Representation in Iraq organized a celebration marking 40 years of FAO's presence in Iraq. The celebration was held under the theme "Working Together to Achieve Zero Hunger."

Ever since Iraq joined FAO in 1945, the two sides enjoyed a history full of cooperation encompassing a wide range of fields that included response to emergencies, rehabilitation, and development, through provision of technical expertise, capacity building of staff and the supply of basic agricultural and food inputs, particularly during the difficult years of economic sanctions and wars. This year's celebration aimed to enhance FAO's cooperation with its main partners, in addition to unifying efforts to eliminating hunger, with the goal of ensuring food security for all.

In his speech at the ceremony, FAO Representative in Iraq Mr. Fadel El-Zubi underlined that since the establishment of its country office, the agency has been working to make its resources and expertise meet the development priorities of Iraq.

"FAO offers its assistance to beneficiaries in collaboration with the Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources and Health and Environment, as well as its other partners, in accordance with its plans and programmes through investment planning, rehabilitation and upgrading of agricultural research and extension of services, as well as veterinary services and plant production and protection," Mr. El-Zubi said.

Mr. El-Zubi noted that FAO has been working to restore degraded agricultural land and ensure higher productivity of water resources in agriculture, focusing on the development of inter-ministerial agro-environmental information systems, strengthening of research institutes, support to service providers and irrigated farms to restore saline soils, strengthening stakeholder capacities in order to increase water productivity, and promoting sustainable land management practices in degraded areas.

Minister of Agriculture Dr. Saleh Hussein Al-Hassani highlighted FAO's role and its contributions to various sectors in Iraq.

"Over the past years, FAO has contributed to the development of cadres of our ministry through the establishment of training opportunities and the imple-



mentation of programmes and projects through which the transfer of new technologies, including fish culture with floating cages, which he said has contributed significantly in the provision of fish at lower prices.

Dr. Al-Hassani also referred to in his speech, which was delivered on his behalf by his advisor Dr. Mahdi Al-Qaisi, to FAO's contribution to the programme of artificial insemination of cows as well as buffalos, which was one of the programmes implemented last year.

The minister also referred to FAO's role in fighting pests threatening date palms in Basra to prevent their spread to other areas as well as the agency's contribution to ensuring regional cooperation between Iraq and neighboring countries.

The minister offered his best wishes to

FAO, voicing appreciation of its role and cooperation with Iraq over the past years and emphasizing readiness for further cooperation in the future.

The celebration included a piece of theatre showcasing the rich history of Mesopotamia. The piece, by Iraqi Fashion House, highlighted the history of Mesopotamia and means adopted by old civilizations in achieving food security.

The celebration was concluded with an exhibition of photos of FAO's projects and activities since its establishment, in addition to an expo of Iraqi agricultural products.

The celebration was attended by representatives of diplomatic missions, UN, parliament and other international agencies, the public and private sectors as well as the Ministry of Agriculture employees.

