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Guterres stresses UN commitment to Iraq during first visit in 6 years

Baghdad/New York, 1 March 2023

The Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres, is in Iraq for the first time in six years, expressing support for the country's people, the new Government and its ambitious reform agenda.

"I am here in a visit of solidarity to underscore the commitment of the United Nations to support Iraq in the consolidation of its democratic institutions and advancing peace, sustainable development and human rights for all Iraqis," Mr. Guterres told journalists in Baghdad, after touching down late on Tuesday.

After "decades of oppression, war, terrorism, sectarianism and foreign interference" in Iraq's affairs – just days ahead of the 20th anniversary of the 2003 invasion - Mr. Guterres acknowledged that the challenges the country faces could not be brushed aside.

Opportune moment

And amid reports that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani continues to face potential political obstacles in reviving national fortunes, the UN chief, in a joint press encounter with Mr. Al-Sudani, expressed his hope that Iraq "can break cycles of instability and fragility".

He added: "I applaud the Prime Minister for his commitment to address the most pressing challenges facing the country head on – including combatting corruption, improving public services, and diversifying the economy to reduce unemployment and create opportunities, especially for young people.

"Such structural change requires systemic reform, stronger institutions, greater accountability and better governance at all levels - and the United Nations stands ready to support these important efforts."

Referencing reported divisions over the sharing of Iraqi oil revenues between central government in the capital and provincial government in



the north, Mr. Guterres encouraged all parties to build on "recent positive steps" between Baghdad and Erbil. "Sustainable agreements" and dialogue should be the long-term objective the UN Secretary-General said.

Dignity of Iraq's displaced

In earlier comments just after touching down, Mr. Guterres also spoke of his "enormous admiration" for the Iraqi people, highlighting how he had witnessed the courage of those displaced inside the country several times, on previous visits.

The UN Secretary-General also highlighted how Iraqi refugees in Jordan and in Syria had shown that they were able "to live in solidarity with each other, to help each other in the spirit that, in my opinion, is the best hope for the future of the country".

Iraq's efforts to repatriate its citizens from northeast Syria – including from the infamous Al Hol camp – had been "exemplary", Mr. Guterres said, before noting Prime Minister Al-Sudani's commitment to allowing the safe and dignified return of ethnic Yazidis to their homes in northern Iraq, after suffering genocide at the hands of Daesh in 2014.

Water emergency

Addressing another key challenge for Iraq, namely water scarcity, Mr. Guterres noted that the issue required international attention, before flagging the UN 2023 Water Conference from 22-24 March in New York.

The mighty Tigris and the Euphrates rivers were now running dry and the impact on agriculture has been dramatic, the UN chief said, adding that "it breaks my heart" to see farmers who have been forced to abandon lands where crops have been grown for thousands of years.

Iraq is one of the countries worst hit by climate change, which has driven displacement, threatened food security, destroyed livelihoods, fuelled conflict and undermined human rights, Mr. Guterres maintained.

When coupled with a volatile security situation and governance challenges, "it can put stability at risk... so now is the time for the international community to support Iraq in tackling its environmental challenges, diversifying its economy, and harnessing its potential for sustainable growth," the Secretary-General insisted.

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In this edition ...

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq Hennis-Plasschaert wishes all a happy Nowruz

Baghdad, 20 March 2023 - “I extend my warmest wishes to all people of the Kurdistan Region, and Iraqis more widely on the occasion of Nowruz. This ancient festive tradition on the first day of spring symbolizes the renewal of life, forgiveness, solidarity, and reconciliation.

May this Nowruz bring joy and prosperity to all in Iraq and beyond.”

Nowruz Pirooz.

UN Iraq Representative Hennis-Plasschaert congratulates all Muslims in Iraq on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan

Baghdad, 23 March 2023 - “The holy month of Ramadan is a time of peace, and a period of reflection and prayer for Muslims around the world. Families and friends come together to reconnect to their shared human values, practicing tolerance and charity.

The UN family in Iraq extends its warmest wishes to all Iraqis on the advent of the holy month.”

Ramadan Kareem.”

Plans launched for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Mosul and Tel Afar

Mosul, 01 March 2023 – Today, the Government of Ninewa formally launched Plans of Action for the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) for West and South Mosul, and Tel Afar centre. The ceremony took place at the University of Mosul – a site once occupied by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). *More on page 15.*

SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: “Every woman in Iraq is a queen. And not only that, she is also quite often the mother of a queen.”

Baghdad, 05 March 2023 - On the occasion of the International Women’s Day, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended an event in Baghdad. The text of her remarks: starts at page 25.

Director-General of UNESCO visits Iraq

Baghdad, 9 March 2023 – Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO visited Iraq from 6 to 8 March 2023. Highlights of her visit start on page 101.

Iraq’s accession to UN Water Convention opens new opportunities to strengthen transboundary water cooperation in the Middle East

Vienna/Baghdad, 24 March 2023 - Iraq today made history as the first country in the Middle East to join the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (known as the UN Water Convention). It becomes the 49th Party to this unique international legal and intergovernmental framework, which aims to ensure the sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation across borders. 19 of the 22 Arab countries are considered water scarce. Nearly all Arab States draw upon transboundary water resources that cross one or more international boundaries. *More on page 98.*

SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: “Water scarcity in this region is not just a threat on the horizon. It is real. It is here, now.”

Basra, 12 March 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, participated at the Iraq Climate Conference held in Basra today.

More on page 93.

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

Guterres stresses UN commitment to Iraq during first visit in 6 years ... (continued from the cover page)

Then and now

Later in the day, the UN chief held a press conference where he contrasted his visit six years ago amidst the existential threat posed by the war against terrorist group Da'esh, or ISIL, with Iraq now.

His visit then was "one of solidarity in a moment of urgency. Today it is a visit of solidarity and hope for the future of Iraq. With a new Government in place, there is a window of opportunity for progress", he said.

The Secretary-General on Wednesday also heard from representatives from women's groups and youth, who voiced their views on the need for further opening up of civic spaces and expressed concern over unemployment and climate change.

He noted with interest, the increasing awareness of climate

change issues both from the Government side and among civil society. He encouraged activists and civil society groups to mobilize and lobby authorities for further action on adaptation and climate resilience.

UN teams

The Secretary-General also held a townhall meeting with UN personnel based in Iraq, including the assistance mission UNAMI, the Country Team and the UN Investigative Team bring Da'esh terrorists to account (UNITAD).

He also visited the National Museum of Iraq, where he voiced appreciation for the immense contribution made by Iraq to world history.

"The contribution of Iraq to world civilization, to world culture, is absolutely outstanding", he said reflecting on the fact that the

Abbasid Caliphate flourished, while Europe was still a "barbarian area".

"So, I'm here to pay tribute to all those that are working in this museum, preserving it in the difficult times that Iraq has faced some years ago, which allow us to be able to contemplate the magnificent culture and history of this wonderful country."

Heading north

On Thursday, the Secretary-General is due to visit a camp for displaced people in the northern part of Iraq.

He plans to meet residents and have a first-hand look at the work that UN agencies are doing there, serving those forced to leave their homes. In the afternoon he will head to Erbil and meet various officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government.

By UN News.

Iraq: Repatriations from notorious Syria camp 'an example for the world'



Baghdad/New York, 2 March 2023 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Thursday praised Iraq for repatriating its citizens from camps in northeast Syria holding people suspected of having ties to ISIL extremists, urging other governments "to take responsibility and to act".

The UN chief was speaking to journalists following a visit to the Jeddah Rehabilitation Centre in northern Iraq, where he met returnees from the notorious Al-Hol camp, whose residents are mainly women and children under 12.

"Iraq is demonstrating with enormous commitment that responsible repatriations are possible, by finding

dignified solutions anchored in the principles of both accountability and reintegration. And it is working. I witnessed it today," he said.

Dire conditions, potential risks

Mr. Guterres - a former UN High Commissioner for Refugees who has visited camps across the globe - was certain that Al-Hol is "the worst camp that exists in today's world", noting that people have been stranded there for years and in the worst possible conditions.

He said detainees have been deprived of their rights, and are vulnerable and marginalized, and remain trapped in a

desperate situation with no end in sight.

"They deserve a path out. This is a matter of human decency and compassion - and it is a matter of security," he said.

"Because the longer we let this untenable situation fester, the more resentment and despair will grow, and the greater the risks to security and stability. We must prevent the legacy of yesterday's fight from fueling tomorrow's conflict."

A complex issue

The Secretary-General commended the Iraqi Government for its efforts, which he called "an example for the world", though recognizing that repatriation is an extremely complex, challenging and sensitive issue.

He appealed to countries that have nationals in Al-Hol camp and elsewhere to "significantly step up their efforts" toward the safe and dignified return of these persons.

"They need to follow the example of Iraq," said Mr. Guterres. "All countries with their citizens in Al-Hol must do the same, and must do the same in a dignified repatriation in line with applicable international law, and in the case of children, guided by the principles of the best interests of children."

Iraq: Repatriations from notorious Syria camp ‘an example for the world’ *(continued)*

Support for reintegration

Mr. Guterres said the returnees he met at the rehabilitation centre want to reintegrate into their communities and societies.

He encouraged the Iraqi authorities to continue working towards their accelerated community-based reintegration, noting that most are under the age of 18.

The Secretary-General underlined the UN's full commitment and support for what he called “this vital effort”.

Visit to the Kurdistan region

The Secretary-General later travelled to the autonomous Kurdistan region in northern Iraq, where he expressed thanks for assistance provided in the aftermath of the recent deadly earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye.

The UN chief also highlighted the possibility of progress in the country.

“In my opinion we are now facing an opportunity for Iraq and an opportunity for the Kurdistan region of Iraq,” he told journalists.

“That opportunity can translate itself into reality if Iraqis are able to come together and unite and if people in

this region can also come together and unite.”

Translate commitment to reality

Mr. Guterres said he had held “fruitful meetings” with the region's President, Nechirvan Barzani, and other senior leaders in Erbil, where they discussed relations with Baghdad.

He noted that several issues require agreement, including the federal budget, oil and gas legislation, and implementation of a security and stability accord known as the Sinjar Agreement.

“But in my discussions both here and in Baghdad, I sensed a genuine commitment to move forward and I urge all to translate this commitment into reality,” he said.

Elections and escalation fears

The UN chief also encouraged Kurdistan's political leaders to work together to ensure delayed parliamentary elections will be held this year, and to put the interests of the people first, despite their differences.

He also addressed instability in the

wider geographic region.

“Full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and good neighbourliness is essential at all times,” he said. “I urge all to pursue dialogue and diplomacy and exercise maximum restraint to prevent further instability and contain the risks of regional escalation.”

Progress is possible

Mr. Guterres emphasized that his visit to Iraq was one of solidarity and hope - a message he had expressed shortly after arriving in the country the previous day.

“But achieving a better tomorrow requires action today. It demands determined diplomacy, constructive dialogue – and the courage to make the necessary compromises. After my meetings and discussions, I am convinced that important progress is now entirely possible,” he said.

After leaving Iraq, the Secretary-General will head to Qatar where he will attend the fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which opens on Saturday in the capital, Doha.

By UN News.

Secretary-General's remarks to the press upon arrival in Baghdad, Iraq

Baghdad, 1 March 2023 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres: “Shukran, Honourable Minister.

It is for me an enormous pleasure to be back in Baghdad, a city I have visited already as Secretary-General of the United Nations and a city where I came many times as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

But this is a visit of solidarity. A solidarity with the people and the democratic institutions of Iraq and a solidarity that means that the United Nations is totally committed to support the consolidation of the institutions in this country and to express my confidence that Iraqis will be able to overcome the difficulties and challenges they still face through an open and inclusive dialogue.

On the other hand, I have enormous admiration for the Iraqi people. I had the opportunity to meet the Iraqis displaced inside the country several times and to witness their courage. I also had the opportunity to visit Iraqi refugees in Jordan and in Syria, before

conditions [inaudible] for them to come back to the country. And you could see also how they were able to live in solidarity with each other, to help each other in the spirit that, in my opinion, is the best hope for the future of the country.

I want to praise the efforts the Government is making to allow the

Iraqis outside the country to come back and we will be fully supporting those efforts and I want to, once again, express my deep solidarity with the Iraqi people and my hope that Iraq will face a future of peace and prosperity and with consolidated democratic institutions. Shukran.”



Joint press encounter with the Prime Minister of Iraq Mohammed S. Al-Sudani



Baghdad, 1 March 2023 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres: "Ladies and gentlemen of the press – assalam alaikum.

Mr. Prime Minister – thank you very much for your warm welcome.

I am very pleased to be back here in Iraq. I was many times in the past visiting your country, but I find it now to be different.

The Prime Minister and I just concluded a very productive meeting.

I am here in a visit of solidarity to underscore the commitment of the United Nations to support Iraq in the consolidation of its democratic institutions and advancing peace, sustainable development and human rights for all Iraqis.

We recognize that the challenges Iraq is facing did not arise overnight – they are the product of decades of oppression, war, terrorism, sectarianism and foreign interference.

And no one can expect these challenges to be resolved overnight.

But I believe that there is a real window of opportunity to achieve progress, and we trust that this will happen.

I am encouraged by the recent formation of the new government, and its ambitious and forward-looking reform agenda.

I applaud the Prime Minister for his commitment to address the most pressing challenges facing the country head on – including combatting corruption, improving public services, and diversifying the economy to reduce unemployment and create opportunities, especially for young people.

Such structural change requires systemic reform, stronger institutions, greater accountability, and better governance at all levels and the United Nations stands ready

to support these important efforts.

We have discussed the importance of building on recent positive steps between Baghdad and Erbil and move towards an institutionalized dialogue and sustainable agreements.

Dear Prime Minister,

I know the question of water security is an issue you care deeply about.

It was here that agriculture first flourished some 10,000 years ago, in the heart of the fertile crescent.

Mesopotamia literally means 'the land between the rivers.'

But today, the Tigris and the Euphrates are running dry.

Water flows have dropped dramatically.

It breaks my heart to see farmers forced to abandon lands on which crops have been grown for millennia.

Water scarcity in Iraq is compounded by reduced inflows from outside, unsustainable water management, and now more and more climate change. It is a threat that requires international attention.

We are convening the UN 2023 Water Conference later this month in New York and we look forward to Iraq's participation.

Iraq is among the countries most affected by climate change.

The climate emergency does not just mean greater environmental fragility, scorching temperatures and runaway desertification.

It also drives displacement, threatens food security, destroys livelihoods, fuels conflict, and undermines human rights, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.

Coupled with volatile security, governance challenges, it can put stability at risk – and this is true for Iraq, for any other country, the region, and beyond. This is not a threat on the horizon; it is the present danger of our times.

Ans do now is the time for the international community to support Iraq in tackling its environmental challenges, diversifying its economy, and harnessing its potential for sustainable growth.

Dear Prime Minister,

Domestic stability and regional stability go hand in hand. Iraq is central to regional stability, and I commend the Government's commitment to advancing dialogue and diplomacy, based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and good neighbourliness.

I welcome Iraq's progress in meeting its international obligations, including on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. And I deeply appreciate Iraq's exemplary efforts to repatriate its citizens from northeast Syria – including from the Al Hol camp as you mentioned.

The Prime Minister has clearly expressed his commitment to the full implementation of the Sinjar agreement allowing for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of the Yezidis to their homes. Yezidi people who have suffered immensely, deserve our full solidarity.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to you, Prime Minister, and to the people of Iraq for your solidarity and for your support to the victims of the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria.

At a time when the world is facing a cascade of crises, hope is in short supply.

But I am here in Baghdad with a measure of hope.

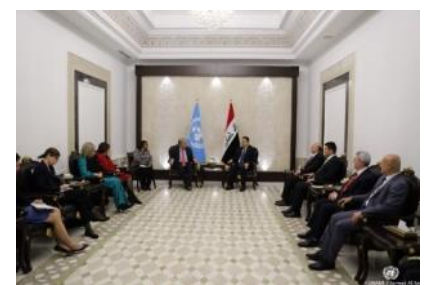
Hope that Iraq can break cycles of instability and fragility.

Hope that it can set a sustainable course towards greater prosperity, freedom, and peace.

And hope that it can open new horizons of opportunity for its dynamic, young population.

The United Nations is proud to continue to support Iraq on this critical journey.

Shukran."



The Secretary-General meets the Press in Baghdad

Baghdad, 1 March 2023 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres: "Ladies and gentlemen of the media – Assalam Alaikum.

When I visited Iraq 6 years ago, wide swathes of the country lay in ruins. Millions were forced to flee their homes.

My visit was one of solidarity in a moment of urgency. Today, it is a visit of solidarity and hope for the future of Iraq.

With a new government in place, there is a window of opportunity for progress.

Earlier today, I had fruitful meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Speaker of the Council of Representatives, as well as representatives of civil society.

I expressed my gratitude for Iraq's solidarity and support to the victims of the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria.

And I welcomed Iraq's efforts to advance regional stability through diplomacy and dialogue. Today's challenges do not recognize borders. Addressing them requires regional cooperation and coordination.

We also discussed the new Government's ambitious and forward-looking reform agenda.

I expressed our steadfast commitment to support action that benefits all Iraqis – through the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the entire UN family operating across the country.

Action to bolster democratic institutions and governance at all levels to build trust.

Action to improve public services and tackle corruption.

Action to strengthen human rights protections and ensure accountability.

Action to halt armed actors operating outside State control.

Action to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on oil revenue.

Action to bring down high levels of unemployment and create opportunities for decent work for young people.

And action to build resilience against climate shocks and water scarcity that threaten lives and livelihoods in the heart of the fertile crescent, where agriculture flourished for millennia.

In all of this and more, national unity and the interests of the Iraqi people are paramount.

So, too, is the role of all of Iraq's



elected representatives.

I was particularly encouraged by the increased participation of women as candidates in recent elections – reflected in the historic number of women elected to the Council of Representatives. We all look forward to seeing more women across all spheres of decision-making.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, I commend the government of Iraq for its efforts to repatriate its citizens from northeast Syria, in particular from the Al-Hol camp, where so many Iraqis, Syrians, and third-country nationals – mainly women and children – remain stranded in desperate conditions.

Iraq's efforts are an example for the world.

We must keep working for dignified solutions anchored in the principles of reintegration and accountability.

Continued engagement on the repatriation and sustainable reintegration of Iraqi nationals from the Al-Hol camp remains essential.

From here in Iraq, I want to send a message to all other Member States with nationals in such camps. It is time for them to significantly step up their efforts to facilitate the safe and dignified repatriation of their nationals, in line with applicable international law, and guided by the best interests of children.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, I will also visit Erbil and look forward to meeting the Kurdistan Regional authorities.

I encourage the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments to continue moving towards a structured, institutionalized dialogue and concrete agreements – in particular on the pressing issue of the 2023 federal budget, as well as on the

oil and gas law.

Moving from constant crisis management to a more robust, sustainable arrangement is the surest path to peace and prosperity for all Iraqis.

I reiterate the calls of my Special Representative for the swift and full implementation of the Sinjar Agreement. Stable security structures and a unified administration are essential.

We owe it to the Yezidi people of Sinjar to improve the security situation on the ground, ensure good governance, and promote the voluntary, dignified return of the displaced to their homes.

I want to express my full solidarity with the Yezidi people who have suffered immensely.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, Inclusive political and electoral processes are a guarantor of stability and progress.

I look forward to the conduct of the delayed Kurdistan Regional parliamentary elections as well as the planned Provincial Council elections across Iraq.

The United Nations stands ready to support Iraq's electoral institutions, in line with UNAMI's technical assistance mandate.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, Over five years since Iraq declared victory over Daesh, the fight against terrorism remains a collective priority in Iraq and in the world.

We must focus on prevention, to address the economic and social conditions that can lead to terrorism in the first place.

We must prioritize inclusion, to ensure counter-terrorism strategies reflect a wide array of voices, communities, and constituencies –

The Secretary-General meets the Press in Baghdad (continued)

including minorities, women, and young people.

And throughout, we must place human rights and the rule of law at the core.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of one of the darkest days in the history of our United Nations – the horrific terrorist attack on the Canal Hotel in

Baghdad which killed 22 of our colleagues and wounded many more.

This day forever changed the United Nations.

But it did not break our resolve to stay and deliver for the people of Iraq.

Today, as Iraq transitions from humanitarian to development

assistance, I am here to underscore the United Nations' abiding commitment to support the Iraqis in advancing peace, sustainable development and human rights for all the people of Iraq.

Shukran Jazeelan. I'm at your disposal for a few questions."

Secretary-General's press encounter at the National Museum of Iraq



Baghdad, 1 March 2023 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres:

"It is impossible to come to this museum and not to feel that here was the birth of civilization and here we have found different demonstrations of how rich the culture of Iraq was during millennia. The old kingdoms of empires, the Abbasid Caliphate, where culture flourished when Europe was still largely a barbarian area and where even the tradition - the Greek classic tradition - was rescued and came afterwards back to Europe. So the

contribution of Iraq to world civilization, to world culture, is absolutely outstanding. So I'm here to pay tribute to all those that are working in this museum, preserving it in the difficult times that Iraq has faced some years ago, which allow us to be able to contemplate the magnificent culture and history of this wonderful country.

Thank you very much."

The Secretary-General remarks to Press after visiting the Jeddah Rehabilitation Centre

Jeddah Rehabilitation Centre, Iraq, 2 March 2023 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres:

"I have just visited the Jeddah Rehabilitation Centre and had the opportunity to meet with returnees from the Al-Hol camp in northeast Syria, where so many Iraqi, Syrians, and third-country nationals – mainly women and children – remain stranded.

It is very important for me to have come here:

to express my support for Iraq's exemplary efforts;

to emphasize the importance of continued returns;

and to urge all other countries and the wider international community to take responsibility and to act.

Nearly half of Al-Hol's population is under the age of 12.

Deprived of their rights, vulnerable, and marginalized, they are trapped in a desperate situation with no end in sight.

As High Commissioner for Refugees, during ten years I visited camps all over the world. I have no doubt to say that the worst camp that exists in today's world is Al-Hol, with the worst possible conditions for people and with enormous suffering for the people that have been stranded there for years.

So they deserve a path out. This is a matter of human decency and compassion – and it is a matter of security.

Because the longer we let this untenable situation fester, the more resentment and despair will grow, and the greater the risks to security and stability.



We must prevent the legacy of yesterday's fight from fueling tomorrow's conflict.

Iraq is demonstrating with enormous commitment that responsible repatriations are possible, by finding dignified solutions anchored in the principles of both accountability and reintegration.

And it is working. I witnessed it today.

I commend the government of Iraq for its efforts, which are an example for the world.

I recognize this is an extremely complex, challenging, and sensitive issue.

But I encourage the government to continue working towards the accelerated community-based reintegration of residents here, most of whom are under the age of 18.

We must provide durable solutions for all. The United Nations is fully committed and mobilized to support this vital effort.

From here, I want to send a message to all Member States that have nationals in Al-Hol and elsewhere. All Members States must significantly step up their efforts to facilitate the safe and dignified

repatriation of their nationals.

They need to follow the example of Iraq. Iraq is not one of the richest countries in the world, but Iraq is having returnees back from Al-Hol. All countries with their citizens in Al-Hol must do the same, and must do the same in a dignified repatriation in line with applicable international law, and in the case of children, guided by the principles of the best interests of children.

I end my visit deeply impressed by the resilience of the people I met. They want to reintegrate in their communities, in their societies and I am deeply grateful to the government of Iraq, with all its difficulties, with all its problems, with all the security concerns that are so legitimate in this country, the government of Iraq is committed to make Iraqis come back here and to be reintegrated and rehabilitated for the future of the communities and for the future of the country. May the Iraq example be followed everywhere else.

Thank you."

The Secretary-General at the press stakeout in Erbil



Erbil, 2 March 2023 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres:

“Ladies and gentlemen of the press – thank you for your presence.

I am very glad to be back in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In my previous visits to the area, including as High Commissioner for Refugees, I was always deeply touched by the generosity and solidarity of the Kurdish people towards those fleeing conflict and catastrophe.

Today, amidst the devastation of the earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to you for once again extending a helping hand.

I have just concluded fruitful meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament.

I thanked them for the close partnership with the United Nations.

We discussed relations with Baghdad and as I said there, moving from constant crisis management to a more structured, institutionalized dialogue is in the interest – and to the benefit – of all.

A number of issues require agreement,

including: the 2023 federal budget, the oil and gas law, stronger security cooperation, the swift implementation of the Sinjar agreement, and the finalization of the Kirkuk Dialogue.

But in my discussions both here and in Baghdad, I sensed a genuine commitment to move forward and I urge all to translate this commitment into reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good governance, respect for human rights and the freedom of expression, as well as inclusive political and electoral processes, are bedrocks of stability and drivers of prosperity.

I encourage all political actors across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to work together to ensure that the delayed parliamentary elections take place this year.

Diverse – even opposing – viewpoints as well as constructive criticism are the lifeblood of any democracy.

Despite spirited differences, I urge all to put the interests of the people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq first.

Ladies and gentlemen of the press,

Full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and

good neighbourliness is essential at all times.

I urge all to pursue dialogue and diplomacy and exercise maximum restraint to prevent further instability and contain the risks of regional escalation.

Finally, let me repeat what I said in Baghdad: my visit is one of solidarity and hope for the future.

But achieving a better tomorrow requires action today. It demands determined diplomacy, constructive dialogue – and the courage to make the necessary compromises.

After my meetings and discussions, I am convinced that important progress is now entirely possible.

The United Nations stands with the people of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to help build that better future that they deserve.

Allow me a personal note. I came to this region many times in the past as High Commissioner for Refugees and I came as Secretary-General in a dramatic moment when Daesh was close and when fighting was fierce. And I learned to have an enormous admiration for the generosity and solidarity of the Kurdish people. I want to say that in my opinion we are now facing an opportunity for Iraq and an opportunity for the Kurdistan region of Iraq. That opportunity can translate itself into reality if Iraqis are able to come together and unite and if people in this region people can also come together and unite.

Iraq is potentially a rich country that can guarantee to its people a future of prosperity. I strongly hope that this will soon become a full reality.

Thank you.”

Readout of the Secretary-General's Meeting with H.E. Mr. Abdullatif Jamal Rashid, President of the Republic of Iraq

New York, 24 March 2023 - The Secretary-General met today with H.E. Mr. Abdullatif Jamal Rashid, President of the Republic of Iraq.

The Secretary-General welcomed the President and thanked him for the kind hospitality accorded to him and to his delegation during his recent visit to Iraq.

The Secretary-General and the President discussed UN-Iraq cooperation and climate change, with a focus on water security.

UN Photo



UN Deputy Special Representative for Iraq Claudio Cordone visits Najaf, Karbala and Babil Governorates

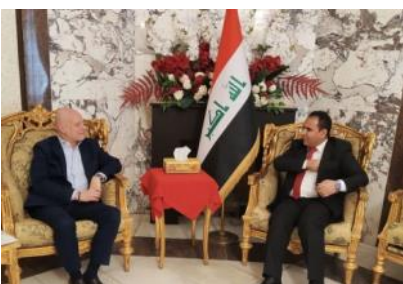
Baghdad, 27 February 2023 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, visited the Governorates of Najaf, Karbala and Babil on 25 and 26 February 2023, meeting with local government officials, religious authorities and dialogue advocates to discuss a wide range of issues. He also visited the holy shrines in Najaf and Karbala and toured the ancient ruins of Babylon.

"I had extensive discussions and fruitful conversations over the past two days, engagements which provided insight into the thoughts, aspirations and current political views of officials and activists", Mr. Cordone said. "In addition to the rich history and culture of Iraq, I was particularly impressed by the determination of Iraqis to work for a better future for their country".

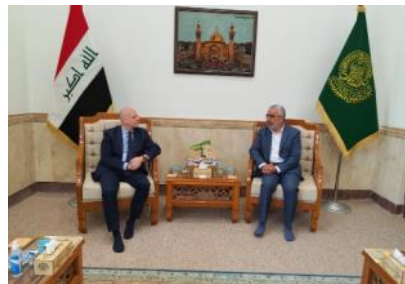


During the visit, DSRSG Cordone met with Najaf Deputy Governor, Talal Bilal, Karbala Governor, Nassif Jassim al-Khattabi, and Babil Deputy Governor, Hassan Mandil, where he discussed the role of the governorates, elections and the United Nations in Iraq.

In Najaf, DSRSG Cordone participated in the opening session of the al-Rafidain Centre for Dialogue Conference. Under the slogan "Youth and the Challenges of State-Building in Iraq Present Dialectics and Future Aspirations", the DSRSG noted in his remarks that "the United Nations is committed to partnering with the youth of Iraq in accordance with



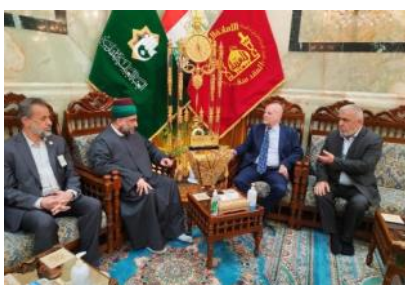
Youth Vision 2030, and in the thematic areas of peace and security, human rights and sustainable development". The DSRSG added that "participation of women and youth in political events must be encouraged and that innovation and ambition are qualities of youth in general - they have great potential for change".



DSRSG Cordone also visited in Najaf the Alalamain Institute for Higher Education of the Bahr Alolom Charity Foundation. The DSRSG was briefed on the academic and research activities, events, training courses and conferences that the Institute offers, and expressed appreciation for their "Iraq's Thirst" initiative addressing water scarcity and climate change in the country.

In Karbala, DSRSG Cordone exchanged views with al-Naba' Forum for Dialogue on elections, corruption and building state institutions.

DSRSG Cordone visited the shrine of



Imam Ali in the city of Najaf, where he also met with the Secretary-General of the Shrine, Sayyed Issa Al-Khursan.



In Karbala, DSRSG Cordone visited the shrines of Imam al-Hussein and Imam al-Abbas, and also met with the Secretary-General, Sayyed Mustafa Dhia al-Din and his deputy Sayyed Alaa Dhia al-Din. DSRSG Cordone commended the charitable work of the holy shrines.

In Babil, the DSRSG toured the archaeological site of Babylon. "We all know how ancient and rich were the civilizations of Mesopotamia", he said. "We can all build on such richness in developing modern Iraq".



SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert attends the Sulaimani Forum; SG Guterres sends a video message

Sulaimani, 15 March 2023 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended the Sulaimani Forum held in Sulaimani. Here is the text of her remarks:

"Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Participating in this Forum four years ago, in March 2019, I kicked off by saying that I would speak candidly and in a thought-provoking way, so that we could attempt to, honestly and constructively, address some of the deep-rooted problems in Iraqi processes and institutions. If you allow me, I will do so again today.

Now at the time, I said that only by focusing on the systemic concerns, would it be possible to revive public trust. I warned that simmering anger boils over easily, and that failure to act would inevitably lead to a new cycle of violence.

What happened after? And where are things today?

Of course, all of us will recall the mass demonstrations in October of that same year.

Many, many Iraqis – from all walks of life – took to the streets, protesting a lack of economic, social and political prospects; tired of corruption and partisan interests; after 16 years, simply done with undelivered promises.

What they were asking for: a country capable of reaching its full potential for the benefit of all Iraqis.

The rest is history. The heavy loss of life, as well as the many injuries, combined with a lack of accountability and the hijacking of peaceful protests by all manner of power dynamics, resulted in the rapid expansion of an already huge crisis of confidence.

Long story short: these events, as we all know, led to the Prime Minister's resignation, the confirmation of a new government and importantly, the holding of early parliamentary elections two years later, in October 2021.

And while these elections were widely recognized as transparent and credible – which is no small feat for a young democracy – soon after, Iraq found itself in an extremely volatile and politically charged post-electoral environment.

Calls for parties to overcome their differences went unheeded. And with



tensions on the rise for months, one did not need a crystal ball to see where this would lead to: a situation that resulted in armed clashes in the heart of the capital and elsewhere.

But, at last, in October 2022, after more than a year of discord and power play, the Council of Representatives confirmed Iraq's new Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani. It was about time.

Ladies and gentlemen, looking back at my quarterly briefings to the UN Security Council over the past four years, it is undoubtedly clear: political, security, economic, environmental and institutional challenges have - by and large - remained consistent. What does this mean?

It means that many of the aspirations and demands - that came to the fore in October 2019 – they are still alive. It means that band-aid solutions do not work. It also means that political inaction must be put behind us.

It moreover means that the patience and resilience of Iraqis will continue to be tested.

Why? Because no one can expect the new Government, this Government, to accomplish miracles overnight. Dealing with both the enormous legacy of Iraq's past and the many challenges of the present. It will take time.

Certainly, Iraq has overcome some of the key, short-term impediments it was facing immediately after the removal of Saddam Hussein. But, since then, the country has grappled with a plethora of destabilising events and trends, both domestic and external.

From deadly sectarian violence, the fight against Daesh, armed groups operating outside state control and

various external power competitions, to COVID-19, significant environmental challenges, and the adverse effects of climate change – to name but a few.

Now, these events of the past 20 years did not only compound existing fragilities inherited from the previous decades, they also exposed new weaknesses.

In other words: while Iraq, throughout its history, has navigated some very dark and difficult times, drivers of instability in the country's more recent past...remain, to a large extent, the same - resulting in a pattern of recurring crises.

And these include, inter alia, systemic corruption, weak governance, poor service delivery, unemployment, and an overreliance on oil. All of which in turn impact the everyday Iraqi citizen, feed into public grievances, and exacerbate tensions within and between communities.

That said, we also know that out of any crisis, new opportunities can emerge. And let me emphasize this before anyone gets the impression that Iraq is a lost cause. It is not.

Iraq has immense potential. And painting a crescendo of doom, is not my objective here, not at all.

So, let me underline once more: the recent confirmation of Iraq's new Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia. Al-Sudani provides a crucial window of opportunity. An opportunity to steer the country back on to the course of stability.

In my most recent briefing to the UN Security Council, in early February, I mentioned that Iraq's Government had shown its resolve to tackle a number of pressing issues.

Yet it is, of course, still early days. I

SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert attends the Sulaimani Forum; SG Guterres sends a video message *(continued)*

can therefore only again emphasize that any government needs time to get things done. Also, for any government to achieve meaningful progress, broad support - be it from within or outside the coalition - is a prerequisite.

It is quite simple: the kind of in-depth change that is needed now requires relentless commitment from a wide range of actors. And absolutely, it also requires placing the national interest above all else.

In turn, the Iraqi people need to see that (slowly but surely) progress is being achieved for all Iraqis – and that includes women, minorities and young people.

They need to see that inclusivity and equality are not mere words in speeches but are dealt with as absolute essentials.

They need to see that civic space is not being restricted but given room to flourish, thereby guaranteeing the freedom of expression.

They need to see that justice and accountability are ensured, for all - regardless of affiliation or background.

And they need to see that creating a conducive and “all-in” environment is at the core of any policy or piece of legislation.

Ladies and gentlemen, with Iraq’s long list of outstanding business on everyone’s mind - it is important to focus, to not get distracted or create new and unnecessary headaches for the Government.

In other words, to break with the cycles of instability, what must the priorities be? What is the potential impact of a certain law or regulation? Also, could it be controversial or divisive? Could it antagonize communities? And if so, what does that mean for the broad support desperately needed now?

Be it possible changes to existing laws, the entering into force of a ban, or potential limitations to rights and freedoms – ignoring the wider impact is risky business.

So at all times, the question must be: is it truly worth the time and effort or will the sum of such issues, at a certain point, be greater than the whole of its parts - thereby (again) distracting too many people from the key priorities, even estranging them?! That said, ladies and gentlemen, let me go back to the long list of pressing issues.

I will name just a few:



First and foremost, the 2023 federal budget, the Prime Minister explained already; it has been passed by the Council of Ministers. And that is truly good news - yet, it is of course still to be passed by Parliament. Clearly, without a budget - passed by Parliament - much of the implementation of the Government Programme will be held back - including public service delivery.

Also, and importantly, high oil prices cannot keep the country afloat. Similarly, creating jobs sustainably cannot be achieved by further ballooning the public sector. Economic and financial reforms are desperately needed.

Efforts to combat Iraq’s systemic corruption need to go beyond individuals or events. The system that was built after 2003 is simply untenable. And if left as is, it will - yet again - backfire.

Additionally, the many outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil call for institutionalized relations. In the absence thereof, little will improve, but not all.

And here too, I could go on.

To, again, cut a long story short: in my address to you, here in Suli - back in 2019, I depicted a landscape marred by factional politics, non-state actors, distortion of state resources, poor services and a lack of jobs. And now, four years later, many of these issues remain sorely acute.

What I am essentially saying is: there is no time to lose.

Definitely, the challenges ahead are manifold. It would be naive to think

that the legacy of past hardships and newly emerging threats, will not continue to test the country’s resilience.

And yes, as any other country, Iraq will be put to the test - sooner or later. But the fear is that, without prompt action, Iraq will flunk this test.

Hence, it is important to anchor the country in the stability it needs to withstand future shocks. And for that to happen we must collectively learn from history – and recent history, at that – to avoid repeating it.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, my remarks today focus on Iraq in its entirety, but the political infighting and parties’ vested interests in the Kurdistan Region cannot be left unmentioned.

Participating in an event at the University of Kurdistan almost two years ago, in May 2021, I concluded my remarks by stating that the Kurdistan Region has a choice:

It can unite, tackle systemic corruption, further strengthen its respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, make meaningful progress on security and economic reform, and engage in dialogue despite internal differences that at times (I admit) seem insurmountable. Or...

Or it can fail to put its house in order, risking what it has achieved in past decades.

And it pains me to say it, but so many people are wondering: what wake-up call are the parties waiting for?

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, let me emphasize: it is our sincere hope that - relying on its immense wealth, diversity, opportunities and potential - Iraq will now be able, and thus be enabled, to successfully move ahead.

After 20 years, the country deserves to rise above endless cycles of instability and fragility. Iraqis are very much aware of the life that was promised after Saddam. Two decades on, they deserve better.

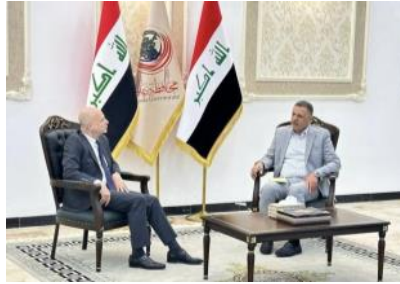
It is as simple as that. And collectively, I am convinced that it is still possible to usher in that promised future.

Thank you.”

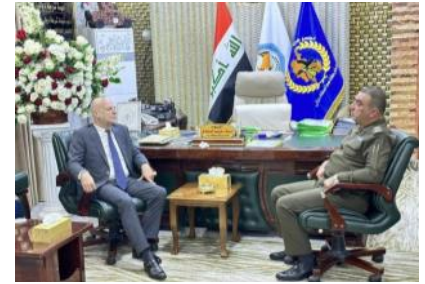
The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, sent a video message to the participants of the Sulaimani Forum 2023 and it is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qJrJbavRRo>

DSRSG Cordone visits Baqubah

Baqubah, 29 March 2023 – On a visit to Baqubah today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Claudio Cordone, held separate meetings with Diyala Governor Muthanna Al-Tamimi, Diyala Police Chief Major-General Alaa al Zubaidi, and the Diyala Operations Chief of Staff Brigadier-General Anwar al-Zuhairi as well as with civil society representatives.



Discussions focused on security and public services in the governorate as



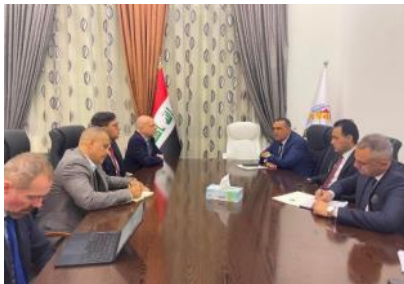
well as the forthcoming provincial elections.

DSRSG Cordone visits Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 4 April 2023 - On a visit to Kirkuk today, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Claudio Cordone, held separate meetings with

the Acting Governor, Rakan Al-Jouburi, Head of IHEC office, Loay Arkan Ali Rostem, representatives of Kirkuk's components and civil society. Discussions focused on the forthcoming Provincial Council's

elections including the participation of women and minorities as well as the overall situation in the governorate.



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 5 April 2023 - We welcome the Baghdad-Erbil deal to resume oil exports from the Kurdistan Region, an important step that paves the way for an agreement on an oil and gas law, strengthens national unity and boosts Iraq's economic prospects to serve all Iraqis.

DSRSG Cordone visits Ninewa



Mosul, 9 April 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Claudio Cordone, discussed in Mosul today with Mayor Amin al-Memari the situation in the city, including security and electoral developments and reconstruction plans. The Mayor stressed the importance of deepening the existing stability in Ninewa.



Mosul, 9 April 2023 - While in Mosul, the DSRSG/P/E Claudio Cordone listened to the views and aspirations as well as concerns of a group of youth and other representatives of civil society in the city. A lively conversation that touched on the electoral law and community relations, as well as security and human rights.



Mosul, 09 April 2023 - DSRSG/P/E Claudio Cordone inspected the ongoing reconstruction of the al-Nouri mosque, accompanied by officials of the Sunni Endowment who gave an update on the reconstruction and community relations. He also visited the nearby al-Sa'a church, also being reconstructed. The area had been devastated during the conflict with Dae'sh. DSRSG toured the Mosul Heritage House for a briefing on the city's rich history.



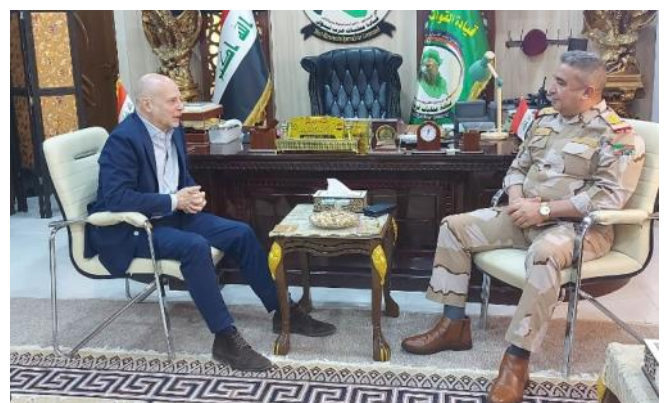
Mosul, 09 April 2023 - In Ninewa Plain's Hamdaniya district, the DSRSG/P/E Claudio Cordone visited Christian spiritual leaders to listen to the views and concerns of their community. He met in Qaraqosh with the Archbishop of Mosul and Area for Syriac Catholics, Mar Benedictus Younan Hanno, and in Karamlis with the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop for Mosul and Aqra, Mar Mkhail Najib Moussa. Discussions focused on community relations, political participation and UN role.



Kojo, 10 April 2023 - In Kojo, Sinjar district, Ninewa Governorate, DSRSG/P/E Claudio Cordone visited a memorial where photos and some belongings of Yezidi women, children and men who were killed by Da'esh were on display. He later stood in front of the nearby graves of 145 Yezidi victims as a member of the community explained the exhumation and reburial process. Somber and powerful scenes like these reinforce the determination to ensure accountability for Da'esh's genocidal campaign against the Yezidis during their occupation of the area in 2014.



Sinjar, 10 April 2023 - In Sinjar, DSRSG/P/E Claudio Cordone met with representatives and elders of the Yezidi, Arab and Turkmen communities from the town and surrounding areas. There was a robust conversation in which they expressed their concerns and underscored the challenges they face in their daily life, the need for the return of the IDPs, keep out external interference and strengthen local administration to speed up development. Cordone emphasized the importance of accountability for Da'esh crimes and the urgent implementation of the Sinjar Agreement, which stipulates a unified security and administrative structures for Sinjar, as these are critical steps for the dignified and sustainable returns and stability for all Sinjaris.



Mosul, 10 April 2023 - On visit to Ninewa Governorate, DSRSG/P/E Claudio Cordone met today with West Ninewa Operations Commander Maj-Gen. Akram Saddam Mednef at his field headquarters at Tumarat. They discussed the overall security situation in the area, including the Sinjar district.

Plans launched for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Mosul and Tel Afar

Mosul, 01 March 2023 – Today, the Government of Ninewa formally launched Plans of Action for the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) for West and South Mosul, and Tel Afar centre. The ceremony took place at the University of Mosul – a site once occupied by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), during which a curriculum to indoctrinate school-aged children into violent extremism was developed.

Developed over the last year in close consultation with a diverse range of national and Ninewa Governorate authorities, civil society actors and community stakeholders, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq and in partnership with the National Security Advisory, each plan identifies key drivers and factors that increase the risk of violent extremism and outlines resilience-building responses tailored to the corresponding context.

“The role of the Government is to prepare the infrastructure needed to protect society from violent extremism. Our focus will be on implementing the National Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism among all segments of society, giving priority to youth and women. We must also focus on social cohesion, as diversity is what makes Ninewa Governorate beautiful. We aspire to be a cohesive community, as we were in the past,” said Mr. Ali Omar, Head of the Ninewa Governorate PVE sub-committee.

“With these Plans of Action – the first of seven that will launch across the country – we see our collective efforts begin to bear fruit,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Mr. Giorgi Gigauri. “Indeed, the key to effective PVE projects is local planning – local planning is what enables these efforts to take root in and speak to the specific realities and conditions faced by Iraq’s diversity of communities.”

These plans of action are evidence-based; inclusive and grounded in whole-of-society, gender mainstreaming and human rights-based approaches; and designed to contribute directly to the objectives outlined in the Government of Iraq’s National Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism.

Attended by district-, sub-district- and governorate-level government officials, as well as representatives from the University of Mosul and civil society,

the event also announced the establishment of two PVE sub-committees in Mosul and Tel Afar, areas that have both been major targets of violence and extremist groups over the last twenty years. The sub-committees will be responsible for implementing the local PVE Plans of Action in their respective districts, with technical and capacity-building support from IOM Iraq.

Violent extremism has had catastrophic impacts in Iraq, including mass displacement, widespread destruction and the deepening of social divisions. As part of its efforts to address the underlying causes of irregular migration, IOM remains committed to supporting the Government of Iraq as it pursues a whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach to PVE, informed by rigorous, cutting-edge research and grounded in gender-mainstreaming principles and human rights.



Ten peace agreements signed across Kirkuk and Ninewa to boost social cohesion in Iraq

Erbil, 16 March 2023 – Today, local authorities, community leaders, and civil society members came together following the signing of ten peace agreements to enhance social cohesion across areas of Kirkuk and Ninewa. The peace agreements were tailored to maximize impact for each area, addressing the creation of administrative units as needed and agreeing upon key tenets to promote peaceful coexistence including encouraging community reintegration and combatting hate speech.

The agreements were signed as part of a larger project implemented by UNDP Iraq in partnership with Public Aid Organization (PAO) and generous support from the Government of the



Netherlands. The year-long project to promote social cohesion and trust-building among local authorities and community mechanisms has included various capacity building, mediation sessions, and focus group discussions for over 2,000 community police, police,

local officials, and community leaders. The project was implemented across twelve areas of Kirkuk and Ninewa, and included development of a peacebuilding curriculum, created with direct input from community members. UNDP Iraq Resident Representative,

Ten peace agreements signed across Kirkuk and Ninewa to boost social cohesion in Iraq *(continued)*

Auke Lootsma, states, “We are grateful to the Government of the Netherlands for their unwavering support to social cohesion in Iraq. These communities across Kirkuk and Ninewa are continuing to recover following liberation from ISIL. Providing tailored support to their individual needs for community empowerment in partnership with local and national government is key to supporting the

region’s social fabric.”

Mr. Zidan Khalaf Obaid, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq on Human Rights, emphasizes, “One of the most important things we are working on today is incorporating social mechanisms into peaceful coexistence. Iraqis have suffered after ISIL’s occupation, and these agreements and conferences help to maintain and celebrate a peaceful society. We thank

UNDP and PAO for supporting the Government of Iraq’s efforts.”

Empowering and engaging community mechanisms and local authorities to promote social cohesion is implemented as part of UNDP Iraq’s five-year Social Cohesion Programme launched in January 2020 to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.

Football games are not just about winning or losing

Anbar, 19 March 2023 - Football games are not just about winning or losing, they’re about the passion, the thrill, and the excitement that unites us all!

IOM Iraq held football tournament in Heet district of Al Anbar governorate, which brought together some of the best football teams in the area. The tournament was a fantastic event that brought the different community groups together and promoted the social cohesion through sports.

This event was made possible with support from UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.



Mediation and dialogue as a cornerstone of peacebuilding



Baghdad, 20 March 2023 - The rich cultural and historical legacy of Iraq is a result of its cultural and ethnic diversity. However, ongoing conflicts and tensions among various communities in Iraq have had a destabilizing effect, potentially hindering community peace.

Mediation and dialogue skills are important to build sustainable peace by offering solutions and discussing the root causes of the conflict.

UNDP, in collaboration with swisspeace, organized a three-day mediation and dialogue skills training

for a group of local NGO representatives, academics and peace advocates.

The training aimed to discuss dialogue design concepts and methodology and to enhance the participants’ understanding of conflict sensitivity. Additionally, discussion took place on how a network or community of Iraqi mediators and peace practitioners can sustain themselves.

The first day of training focused on conflict sensitivity and how it is taken into consideration by professionals working in organizations for conflict

resolution. Participants presented real conflict scenarios, discussing certain developments and how to facilitate the dialogue process.

Zeravan Ameen Abdullah, an academic at the University of Duhok, says, " I believe that dialogue can shed light on the root causes of conflicts and lead to finding permanent solutions instead of relying on temporary ones. Each conflict has a unique situation that requires innovative solutions and systematic approaches in mediation and dialogue design. Practical integration with real situations is essential in finding common ground."

On the second day, the training covered conflict analysis tools, as well as how to prepare for the dialogue process.

Zena Jassam, project coordinator and trainer at Iraqi Al Amal Association, explains, “Iraqi society has a long history of constant conflicts that often escalate, leaving us in a temporary negative state, hindering positive peace and progress. The conflicts in Iraq are different from those in other societies due to cultural, social, religious, and national contexts."

On the third day, the attendees

Mediation and dialogue as a cornerstone of peacebuilding *(continued)*

discussed how to sustain a network of Iraqi mediators to resolve conflicts. “We need mediation in Iraq. Numerous consecutive wars and economic crises have led to a proliferation of conflicts in society, and incessant struggles without respite,” says Methaq Fadhil Sharhan, an expert in diplomatic

negotiation and regional disputes. “The role of the mediator is particularly challenging: sometimes the problem is simple, while at other times it branches out into a larger issue. The nature of the conflict varies according to the region and the cultural and social context. Therefore, having a network of

neutral mediators to resolve conflicts through dialogue is essential for building peace and social cohesion.” This training is part of UNDP’s Social Cohesion Programme, which works on promoting stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.

Political Consultations

SRSG mets with KRG Minister of Interior

Erbil, 08 March 2023 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met with Kurdistan Regional Government Minister of Interior, **Mr. Réber Ahmed**. Discussions focused on the current political and security situation in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, and the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement in particular.

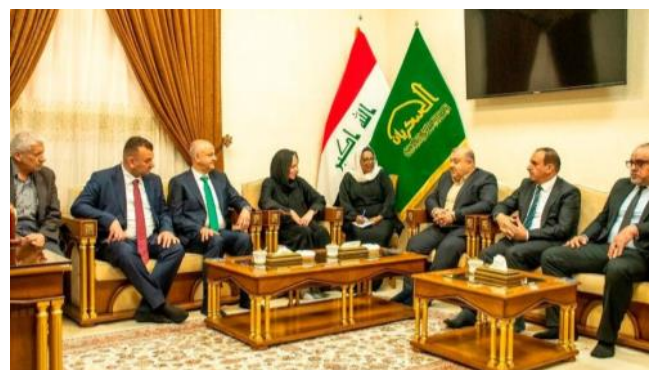
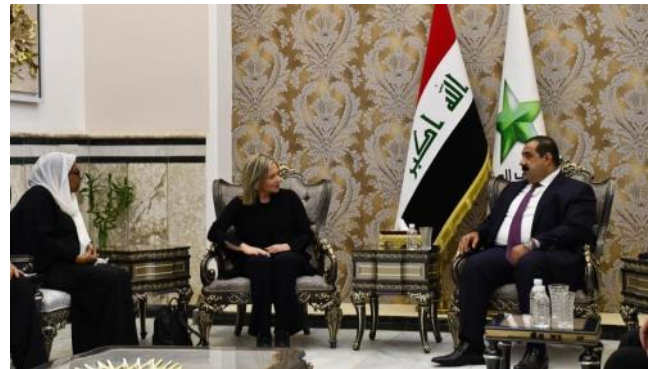


SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert visits Samarra

Samarra, 16 March 2023 – On a visit to Samarra in Salah Eddin Governorate, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert

held separate meetings with Governor Ismail Al-Haloub and MP Muthanna al-Samarrai. Discussions centered on the political, security and economic situation in the city and the

Governorate. SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert also visited the Al-Askari Holy Shrine and the Malwiya Minaret (the Great Mosque of Samarra).



“Gender Mainstreaming in PVE: Opportunities in Iraq and Beyond”

Baghdad, 23 February 2023 – Today, IOM Iraq launched its latest report “Gender Mainstreaming in PVE: Opportunities in Iraq and Beyond”.

Here is the Executive summary:

Gender roles and relations are a central but often invisible part of how violent extremism (VE) functions. They are factors in different communities’ and individuals’ vulnerability to VE, and often exploited by VE organisations (VEOs) as part of recruitment strategies. Similarly, understanding gender roles and inequalities, and using gender as an analytical tool, is a vital part of the effort to counter and prevent violent extremism (C/PVE), though PVE efforts to date have not always taken gender into account.

Gender-blind approaches to VE and PVE are increasingly being challenged in recent years, as researchers and practitioners develop better knowledge and tools to both understand the role of gender in VE and its organisations, and how gender mainstreaming practices can open up new avenues of work in PVE. The key messages of this report on gender mainstreaming in PVE are the following:

- First: Gender cannot only mean women, though in practice this assumption is common. While gender refers broadly to gendered roles that all people play in society, community, family and so on, in practice it is often used interchangeably with women. However, there are gender roles and hierarchies (and gendered violence) that are operationalised in very specific ways for men and women in VE groups.

Similarly, there are ways to engage men and women differently (and together) in PVE. In fact, PVE policies and programmes should work to engage not only on issues of women’s rights, but also on men’s roles in society, masculinities, and how these ideas shape issues of violence, militarism, extremism and ways to prevent it. As such, the concept of masculinities represents a key entry point for PVE interventions, and a way to engage men in PVE work that addresses gender inequalities and insecurities as a root cause of VE.

- Second: It is essential not to desecuritize and depoliticize women’s inclusion in PVE; rely solely on women’s traditional roles; or locate



women’s participation only at the ‘local’ level interventions. VE drivers present a complex problem that encompasses many factors, and the political issues or disempowerment underpinning these drivers is often silenced in the few women’s participation programmes that exist, in part due to the sensitivity of this work and potential backlash.

In the little literature on gender-focused PVE projects that concretely assesses programme impact, examples of women’s participation in PVE (in case studies external to Iraq and outside of “Western” contexts) are discussed in terms relating primarily to their economic empowerment or empowerment within the family, which does the following: depoliticizes women’s participation, situating it entirely within the family, and depoliticizes the PVE approach overall.

‘Political’ here is meant to encompass issues like: self- and community advocacy; trust in institutions; trust in governance structures and feelings of self-efficacy. This also means that women’s involvement in PVE initiatives should not be framed only as beneficiaries of programmes focused on ‘economic empowerment’ and livelihoods/cash-for-work terms, or as mothers/ wives.

While economic empowerment/livelihoods work can be important entry points for participation in a broad sense (because this approach desecuritized the engagement with communities and provides a material benefit to participants or beneficiaries and their families), it should not be the only way women are engaged or invited to participate in PVE projects.

- Third: Cutting-edge research highlights the link between ‘violent

misogyny’, violence against women and violent extremism, which presents another entry point for PVE work, especially in conducting further research.

Different forms of gendered violence are connected, and gender-based violence (in a general sense; against specific ethnoreligious minority groups; and also those who are perceived to be LGBTI+ individuals) is frequently wielded by VE groups as a tool to assert control and communicate their ideologies and social norms. These links are important to understand for practitioners working on PVE, but they also need to be factored in when designing programmes that address root causes.

- Fourth: There are entry points to gender mainstreaming in PVE at every level of work, from knowledge production to central- or national-level policymaking, to security sector reform, protection work and programming work at the local level. While it is important to think through these entry points and their appropriateness and availability in context-specific ways, this report highlights some common entry points identified by the existing research on gender mainstreaming in PVE.

- Fifth: There is an opportunity to incorporate Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and PVE strategies, policies and implementation in national and local settings. Frequently, WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) do not explicitly discuss PVE and women’s participation in it (though Iraq’s second NAP does engage with the topic directly). PVE work can also run the risk of not acknowledging or incorporating gender-equality strategies. There is an opportunity to build cohesion and

“Gender Mainstreaming in PVE: Opportunities in Iraq and Beyond” (continued)

momentum across the two strategy spaces, while also using progress in one area to push for change in another.

• Six: Progress on women’s rights in Iraq and the implementation of frameworks and agendas related to women’s inclusion are often siloed and piece-meal, but there are many intersections between the PVE Strategy and women’s rights and inclusion agendas in Iraq. The siloes exist, in part, due to the way such efforts are funded and resourced (project-driven and discrete), but also because many actors simultaneously work on the same issues without coordination. Organizations working on PVE and gender mainstreaming can focus on supporting momentum-

building when it comes to women’s participation in decision-making processes, security processes and PVE more generally by both tracking and supporting gender equality policy agendas that have intersections with PVE work (this includes the WPS NAP in Iraq, the Yezidi [Female] Survivors Law and efforts to adopt a domestic violence bill, amongst other policy agendas).

Seven: PVE focus in policy funding and programming can create risks for gender equality activists and for a women’s rights and gender equality agenda. Practitioners and policymakers need to be mindful of the ways this could exacerbate risks of increased VE activity (or vulnerability of a

community to VEOs) as well as risks to progress made on gender equality. PVE work is not apolitical, nor does it come without risks to both the practitioners and activists that carry it out. There is also risk that this work instrumentalizes, securitizes or displaces gender equality work already being done in a given context. Ways to mitigate this include focusing on protecting activists and practitioners, ensuring specific (and longer-term) funding for women’s groups and giving space for those same groups to shape PVE work in ways that supports their broader gender equality advocacy.

• Full report is available at: bit.ly/3Zeaaz1

Empowering women is key for equality in peacebuilding!

Baghdad, 24 February 2023 - Women for Peace groups supported by the Government of Denmark through UNDP have come together in a symposium to exchange experiences and discuss upcoming peacebuilding initiatives.

Together, these 100 women make real change within their communities across Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al Din governorates.



Leading the way

Baghdad, 2 March 2023 - There is much work to be done to bring Iraq back into being a progressive, developed country where all citizens have equal rights regardless of their status, gender or (dis)ability. But in order to effect that change, Iraqi women need to be able to see the benefits of a better educated force for which they can play important roles. UN Women believe that female role models with strong leadership skills can provide that level of encouragement to motivate women to want and to seek equality and be provided with the opportunity to do so. Al-Muhra is a force of nature, and she is determined to be heard. At 27 years old she is a graduate of the Department of Banking and Financial Sciences with a bachelor's degree in Management and Economics. She lives in the Salah Al-Din Governorate's Al-Alam district with her parents and siblings.

“I actively sought out classes that would enable me to help in my community,” she said. The Iraqi Flower Organisation for Humanitarian

Aid provided classes with a focus on education. Workshops are designed to increase the knowledge of the organization's employees and volunteers with peace-building skills. “We were provided with opportunities to practice the skills for negotiating and I found it very useful when the group stimulated peace-making processes for social reintegration and leadership skills especially designed for Salah al-Din Governorate, Tikrit,” Al-Muhra said. UNWomen provided the financial assistance and technical skills and experience to the NGO to run the courses effectively. “The training provided me with a strong incentive to learn practical methods and techniques for promoting peace in the community where I live, as well as increased my determination to succeed,” she explained.

Al-Muhra is following a plan for her future that will see her ambitions realised to become an officer and a female innovator. “I want to inspire women and help them to influence the decision makers so that society is able

to see beyond tribalism and patriarchy practices that is keeping us from developing. I want a society where the views of women are taken seriously whether they are a mother and a housewife, but also where they have the opportunity and choice to be a woman who is respected in a leadership position. I am determined to work with all my strength to help society break these restrictive customs and beliefs that women are inferior.”

Al-Muhra believes that participation in the project improved her self-confidence, but it also drives her to take these new skills in leadership, conflict resolution, and dialogue diplomacy to bring about positive changes in her community so everybody can live a more harmonious life.



Women motivating women to strive for peace in Iraq



Baghdad, 02 March 2023 - Iraq's recovery from decades of conflict is a slow process where issues are yet to be resolved at national and at community level. The participation of women in Iraq's peace process is central to resolving conflict and bringing about a peaceful developed society that provides equity opportunity for all its citizens, regardless of their gender.

UN Women have worked in Iraq throughout the conflict, networking, cooperating and coordinating with women's groups and providing them with the support and necessary training to reach out to women in the community. So many women missed out on education during the years of conflict, so the UN Women team encourage partners to draw in women leaders and teachers among their own community.

Mina* is a 28-year-old who lives in Diyala, Muqadadiya District with her

mother and seven sisters. She holds a law degree and works as a lawyer in the Muqadadiya Court. Mina experienced terrorism first-hand as a very young girl when al-Qaeda demolished the family home and murdered her brother in 2006. As a result, the family became displaced, which motivated Mina to study and influenced her career choice. She knows exactly what other families and vulnerable women have experienced and is aware of the discrimination Iraqi women face on a daily basis. Mina is convinced of the need to have more females involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Diyala and in particular, in Muqadadiya district.

Mina's circumstances and experiences inspired her to join the Musharaka project which aims to enable women take on effective roles in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and quick response, in the governorate of Diyala. Through the courses provided by the project, she developed skills in conducting advocacy campaigns to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and response.

"Through participating in the advocacy activities on the course, I have gained more information and skills that helped me increase my awareness of the importance of women's participation in conflict resolution. I learned how to

implement plans and put in place advocacy campaigns, in order to place pressure on related organisations by promoting a greater and more influential role for women in peacebuilding in our beloved governorate," she said.

Mina's interest, ability and knowledge of the law made her an ideal candidate to join the volunteer community committee and her role in the committee allowed her to appreciate the importance of effective volunteer participation within a unified group. Mina was able to witness the changes that can be affected when women come together and support each other, ensuring a much more powerful entity than any one individual.

"My participation in project activities convinced me that change can be made to the status of women, especially young women, contributing to the development of society in the governorate of Diyala. I am calling on all girls to develop their capacity to participate in supporting and developing our local communities to strengthen the role of women in peacebuilding", she continued.

Mina currently lives with her mother and siblings and is the breadwinner in her family.

* Name changed to protect the identity of the woman

Volunteering to help empower women

Baghdad, 02 March 2023 - There are myriad reasons why the women in Iraq are vulnerable – the years of conflict left many homeless and in poverty, frequently subjected to sexual and physical violence and without a voice in decision making on issues that directly affect them. Rebuilding the country to provide security, decent living conditions, opportunities for education and employment to enable vibrant communities for all its citizens regardless of gender, must first start with peace.

UN Women celebrated the 22nd anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in October 2022 alongside its partners in government, NGO's and civil society. Resolution 1325 is focused on Women, Peace and Security in facilitating the engagement of women's participation in peace negotiations and recognizing the impact their contribution can make to peacebuilding. UNWomen's support involves training its partners with technical skills and advocacy campaigns to raise awareness of the role of women in peace negotiations.

Roshna Khalil Sadiq (31) is from Goldarah a village in Kirkuk, Kurdistan.

She holds a diploma from the Faculty of Civil Technology and a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Roshna works as a lawyer and judicial expert, living with her father and five siblings she helps to support the family.

Trawling social media one day, Roshna first came across Resolution 1325 on a post published by an NGO. The post sparked an interest for her, and she began researching and learning about its history and importance in working towards a peaceful society.

"I volunteered as an activist," Roshna explained. "Before volunteering I faced many difficulties related to customs and traditions. I had no confidence in my ability, capabilities or my right to sovereignty as a woman. I just didn't appreciate that I had a right to self-autonomy. I had little interest and felt no need to work as an activist or in the political or social field. Then as I began reading about SCR 1325 and I realized I needed to become involved. My involvement started with projects that address women's participation in decision making as well as projects that address issues to educate women about their



rights and entitlement to live a violence-free life".

Roshna believes she has benefited greatly from participating in the project. "After training, we conducted several courses and sessions that address violence against women and the importance of women's political participation in decision-making processes in my area of Dibis District", she continued. "I was really pleased with the results of the project which allowed me to connect and network with other activists and provided me with greater communication skills – now I can communicate with an audience and speak with confidence. I could never imagine myself being able to do that before and this allows me to be able to raise awareness of the critical need to have more females involved in political life so we have some control over the issues that affect our lives."

UN Women Representative to Iraq, Dina Zorba meets with the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Evan Faik

Baghdad, 13 March 2023 – UN Women Representative to Iraq, Dina Zorba, met with the Minister of Displacement and Migration, Evan Faik, to discuss the displaced women portfolio and providing women with programs and projects that qualify them to integrate back into the society. Evan stressed on the importance of developing action plans to improve the support given to displaced and returnee women by institutions and organizations through various projects and programs that focus on their rehabilitation and further support their children.



Reaching marginalized groups of women to advocate change

Baghdad, 13 March 2023 - There is a proliferation of misinformation throughout media, driving hate crimes, including racism and leading to increased violent crimes. Across the globe female politicians are particularly targeted with hate crimes, and threats of violence on social media - Iraq is no exception. The relevance and importance of truthful and ethical journalism has never been so crucial to good governance, peace, and democracy. Well trained and ethical journalists have a major part in reporting truth and questioning the status quo. They play an important role in rebuilding Iraq into a more fair and equitable society.

Intikhab Adnan Mahmoud (48) is a qualified journalist and trainer who works with several civil society organisations. She works from her hometown of Baghdad and her experiences during the many years of conflict inform her sense of justice and fairness. Intikhab is married with four children and during the height of the sectarian violence the family had to flee as refugees to Syria where they spent eight years.

UN Women recognize the value of Iraqi women leaders to influence others to drive the necessary change that will move society towards greater democracy and equality. Support from international donors is crucial to train local civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-government organisations. UN Women's provide comparative advantage with expertise and technical skills to support Iraqi women's groups and empower them to drive the message among their own.

Intikhab spoke of the difficulties she and her family faced as a result of violence and conflict. "We faced many difficulties and challenges as refugees and then met similar challenges after we returned to our country," said Intikhab. "I needed guidance and self-development to acquire the information that would help develop my skills in the areas of journalism and civil society activism. I required these skills to help me prepare to conduct advocacy campaigns for women's issues. I gained those skills through my participation in several training courses held by the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum. This CSO facilitated Training of Trainers

and they also organised advocacy campaigns to support women's issues." Intikhab continued, "I acquired many skills through professional training and personal capacity building, keeping pace with modern technology when delivering training content. I became a member of the board of directors of the Women Journalists Forum where I was introduced to these courses."

Intikhab believes that she benefitted hugely from the courses, learning new skills and updated methodologies, adapting and modifying some of the training principles and methods she previously used. The participants were taught how to reach out to oppressed groups of women who struggle to develop and become independent. "We learned how to advocate for abused women and persons with disabilities and how to target those groups by initiating advocacy campaigns and by training the participants on how to design those campaigns for their own life paths."

Intikhab explained, "These courses made me think seriously about implementing special advocacy campaigns related to underage marriage, especially since I, myself, married at a young age and bore many responsibilities. Most of the participants are divorced women, underage married girls, or persons belonging to marginalized groups based on gender. I believe that we need more inclusivity for women with disabilities and provide them with training to enable them to implement advocacy campaigns themselves. These campaigns can help support their cause and the causes of women experiencing displacement, especially since I was a refugee myself."



The Atwar Bahjat Award 2023 honors 15 exceptional women journalists

Baghdad, 13 March 2023 - An International festival was launched by Iraqi Women Journalist Forum (IWJF) and in partnership with UN Women to honor 15 exceptional women journalists from various countries with the Atwar Bahjat Award 2023. Atwar Bahjat was an Iraqi journalists considered to be an icon for Arab journalists around the world and represented the strong voices of women and the courage and resilience of Iraqi women.

UN Women Representative, Dina Zorba, gave a moving speech where she thanked all the attendees for their support to Arab women Journalists and highlighted the importance of media in conveying messages and providing spaces for freedom of speech.

Many journalists from all around the Arab world from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Mauritania

and Egypt as well as famous celebrities including Elham Shaheen participated in the event.



Bringing hope to women in Iraq

Baghdad, 14 March 2023 - The decades of war in Iraq had a severe impact on women and girls whose lives were uprooted physically as they fled the terrors of violence. Many were left vulnerable, facing poverty, with little education and a poor social standing in the community. The custom of a bride price or dowry encouraged the practice of girl marriage and when families faced poverty it forced many to sell female children into marriage, frequently to much older men. The child brides were taken out of school, their lives were put in danger when they became pregnant as children and they also faced a life destined in a trap of poverty, without opportunities to fulfil their potential.

The high numbers of deaths during the war years left uncounted numbers of women as widows, struggling to support their families. This created huge stress for girls and women when dramatic changes were made to their perceived roles in society. Communities ostracised widows and left them and their families in isolation trying to survive to meet their daily needs.

Sakna Mahmoud knew all about this scenario. She spent her early childhood in her home village of Hassania, close to the city of Mosul. Sakna had no choice when as a 13-year-old child, her family arranged her marriage to a 22-year-old man, which put an end to her education. Now Sakna is now 32 and finds herself a widow with limited education.

When tribal conflict broke out in her region in 2017, insecurity and zero



resources with no income, job or qualifications, led Sakna to flee Khazer Camp for safety. She still lives there with her widowed mother who is ill, her sister and her own five children in the camp.

UN Women teamed up with Jinda Organization an organisation that work on the ground in the camp to support women like Sakna. UN Women provide the technical skills and knowledge to set up courses targeting vulnerable women. With funding support through UN Women donors, Jinda Organization facilitated a Women's Empowerment for Dispute Prevention and Response Strategies programme for women in Khazer Camp.

Sakna came across the course through word of mouth. Her sister and friends had come through the workshop and felt that Sakna would benefit. "I used to face many difficulties when dealing with people who are not in my circle, I just didn't have the confidence and felt really shy when I was presented with problems. I suffered many difficulties

living in the camp and didn't have any knowledge about how to solve my problems," she said. "I felt very frustrated and angry until I was introduced to the course. It taught me how to engage with people and provided me with the opportunity to role-play dealing with difficult people, which boosted my confidence."

Sakna saw the opportunity to develop herself and overcome her shyness. She is now spokesperson for the group and feels less isolated because she has met other women in similar situations. "I feel that my friends and I have really developed since we began learning," Sakna said. "Most of us have very low levels of education and it puts up barriers in society."

She concludes, "We need similar sessions to help develop life skills because we have multiple roles now as mothers, fathers and brothers combined. I am so grateful to my trainer in Hope Retrievers, and I look forward to taking part in similar courses in the future."

UNFPA teams up with Viber to raise awareness on early marriage and facilitate information-sharing



Baghdad, 16 March 2023 - UNFPA Iraq and Viber have officially launched a social media awareness campaign to promote information-sharing on early marriage in Iraq. The campaign seeks to engage young people in an easy and interactive approach, providing them with the necessary knowledge and information to make informed choices

about their lives.

The initiative is part of UNFPA's efforts to reduce early marriage in Iraq, which affects girls disproportionately, has a serious negative impact on their health, education, and prospects. Through the campaign, UNFPA and Viber aim to increase understanding of the risks associated with early marriage and to provide young people with resources and support to resist pressure to marry before they are ready.

"We are delighted to partner with Viber on this important initiative to raise awareness on early marriage and empower young people with the knowledge and resources they need to make informed choices about their lives," said Mr. Nestor Owomuhangi, UNFPA Representative in Iraq. "By leveraging the power of social media,

we can reach more young people than ever before and help them build a brighter future for themselves and their communities."

"We are excited to collaborate with UNFPA on this initiative to support young people in Iraq," said Atanas Raykov VP of Growth, Key Markets at Rakuten Viber. "We believe that by using our platform to share information and create interactive experiences, we can help raise awareness and promote positive change in the country."

The campaign will feature a series of social media posts and interactive content, including videos, still designs, a pack of Viber stickers and chatbots designed to engage and educate young people in Iraq. The content will be available on UNFPA Iraq's Channel on Viber's platform. Viber is one of the top communication apps in the region.

Renovated Women Protection Centre in Baghdad provides hope for gender-based violence survivors

Baghdad, 13 March 2023 – UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, opened a newly renovated women's protection centre in Baghdad on 11 March. The centre was upgraded and rehabilitated in partnership with UN-HABITAT with financial support from the French Government. The centre provides physical protection and a range of services to gender-based violence survivors.

Dr. Isam Abdul-lateef Al Tamimi, the Director General of the Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, emphasised on the Iraqi Government's strategy towards protecting survivors of gender-based violence and stated that this protection centre is a positive initiative to empower women and promote gender equality.

Speaking at the event, Mr Eric Chevallier, the French Ambassador to Iraq, highlighted the importance of supporting survivors of gender-based violence. "This is an important milestone for a project that we have been proudly supporting since December 2021. I would like to thank all the stakeholders for their engagement, especially UNFPA and UN_HABITAT and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The project has not only renovated the infrastructure of the Sulaihk Center

but has significantly improved the well-being of the young women and girls residing here, even though the project's ultimate goal is to help them leave this place and rebuild their lives." "In the coming months, I hope to take part in the inauguration of centres like this one, in Diwaniya, Mosul and Ramadi, which are also part of the project," he added.

"This centre will provide a safe and supportive environment for gender-based violence survivors in need of critical services and the care that they need to heal", said Mr Nestor Owomuhangi, UNFPA's Representative to Iraq. "In addition to establishing services for survivors, UNFPA will be working with the government to improve the policy environment that

prevents all forms of violence against women and girls."

UN-HABITAT Representative Mr Wael Al-Ashhab highlighted the good efforts that both agencies are working on to ensure high quality of renovation of a proper venue that provides a convenient and comfortable environment for vulnerable groups.

The women protection centre will provide survivors of gender-based violence with medical, psychosocial, legal and livelihood support to enable them to reintegrate into society. With support from the French Government, UNFPA in collaboration with UN-HABITAT is also rehabilitating another centre in Al-Diwaniyah and building two new centres in Ramadi and Mosul.



The Alliance for Sustainable Peace in Iraq launched in Baghdad

Baghdad, 13 March 2023 - UNDP is excited to announce the launch of the Alliance for Sustainable Peace in Iraq, formed after extensive consultations to better understand priorities for women, peace, and security in Iraq.

The Alliance for Sustainable Peace in Iraq is supported by UNDP and three women-led networks - Together (Ma'an) for Sustainability Network, the Iraqi Network for Resolution 1325 and the Tam Network for #Sustainable_Development. It aims to advance gender equality in crisis situations and empower women as key players in building lasting peace and

combating violent extremism. Over 100 representatives from

government and non-government sectors attended the launch event.



Empowering women at the Feminine Corner

Mosul, 27 March 2023 - Feminine Corner is women's cultural centre in Mosul, hosting a variety of reading, socializing, learning and discussion activities.

Through IOM's Enterprise Development Fund, the business received support that enabled them to move into a new building and purchase kitchen equipment and furniture, and

hire 5 new employees and continue its mission of empowering women.

“At Feminine Corner, you can find a variety of activities including a library and art gallery, a handmade bazaar for girls, weekly puppet shows and cinema for kids, a library for kids, puzzles and strategy games, as well as courses on drawing, music, calligraphy, and parenting.”



Empowering women through technical skills: a UNESCO TVET success story

Mosul, 30 March 2023 - In the war-torn city of Mosul, Iraq, the devastation of the long-lasting conflict had left the citizens in a state of despair. Homes and schools were destroyed, and thousands of people had lost their jobs. The future seemed bleak for the people living in the city.

Hope came in the form of UNESCO's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme funded by the European Union as part of the “Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities” project. UNESCO recognized the need for job creation and skills training in post-conflict areas and

implemented the TVET programme to provide education and training to the most vulnerable groups of youth and to equip them with the skills needed for the future.

The TVET programme in Mosul provided a range of courses that focused on the construction sector. This was in recognition of the fact that the demand for skilled workers in this sector is high and provided training courses in partnership with MoLSA and the Vocational Training center in Mosul in brickwork, concrete, carpentry, plumbing installation and electrical installation. The courses were

designed to be practical and hands-on, ensuring that trainees could put their newly acquired skills to work immediately.

The impact of the TVET programme was remarkable. Graduates were able to find jobs in the local community, and some even started their own businesses, contributing to the economic growth of the area. Moreover, the programme offered hope to the citizens of Mosul, giving them the chance to rebuild their lives and communities.

One graduate of the TVET programme, a young woman named Ghufuran Wa'ad Abdul Wahab, had lost her home in the conflict. She enrolled in the programme to learn brickwork work, and she was quickly able to find work in a local project. She used her earnings to rebuild her home and support her younger siblings, who were still in school.

Ghufuran's success story was just one of many that came out of the TVET programme in Mosul. The programme not only provided essential skills training but also restored hope and confidence in the people of the city.



WFP and WED discuss current and future projects

Baghdad, 2 April 2023 - WFP representative in Iraq, Mr. Mr. Ally Raza Qureshi, met with the Director General of the Iraqi Women's Empowerment Department, Dr. Yasra Karim Mohsen. They reviewed current joint projects and discussed future ones that could contribute to the empowerment of Iraqi women.



International Women's Day

SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: "Every woman in Iraq is a queen. And not only that, she is also quite often the mother of a queen."



Baghdad, 05 March 2023 - On the occasion of the International Women's Day, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended an event in Baghdad. Here is the text of her remarks:

"Good evening.

I am glad to be here.

And, I mean that.

It is a real honour to address you all, on the occasion of 8 March, the day I would say in our calendar year, when we reflect on achievements and recommit to the further advancement of women. And, of course, I am proud to be among you - so many of you have used your voice to champion women's causes and I am truly proud of that.

So, let us use this opportunity to reflect indeed. Where do things stand when it comes to women in Iraq today?

Those who know me are most likely aware of the fact that I'd like to think in terms of the glass being half full.

So, let me start with the October 2021 elections. Women took the opportunity presented by these elections - and they ran with it. They mobilized for their districts, surging past the 25%

minimum quota to make up the highest number of women in Iraq's parliament to date.

This was not an easy feat, as it is widely recognized that women face significant challenges when they seek to exercise their political and electoral rights. From, for instance, the escalation of harassment; intimidation; sexual, psychological and physical violence, to gender-biased scrutiny from the public and media. Unfortunately, this is the case in too many countries and regions across the world. Also in Iraq.

So yes, to all those women out there, I would say a job well done. At the same time, it is crystal clear that a lot of work lies ahead of us.

Not only to ensure the elimination of existing barriers to the realization by women of their political and electoral rights, but also to achieve a better gender balance in decision-making positions. I mean, nobody will deny that very few women end up as mayor or governor, let alone as head of state or government.

Meanwhile, the Government of Iraq has taken some steps to increase much-

needed protection for women in vulnerable positions, including those belonging to minority communities. I am glad to see movement in the area of retroactive compensation to Yazidi women under the 2021 Yazidi Survivors Law.

That said, also here, more - much more - work lies ahead. For instance, there are still too many gaps, in terms of both legislation and its enforcement, which women can slip through. The draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law not only needs passing, it also needs the budgetary and legal clout to make the difference.

Moreover, the harsh reality is that violence against women takes many subtle forms. Yes, certainly all kinds of overt and explicit threats, but also implicit threats of social exclusion and rejection.

All of this with the intention to degrade, demoralize or shame the women in question. It can happen at home, in the community, in public and online. And there is no denying it: threats - implicit or explicit - often precede physical or sexual violence.

The good news is that the October 2022 Government Program espouses a commitment to the empowerment, support and protection of women. And, of course, commitments are good. They are the first step. But what comes after is the part that really matters. That is where we - all of us in this room - need to be vigilant. We need to keep asking when and how this commitment will bring about action.

Speaking of action, women - in particular, young women I have to say - are taking it. Across this country, they are coming up with innovative community-driven solutions for some of

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “Every woman in Iraq is a queen. And not only that, she is also quite often the mother of a queen.” *(continued)*

the biggest existential crises facing Iraqi society. For example, I have met some of the amazing women working at shelters for survivors of violence here in Baghdad. Iraqi women continue to be involved in reconstructing areas liberated from DA'ESH, raising awareness of the risks posed by improvised explosive devices and rebuilding their communities.

Just last week I heard about a women-led project converting organic waste into fertilizer, thereby reducing pollution, generating revenue and contributing to Iraq's agricultural sector.

That's just great! And, it inspires so many people – including myself.

Nevertheless, there is always a but, as you could hear from the examples I used earlier on. In other words: further progress requires hard work. Even if one likes to think in terms of the glass being half full – like me, our optimism can only go so far, before it fades.

Distinguished guests, dear friends, The building blocks are down; that is good.

But a solid structure is – as of yet – lacking.

And to state the obvious: its construction requires more. A lot more. It requires more resources. And I hope we see some tangible allocations in Iraq's new budget.

It requires more mobilization and advocacy. Within this context, let me mention the lessons learned during the 2021 elections and the importance of applying these lessons to any future elections.

It requires more partnerships. Hearing directly from everyday Iraqi women is the best way to keep our finger on the pulse; to know what is really happening across the country.

It requires more representation. While I was glad to see the appointment of three women cabinet ministers (some of them here today), we are eagerly awaiting a further increase of women in decision-making positions.

It requires more political will, which will be needed in pushing through, for instance, the long-awaited draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law. I mention this law again because it is so important, and not only for women but also for the elderly and children – male or female – and anyone else who is at risk of experiencing violence within the family. And lastly, all of this requires courage. Because – frankly – it is not always easy to talk about or to act on women's empowerment today.

Having said this: we, women, are backed by a strong case.

I'm not only talking about the moral one. I mean, I don't think many men would disagree that safeguarding the rights and freedoms of half the population is, simply, the right thing to do.

There is also a legal case. And here I am, of course, referring to Iraq's 2005 Constitution – passed by popular referendum – enshrining the equal rights of women and men. not to mention the many national, regional and international laws and treaties.

And, there is a practical case – one that is getting harder to argue against. Research continues to demonstrate that having more women in decision-making positions is good, not just for women, but for everyone.

Studies show that society as a whole becomes more secure, more prosperous, as gender equality improves.[1] And, as Iraq continues to advance its own program of economic growth, I will also cite the World Bank, which has concluded that, on average, long-term value added to the economy per person would be almost 20% higher if gender employment gaps were closed.[2]

Now, as we are not here to discuss politics or argue over affiliation, I am pretty sure that all of us will share, value and/or appreciate the calls for respecting local contexts, cultures and traditions. At the same time, both the data and our lived experience, tell us that the world cannot face the many challenges that are looming without harnessing the potential of women. It is as simple as that. And, leveraging the enormous potential of women starts with protecting their rights and freedoms.

The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, who visited Iraq few days ago, has delivered this message time and again. And, it is the reason he has prioritized placing women and girls at the centre of “Our Common Agenda” – it is a sweeping initiative to tackle the biggest issues of our time. To be clear: our common agenda is an

initiative called for by all UN Member States, including Iraq.

Now dear friends, I look around today, at a room of accomplished, illustrious women.

I know that some, in particular some men, would accuse us of “preaching to the choir”, as the saying goes.

And, yes, let's face it – to see real change...we must convince, we must enlist...those who are not in the room. At the same time, I also think we need spaces like this one; to draw strength from our common efforts...to share lessons and experiences...to strategize on the way forward – on reaching those not already part of our “choir”.

When I was little girl, my mother told me time and again: if you can dream it, you can do it. And she was right. So yes, let us do it collectively.

Distinguished guests, dear friends, Tonight's theme reflects on the role of women in Mesopotamia. These women built entire cities; they marked history with their words; they led civilizations.

And we do not need to look far to see such examples in modern times. I'll mention the late Zaha Hadid, a globally distinguished architect; the late Zakia Haqqi, the first female judge in Iraq and the Arab region; and Alia Saleh Khalaf, also known as Umm Qusay, who put herself at great risk to save the lives of Iraqi soldiers from Da'esh and continues to inspire many.

These are just some of the countless women who stand up and call for change...who push for legislation...who speak truth to power, making the case for the advancement and empowerment of women in Iraq and beyond.

In conclusion, dear friends, and to once again pay tribute to tonight's theme, let me emphasize: every woman in Iraq is a queen. And not only that, she is also quite often the mother of a queen.

And, frankly, I am yet to meet the man who could say the very same thing.

Thank you.

[1] World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report (2017), as cited by European Partnership for Democracy

[2] World Bank in Gender Overview



On the eve of International Women's Day, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and UNICEF launch the National Girls' Network



Baghdad, 06 March 2023. – The Ministry of Youth and Sports and UNICEF, in partnership with YPEER, a youth-led organization, launched today the National Girls' Network, supported by Canada and other donors, aimed at promoting and spearheading the rights of girls across the country. The launch was attended by the UNICEF Regional Director, Ms. Adele Khodr, on official visit to Iraq, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr. Ahmed Al-Mubarqa, Ms. Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, and a representation of Iraqi girls. The new network aims to empower girls with skills and knowledge to lead advocacy actions at national level, as well as participate and contributing to key issues affecting children and young people in Iraq.

330 young people, mainly girls, will be trained to proactively influence decision-making processes impacting their lives. These actions will focus on

policies and programs that advance gender equality and support girls' empowerment to play a key role in decision-making processes among other national stakeholders.

"Girls make 50 percent of the talent in Iraq. Through the National Girls' Network, thousands of young girls and boys will be reached with a message to promote child rights and gender equality with concrete actions. The message we are sending today to the girls of Iraq is loud and clear: we need you to be part of the decisions that impact your daily life," said UNICEF Regional Director, Adele Khodr.

"With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Youth and Sports continues to implement the National Youth Vision 2030. The National Girls' Network will highlight the focus on girls and young women. By supporting their inclusion, we are building a more sustainable Iraq, in which girls contribute to a better and more inclusive future for

every girl," said, Mr. Ahmed Al-Mubarqa, Minister of Youth and Sports.

Nearly 60% of Iraq's population is under 25 years old, with an average age of 21. Due to political instability, social unrest, and economic issues, young people suffer high unemployment (over one out of four in 2020, according to statistics) and limited access to civic, social, and economic involvement opportunities. This exclusion disproportionately affects mainly females. The National Girls Network will act as a catalyst for empowering and nurturing Iraqi girls, especially the most vulnerable, to tackle these issues up front.

Through this network, UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth and Sports will address some of the key challenges faced by girls in Iraq, such as limited access to learning and skilling, early marriage, gender-based violence, the effect of climate change on girls, or girls' inclusion in the labor market, among other issues. Ultimately, the goal is to create a safer and more supportive environment for girls, where they will thrive and reach their full potential.

This National Network will be considered a key milestone toward girls' empowerment and participation in Iraq, aligned and contributing to the operationalization of the National Youth Vision 2030 by promoting child rights and gender equality with concrete actions.

UNITAD marks International Women's Day with a handicraft fair that commends the resilience and creativity of Yazidi women survivors

Baghdad, 7 March 2023 - UNITAD, in partnership with Free Yazidi Foundation's Enterprise and Training Center (ETC) hosted a fair for handicraft products of artisan Yazidi women survivors of the 2014 ISIL genocide in Sinjar.

Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher, together with Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, opened the fair, which is hosted at the UN Compound in Iraq as part of celebrating International Women's Day 2023 and commending the resilience and creativity of Yazidi women survivors.



UNITAD applauds the courage and resilience of women survivors of ISIL atrocities

Baghdad, 08 March 2023 - Marking International Women's Day 2023, UNITAD applauds the courage and resilience of women survivors of ISIL atrocities.

Here is Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher's message: "On International Women's Day this year, we at UNITAD salute the bravery

and perseverance of women and girls in the face of the atrocities and criminality inflicted on them and their families by ISIL.

We must not forget that we owe a lot to the courage of women survivors who came forward early on, and spoke up to reveal the magnitude of ISIL's criminality, which targeted women and

girls by some of the most gruesome acts we have seen in recent history.

To those women we say, your plight is not forgotten, neither is your courage. In the pursuit of accountability and justice, meeting your expectations remains our compass."

This year's IOM theme, Road to Equality: Bridging the Digital Gender Divide in Migration, is particularly relevant for Iraq, where women's access to technology remains limited

Baghdad, 08 March 2023 - Statement from Giorgi Gigauri, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, on International Women's Day 2023:

"International Women's Day is a time to celebrate the achievements of women and to highlight the challenges they face in achieving equality. This year's IOM theme, Road to Equality: Bridging the Digital Gender Divide in Migration, is particularly relevant for Iraq, where women's access to technology remains limited. Migrant women and women who have been displaced by conflict or climate change face even greater challenges in accessing technology and the opportunities it affords – these challenges can be counted among the many others they face, such as discrimination, exploitation and gender-based violence.

In recent years, technology has emerged as a game-changer in the

migration landscape in Iraq. With the rise of digital platforms and tools, people on the move can now access information and services more easily than ever before, and governments are better equipped to facilitate safe, dignified and regular migration and movement. For women in particular, technology has the potential to offer greater access to education, employment and financial services, and ultimately greater agency and self-determination over their lives and circumstances. However, for now we must recognize that the digital divide remains a significant barrier for many women, particularly those in rural or remote areas.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Migration both recognize the importance of gender equality in achieving their objectives. At IOM Iraq,

we are committed to supporting gender mainstreaming and promoting women's empowerment in our programming, including through our Enterprise Development Fund programme, which offers training and financial support to women entrepreneurs and those working in innovative fields like tech to start or grow their businesses.

As we work towards achieving these goals, it is essential that we focus on the needs and priorities of women, including by promoting equal opportunities to access and benefit from technology. We must ensure that women are included in decision-making processes and have access to the resources they need to thrive. Let us use International Women's Day as an opportunity to renew our commitment to gender equality in Iraq and around the world. We call on all stakeholders to join us in this important endeavor.

On International Women's Day, UN renews commitment to Iraqi women and girls as Baghdad named the Capital of Arab Women 2023

Baghdad, 08 March 2023 – On International Women's Day (IWD), the United Nations family in Iraq renews its commitment to support the rights of women and girls in Iraq, and to advocate for the acceleration of their empowerment as well as the strengthening of gender equality.

To mark the occasion in Iraq, the Council of Ministers Secretariat (ComSec)/Women Empowerment Directorate, under the auspices of H.E. Prime Minister Mohammed S. al-Sudani and in cooperation with UN agencies, launched a conference in conjunction with the declaration of Baghdad as the Capital of Arab Women for 2023, as decided by the Arab

Women's Committee.

At the conference, the government also launched its National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023-2030, with special focus on the importance of women's political participation, protection of women and girls, economic empowerment, and climate change. The national strategy is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325, constitutional principles of human rights, and the Government of Iraq's priority to empower women.

International Women's Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly as a global call to recognize the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women,

and an opportunity to advocate for their rights and empowerment.

This year's International Women's Day theme is "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality," recognizing how a gender-responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital education can help us to collectively achieve the Global Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Advancements in digital technology offer opportunities to address development and humanitarian challenges, including increasing participation of women and girls in leadership and political realms, as well as entrepreneurship.

"On this occasion, we congratulate Iraqi

On International Women's Day, UN renews commitment to Iraqi women and girls ... (continued)

women for the recent vote by the Council of Ministers to approve the National Strategy for Iraqi Women for the years 2023-2030. The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers contributed to its formulation and adoption of its axes through the participatory effort of the executive and legislative sectors, local organizations,

and supporting international bodies.” “The axes of the strategy focus on advancing the reality of Iraqi women and empowering them in various fields, such as social, political, economic, protection, participation, financial inclusion, and facing climate challenges. The government believes in the active and influential role that

women have accomplished and continue to achieve in building state institutions and maturing their democratic experience.” said Hameed al-Ghizi, Secretary-General of the Cabinet, on behalf of Prime Minister Mohammed Shiaa Al-Sudani and expressed these views.

On International Women's Day, the Ministry of Interior of the KRG and UNICEF, with support from USAID/BHA, launch 'Laaha', a virtual safe space platform for women and girls in Iraq



Erbil, 08 March 2023 – Marking International Women's Day (IWD), the Ministry of Interior of the KRG, jointly with UNICEF, and supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), officially launched 'Laaha' an online virtual safe space platform for girls and women to provide adolescent girls and women, including those most at risk, with a virtual space to access information, support and services in a way that is safe, culturally appropriate and accessible – even when they are unable to reach a physical safe space.

The launch event included speeches from participating organizations, multimedia presentation of the platform, and the presentation of the results of a special UNICEF U-Report poll on the situation of women and girls.

“Physical safe spaces are a lifeline for many girls and women around the world, giving them access to mental and physical health advice, relationship help and a range of services and support to promote their resilience. But access considerations mean that many can be cut off from vital services and support they can trust - right when they need it the most. UNICEF and the Ministry of Interior, thanks to USAID/BHA funding, and working

with women and girls, has created Laaha, a virtual safe space for them and ran by them”, said Adele Khodr, UNICEF's Regional Director for the MENA region.

“In this age, known as the age of technology. The KRG, in collaboration with its partners, has made good efforts to digitize services provided to women. We are gathered here today to announce another important project with the support of UNICEF and USAID and the US Consulate in Erbil, which is the launch of an electronic platform for women. Women can access specialized information in the fields of health, prevention, legal and various other services. Governments and organizations are brought together to make services available to women easily accessible to women in need.” Expressed Mr. Rebar Ahmed, the Minister of Interior of the KRG.

“USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance is committed to combatting the scourge of violence against women and girls in Iraq. In partnership with UNICEF, USAID/BHA continues to support GDCVAW and other government line ministries to build technical capacity and promote women and girls' rights to contribute to longer-term and more sustainable solutions to GBV in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region”,

stressed Ms. Carrie Denver, Acting Deputy Principal Officer for the US Consulate. “We commend the Kurdistan Regional Government for their support to the platform, and for working on tools supporting gender equality.”

An increasing number of women and girls across the globe require assistance; yet, in many emergency-affected locations - providing support is often complicated and unpredictable. In addition to exacerbating gender-based violence (GBV) risks, such situations also increase the barriers women and girls face to accessing services, due to cultural norms that restrict their mobility and access to lifesaving services; domestic responsibilities and cultural norms that keep them isolated in their homes; and/or protective approaches employed by their relatives in an attempt to shield them from violence. Across Iraq, threats and incidents of GBV against women and girls persist, particularly sexual violence, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, harassment, early and forced marriage. For International Women's Day, an online poll was organized via U-Report in Iraq. The poll showed that 48% of the respondents have faced barriers to accessing or using technology because of their gender. In addition, 80% stated that promoting greater gender diversity in tech industry, empowering women entrepreneurs, and creating safer online spaces for women can play a significant role in advancing gender quality.

The poll results also indicated that technology has impacted the life and work of women positively by increasing access to education and providing flexible work options, and by giving women and girls a platform to voice their opinions and advocate for their rights. In exchange, U-Reporters also

On International Women's Day, the Ministry of Interior of the KRG and UNICEF ... (continued)

referred to the potential negative impact of technology in women and girls' lives, including cyberbullying, online harassment, and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in media and advertising.

The content on Laaha has been designed for a range of literacy levels through formats including podcasts, videos, simple interactive games, and audio voicer for all text. The platform design also takes into account low bandwidth or unstable internet connections.

Laaha has been built by and for women and girls and has been community-led by NGOs, CSOs and youth-led organisations who have informed the content and functionalities, accounting for digital gender gap.

Content includes topics related to:

- Help and services: including types of services including case management, health, MHPSS, legal;

how to support other women and girls in your community; and how to directly access support or assistance

- Relationship & Rights: including decision making and trust; consent in relationships; consent in service provision; understanding types of violence including early marriage and intimate partner violence;

- Body & Health: including pregnancy and birth; menstruation and puberty; female and male anatomy;

- Safety: including information on staying safe online; community safety planning; setting boundaries.

In addition to Laaha, UNICEF continues to work with the Government of Federal Iraq and the KRG in establishing safe spaces for women and girls, as a key approach of reaching and providing them with key information, links to services, skills-building, peer connection, and support. In Iraq, UNICEF has eleven (11) CSO

implementing partners for providing services to women and girls, covering 9 governorates with the greatest needs and where there are significant gaps in services. Additionally, UNICEF supports increasing access to comprehensive, multi-sectorial GBV response services, embedded within the available governmental structures, such as health facilities as well as centres managed by GDCVAW in KRI and Family Protection Units in Federal Iraq. Prevention interventions, targeted at changing behaviour, social and gender norms that enable gender inequality and violence to continue, are also implemented through these partnerships and safe spaces. UNICEF utilizes both static women and girls' safe spaces and mobile team service provision approaches to increase access to services.

A woman of resilience: Dr Ekram's journey to rebuild

Mosul, 08 March 2023 - Dr Ekram Abdullah Bashir, the Ninewa Medical Fluids Factory manager in Mosul, has faced many challenges throughout her life. Still, she has never let them hold her back. Born and raised in Mosul, now 55, she has always been passionate about serving her community through her work.

However, when ISIL invaded the city in 2014, Dr Ekram's life was turned upside down.

Overcoming adversity

During the liberation from ISIL, Dr. Ekram was forced to flee with her ailing mother to a relative's house in Salah al-Din. While she was away from the factory and her official duties, she used the time to complete her PhD degree.

Despite the difficult circumstances, Dr. Ekram remained focused on her goals, knowing that her education would allow her to make an even greater impact in her community when she returned.

Returning home to rebuild

After the liberation in 2017, Dr. Ekram returned to Mosul, eager to resume her work at the Ninewa Medical Fluids Factory. "When I returned to Mosul after the liberation, I was heartbroken to see the damage done to our factory. But I knew that we had to rebuild, not just for ourselves, but for the entire community. Our factory symbolizes



hope, resilience, and the power of human ingenuity."

That's when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) stepped in to help through the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS).

Through the FFS's support, the factory was rehabilitated, and Dr. Ekram and her team were able to start producing medical fluids again. The factory provides essential medical supplies to hospitals and clinics throughout the region, helping to save countless lives.

As Dr. Ekram explains, "Our work is critical, and we take it very seriously. We know that every day, people's lives depend on the products we make here."

Overcoming gender barriers

As a female manager in a male-dominated industry, Dr Ekram

understands the importance of empowering women in the workplace. She works closely with her female employees, providing them the training and support they need to excel in their roles.

"I believe that women have a unique perspective and set of skills that can be incredibly valuable in any industry," Dr Ekram explains. "I work hard to create a supportive and inclusive environment where all my employees feel valued and respected."

Impacting local communities

The rehabilitation of the Ninewa Medical Fluids Factory has significantly impacted the local community, improving access to vital medical fluids for over 800,000 people and enhancing the capacity of the local health system to provide life-saving care. In addition, the factory's

On A woman of resilience: Dr Ekram's journey to rebuild *(continued)*

reopening has created over 300 local job opportunities, boosting economic resilience and supporting sustainable development in the region.

Today, the factory can produce over 5,000,000 bottles of 19 different medical fluids annually, such as saline solution, glucose solution and sodium bicarbonate. "By producing these vital medical supplies, we play a crucial role in improving access to healthcare and saving countless lives in the community," she adds.

A vision for growth and innovation

Dr Ekram's comprehensive plan for maintaining the Ninewa Medical Fluids Factory includes ongoing investments in technology and equipment and training programmes for her employees. She is committed to ensuring the factory remains operational for years, providing essential medical products for

generations.

"We want this factory to continue to be a vital part of our community, a source of pride for all of us, and a beacon of hope for the future," Dr Ekram shares. Dr Ekram's journey in Ninewa is a testament to the power of resilience, determination, and empowerment. "Our factory is more than just a place where we produce medical fluids. It is a hub of innovation and collaboration where our team works tirelessly to improve the quality and efficiency of our products. I am proud to lead such a dedicated and talented group."

Looking ahead

As Dr Ekram reflects on her journey and the challenges she has faced, she remains grateful for the support she has received from her community and her colleagues. She is proud to be where she is today, and she hopes that her story will inspire others to never

give up on their dreams.

"I am excited about the future of the factory. We have come a long way, but much work still needs to be done. I am committed to ensuring that we continue to innovate and grow, providing essential medical products for generations to come," she says.

About:

Since 2015, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization has worked with the Government of Iraq and local actors to ensure safe, dignified, and voluntary returns and to lay the foundation for successfully reintegrating displaced populations into the community. To date, UNDP has completed over 3,400 stabilization projects, including rehabilitating critical water and electrical infrastructure, schools, housing, and health facilities, all made possible with support from USAID.

Association of Women Judges commemorates International Day of Women Judges with the support of UN Iraq

Baghdad, 10 March 2023 – Iraq's Association of Women Judges commemorated the International Day of Women Judges for the first time in Iraq with the support of Honorable Chief Justice Faiq Zaidan and the United Nations in Iraq.

In 2021, with Resolution 75/274, the United Nations General Assembly declared 10 March as the International Day of Women Judges and encouraged that the day is commemorated through activities promoting the full and equal participation of women at all levels of the judiciary.

His Excellency, the Honorable Chief Justice of Iraq, Mr. Fa'iq Zaidan, spoke at the event and emphasized, "the Supreme Judicial Council has an



ambitious plan to increase the number of judges, particularly women judges, and the Council has already contributed to supporting, motivating and strengthening the role of women judges by ensuring they assume leadership roles in some of the key departments of the Judiciary."

During the commemoration, women judges from across Iraq further discussed how to strengthen their roles, responsibilities and contributions at all levels and across all sectors of Iraq's judiciary. They were also joined by the representatives of the Iraqi Parliament and the Government to explore legislative and policy measures to

address gender norms and enable gender equality in Iraq.

"Supporting women's advancement and promoting women justice leaders at all levels in the judiciary and across all types of cases is an investment in justice being better served and in equality before the law," said Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai. "The establishment of a dedicated Women Judge's Association in Iraq is an encouraging step to build gender equality within the Iraqi judiciary, paving the way for women across the nation to achieve equitable access to justice", he added.

During the “Women of Earth Festival”, the Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani confirmed the government’s commitment to women’s empowerment

Baghdad, 13 March 2023 - To celebrate International Women’s Day, the Prime Minister’s Office proudly sponsored the “Women of Earth Festival,” which was organized by Dr. Shahbaa Al-Azzawi, the Prime Minister’s Advisor for Youth, Sport and Women Affairs, in partnership with UN Women.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani commended Iraqi women for their leadership and constructive role in society and confirmed the government’s commitment to women’s empowerment.

In Prime Minister Al-Sudani’s speech during the “Women of Earth Festival” held in Baghdad this week to commemorate International Women’s Day, he emphasized that “the government’s vision and understanding of the role of women in society is present in the government program, based on the principle of equality and with a recognition that building community begins and ends with them.” He also assured Iraqi women that “we will keep protecting them from

all forms of violence and support all legislations, laws, and principles that advocate for women’s rights and protect women.”

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski also confirmed the essential role women play in societies. “We must focus on the needs of women and girls and ensure they are empowered in all sectors of life. That’s why gender equity and equality are important foreign policy and national security priorities for the United States,” stated Ambassador Romanowski in her remarks at the

festival.

UN Women Iraq Representative Dina Zorba underscored the vital role of Iraqi women. “Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that women’s political, economic and social participation increases the stability of societies and the sustainability of their security,” she said. “In this regard, Iraqi women have realized substantive achievements by holding 98 seats in the recent parliamentary elections, at a rate of 29.7%, which is one of the highest percentages of women’s representation regionally and globally.”



International Women’s Day celebrated in Erbil

Erbil, 13 March 2023 - Prime minister of the Kurdistan Region, Masrour Barzani attended the International Women’s Day event organized by The High Council of Women and Development (HCWD) and in partnership with UN Women in Erbil.

The event was attended by Khanzad Ahmad, Secretary general of the HCWD, Rebar Ahmed Khalid, Minister of Interior, Ricardo Rodriguez, Head of UNAMI Regional Office Erbil, Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative to Iraq as well as members of parliament, ministries, civil society and international community including Sweden, Italy and other UN Agencies.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between HCWD and UN Women to collaborate and partner on gender equality and women

empowerment initiatives including the collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data in the Kurdistan region.



DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality

Baghdad, 08 March 2023 - Ms. Muklah Hilal Naji, a Software Engineer, talks about her interest in technology and computer programming. “After graduation, I worked as a software engineer in many private local and international firms.

My interest in technology and programming helped me to organize my first programming competition and hence our first bootcamp in 2019 where

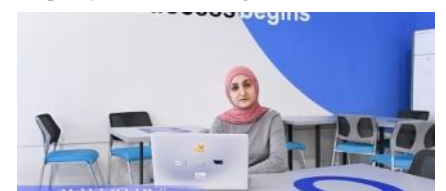
we trained 50 persons; we were always keen to have number of females not less than 40% trainees.

The next season, Corona has just erupted and effected many startups, but it helped us to expand training from Baghdad to other provinces as well because our courses went online, this season more than 1000 persons applied.”

Video produced by the UNAMI Public

Information Office / Mazin Al-Azzawi and Sanaa Kareem.

<https://youtu.be/D3oagLYwFFU>



UN-Habitat organized a 3-day computer literacy training for 10 female gardeners and workers

Mosul, 15 March 2023 - To celebrate International Women’s Day on 8 March 2023, and in line this year’s theme “DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality”, UN-Habitat organized a 3-day computer literacy training for 10 female gardeners and workers in the Community Hall of Al Yarmouk Park in partnership with Mosul Municipality.

“This course taught me how to use a computer, MS Word and MS PowerPoint and I am now able to offer better services to my customers” told us a trainee who owns a small photocopy centre in the neighborhood.

Digital technology is opening new doors for the global empowerment of women, girls and other marginalized groups. From gender-responsive digital learning to tech-facilitated sexual and



reproductive healthcare, the digital age represents an unprecedented opportunity to eliminate all forms of disparity and inequality.

This initiative is funded by the European Union in support of an inclusive digital transition. Through the EU’s digital strategy and

sustainable growth, the EU seeks to ensure women’s equal access to the untapped potential of digital technologies. This cannot be done without tackling the structural barriers underpinning the global gender digital divide and digital transition that is both fair and inclusive.



Baghdad, 20 March 2023 - NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for #WomenPeaceSecurity (WPS), Irene Fellin, NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) Ambassador Robert Dresen and advisors met with UNICEF Representative Sheema Sen Gupta jointly with UNAMI’s Chief of Staff, representing the DSRSG/RC/HC Ghulam Isaczai, UNAMI’s Senior Gender Advisor and OIC Human Rights Office. Discussions focused on issues relating to children affected by armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence.



Baghdad, 22 March 2023 - With the presence of Iraqi Minister of Youth and Sport, H.E. Ahmed Al-Mubarka, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone attended today the closing conference on the ‘Women’s Voices First’ project, organized by Peer Organization for Youth Development. The project is part of a program enhancing the role of youth and girls in decision-making in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

UNFPA organizes livelihood projects in 37 women centers across Iraq to create more equitable and sustainable societies for everyone

Baghdad, 5 April 2023 - Did you know that investing in women and girls is one of the best ways to promote sustainable development?

Gender equality is a critical aspect of sustainable development, as it recognizes the equal rights, opportunities, and contributions of all individuals, regardless of their gender.

With support of Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingsamarbete, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman and Canada in Iraq, UNFPA organises livelihood projects in 37 women centers across Iraq to create more equitable and sustainable societies for everyone.



UN Women and WFP organize Green Jobs Market inception workshops in Erbil



Erbil, 13 April 2023 - Green Jobs Market Inception Workshops in Erbil organized by UN Women in partnership with WFP between 10 -13

April 2023 as part of the project "Strengthen the resilience of vulnerable women impacted by crisis and climate change in Iraq". The project will be conducted in six locations: Baghdad, Erbil, Kirkuk, Mosul, Anbar and Thi Qar and aims to equip women with green skills and reducing disaster losses while focusing on generating economic, social, and environmental results that enhance vulnerable women wellbeing and resilience (including women refugees, IDPs, returnees, and from host communities) at the individual and communities' levels. The workshops have been attended by 74 participants over 4 full days, the two

workshops organized as part of the project inception phase and targeted Iraqi experts, Iraqi Women Activists, CSOs, Baghdad Chamber of Commerce, private sector, startups, women led entities, and representatives from Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Migration and Displacement, Provincial Councils of: Kirkuk, Ninawa, Anbar, Thi Qar in addition to representatives from Council of Ministries Secretary (COMSEC) and Higher Council for Women and Development in KRI, WFP and UN Women staff members.

Human Rights

On 2nd Anniversary of YSL: Yezidi survivors see first benefits of landmark reparations law

Mosul, 2 March 2023 – On March 1, the Directorate of Survivors Affairs (Directorate) distributed the first salary payments promised under the Yezidi Survivors Law (YSL) to survivors of Daesh's 2014 genocide against Iraq's Yezidi, Shabak, Turkmen and Christian communities – two years to the day since the Law's adoption by the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

The YSL established a framework for the provision of financial support and other forms of reparations to survivors. These include a monthly salary, a plot of land, access to health and mental health services and more. Since the application portal was launched in September of last year, 348 survivors have been verified and approved to receive reparations under the YSL.

During the distribution ceremony, which took place at the Directorate's office in Mosul and was attended by members of the YSL Committee including Director General for Survivors Affairs, Sarab Alias Barakat, 24 survivors (21 women and 3 men, all Yezidis) received debit cards that they can now use to withdraw

their monthly salaries from the Government. Such distributions will persist as the YSL Committee continues to review survivors' applications for benefits.

"We are very happy to mark the second anniversary of the passage of the YSL by handing out these debit cards to the first group of survivors, thereby enabling them to access their monthly salaries," said Director General Barakat. "The work of our Directorate is ongoing towards the full implementation of this landmark YSL, which stipulates reparations for survivors both male and female from the Yezidi, Shabak, Turkmen and Christian communities."

"This is the first tangible benefit that survivors are seeing from the law, an important moment in the reparations roll-out and larger transitional justice process in Iraq," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Mr. Giorgi Gigauri. "Just as we were extensively involved in the development of the application portal, IOM will continue to support the Government of Iraq to compensate survivors to the extent possible for the

losses – material, mental and physical – they sustained as a result of the genocide, and thereby better enable them to heal, return home and achieve durable solutions to their displacement."

"Today, I feel better because I am seeing a tangible step toward the implementation of the YSL," said Manal, a survivor from Sinjar and member of the Survivors Voices Network. "As I receive this card, I remember everything that we survivors went through at the hands of Daesh, and all the years waiting for justice. I am happy to be here today and witness this support from our government. We hope that this will be followed by the implementation of the rest of the reparations provided for in the law."

IOM continues to work with the Directorate to strengthen its capacity to implement the YSL, including through capacity building, technical guidance, material assistance and outreach among survivors, affected communities and the general public. This programming is made possible by support from the governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Germany, Australia and the United Kingdom, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Survivors can apply to receive benefits under the YSL by submitting an application directly through the Directorate's online portal, or by scheduling an in-person meeting at the Directorate's main office in Mosul or any of its branch office locations and submitting an application during the meeting with the Directorate's staff.



The Government of Iraq, supported by the United Nations, strengthens its commitment to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed forces



Baghdad, 30 March 2023 – The Action Plan signed today commits the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the National Committee for the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) to put in place response and prevention mechanisms within the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to strengthen the existing child protection framework.

This framework is supported by UNICEF and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) as co-chairs of the CAAC Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, in cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC).

Among other steps to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the PMF, the Action Plan includes measures to strengthen age verification, in addition to awareness raising campaigns to prevent child recruitment. The plan also supports the adoption of the necessary legislation and administrative measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children and promptly investigate any

allegation of recruitment and use of children.

"The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, as representatives of the Government of Iraq, along with the National Committee for the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, would like to express its commitment to implement the plan to serve children exposed to recruitment in armed conflict, in order to ensure Iraq's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as with the protocols signed by the Iraqi government," said the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Ahmed Jassim Al-Asadi. "While we continue to work on implementing the national child protection policy as part of the Government program, we are also supporting the Child Protection Law, pending Parliament ratification."

"The Action Plan reflects the commitment of the Government of Iraq, working in partnership with the United Nations, to ensure the protection of all children affected by conflict in Iraq", said Claudio Cordone, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral

Assistance.

"The signing of the Action Plan is a key step on the journey to ensure the protection of children in Iraq and to avoid their recruitment and use by armed forces", said UNICEF Representative in Iraq, Sheema SenGupta. "UNICEF will continue to support the Government of Iraq on the full implementation of the Action Plan and continue working with all parties for the protection and wellbeing of children in Iraq."

The Action Plan is a follow-up to the call by the Security Council to parties to the conflict listed in the annex of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict report to strengthen the protection of children and to prepare concrete time-bound Action Plans in close cooperation with the United Nations Country Task Force to halt recruitment and use of children.

All measures listed under this agreement fall under the obligations of Iraq under its national legislation, as well as under International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child (since 1994) and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (since 2008) and other commitments.

"I welcome this long awaited and positive outcome of the engagement between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations and stand ready to assist the Government towards its full implementation", said Virginia Gamba, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

UNAMI HRO briefs students on UNAMI's human rights monitoring and reporting

Erbil, 13 April 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office, in coordination with Salahadin University (SU) College of Law in Erbil, organized a briefing session with a particular focus on human rights aspects of the Mission's work. Eighty-five students and three professors (in two groups) from the College of Law of SU participated in the session. The students were briefed on UNAMI's human rights monitoring and reporting, focusing on priority areas of work in the Kurdistan Region, including civic space, women rights and the administration of

justice among other topics. Participants discussed different avenues of advocacy on how to efficiently promote

accountability, strengthen the rule of law, and protect human rights in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq.



United Nations Protection Mechanisms related to minorities discussed at a workshop in Dohuk

Dohuk, 26 April 2023 – Twenty-seven representatives of civil society organizations belonging to minority communities in Duhok and Nineveh governorates participated in a two-day workshop aimed at enhancing their understanding of United Nations Protection Mechanisms related to minorities, including the Universal Periodic Review, the Special Procedures and the Treaty Monitoring Bodies of the United Nations. Organized by UNAMI's Human Rights Office, the workshop included discussions about the role of civil society actors on how to work most effectively with these mechanisms, in order to successfully contribute to the implementation of human rights.



Living with Disabilities

UNFPA provides psychosocial support to adolescents with disability

Mosul, 28 February 2023 - Do you know that UNFPA with the support of Embassy of Finland in Baghdad - Suomen suurlähetystö Baghdad provides vital reproductive health services to adolescents with disabilities in Mosul? To ensure that no one is left behind, regardless of their abilities, UNFPA provides psychosocial support to adolescents with disability through outreach activities in the most rural areas. Together, we can work towards a world where everyone has access to the healthcare they need to thrive.



Finnish Embassy paid a visit to the UNFPA-supported Al-Qosh youth centre

Baghdad, 7 March 2023 - Today, the Finnish Embassy paid a visit to the UNFPA-supported Al-Qosh youth centre that has undergone transformation to become more accessible and welcoming to adolescents and youth with disabilities with the support of Embassy of Finland in Baghdad - Suomen suurlähetystö Baghdad.

Following the renovations, the centers will continue to offer activities such as sports, arts, and vocational training. These activities not only provide opportunities for personal growth and development but also foster social inclusion and break down barriers between individuals with and without disabilities.



UNICEF and Government of Iraq take an important step towards a more inclusive Iraq

Baghdad, 11 March 2023 - Persons with disabilities and special needs have the right to special protection and laws to grow and thrive. Last Thursday, UNICEF and the Government of Iraq, with support from Germany through the KfW Development Bank, held a brainstorming session to amend the Law of Care for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs No. 38 of 2013.

This is an important step towards a more inclusive Iraq.

#ForEveryChild, a future.



UNICEF Iraq commemorates World Autism Day

Basra, 2 April 2023 - This World Autism Day, let's remember the positive impact of early interventions and inclusive education for children with autism spectrum disorders.

Today, children and their families joined UNICEF and the Al-Rajaa Institute in Basra for a World Autism Day awareness event. Let's all do our part and create a more understanding and accepting world #ForEveryChild.



#ForEveryChild, a future

Baghdad, 3 April 2023 - "Maths is my favourite subject in class," says Ruqayya, 15, while solving a maths question in class at a community-led school – Al Woujdan School for Accelerated Learning. Ruqayya never went to school since she had phocomelia syndrome, which is a rare birth defect characterized by severe malformation of the extremities.

Ruqayya lives with her grandparents.

Following the UNICEF-supported 2022 back-to-learning campaign, funded by Germany, through KfW Development Bank Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), her grandmother Nidal encouraged her to return to school, where she can complete two classes in one year.

#ForEveryChild, a future.



In Mosul, mothers and daughters who have disabilities participates in recreational and learning sessions together

Mosul, 16 April 2023 - In Mosul, mothers and daughters who have disabilities participates in recreational and learning sessions together. As primary caregivers, parents play an important role in supporting their adolescents' growth and development. UNFPA with support from Embassy of Finland in Baghdad regularly organize activities for adolescents with disabilities and their parents to support their holistic development and promote their inclusion in society.



UNESCO Iraq and the Iraqi Higher Judicial Council participated at the UNESCO global conference “Internet for Trust”

Paris/Baghdad, 24 February 2023 –

On 21 February, the opening session of the UNESCO Global Conference "Internet for Trust" was held. Over 3000 representatives of governments, regulatory bodies, digital companies, academia and civil society gathered at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris for this first global conference to address the threats to information integrity and freedom of expression posed by social media platforms.

Participants in the conference come from all regions of the world. Among the notable contributors were the Nobel Peace Prize-winning journalist Maria Ressa, the Pulitzer prize-winning investigative journalist Julia Angwin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications Melissa Fleming, Irene Khan the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Expression, Daniel Motaung and Christopher Wylie, both Facebook Whistleblowers, and Roberto Barroso, the Brazilian Supreme Court Justice.



Representatives of UNESCO Iraq and the Iraqi Higher Judicial Council participated at this conference held from February 21-24 in Paris.

During the days of the conference, the Iraqi judiciary representative held side-by-side meetings with the agents and managers of global social media

platforms and internet service providers to agree on initial forms of cooperation that may contribute to regulating the reality of digital use in Iraq, ensuring that bad content is dealt with within platform policies and hacking without reaching the level of litigation and legal prosecution.

UNESCO and FreePressUnlimited hold important meetings in Baghdad



Baghdad, 14 March 2023 - The Communication and Information sector of UNESCO Iraq Office, and the Dutch FreePressUnlimited FPU team met in Baghdad with Judge Amer Hassan, the judge of the Publication and Media Court, and a representative of the High Judicial Council to discuss the specifics of their joint cooperation on the project “Breaking the Silence: on governmental

accountability and judiciary follow up on safety of journalists and ending impunity II”, that is funded by the Embassy of Netherlands in Iraq. One of the main topics that was covered in this meeting was how to carry out the project's activities to set up a helpline for Iraqi female journalists as well as to install a safety mechanism for journalists in five Iraqi media

institutions to serve as an example. Other major topics included freedom of expression, information crimes, and the right to access information.

The Iraqi judiciary, expressed its willingness to collaborate, provide the required resources and clearances for this project, and move forward with the judge-training initiatives already agreed upon with UNESCO.

A number of trainings and initiatives aimed at the 18 publishing and media courts spread across the Iraqi governorates will be put into action this year, along with the release of a special handbook for journalists and judges of free speech. In contrast, UNESCO will collaborate with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and the Journalists Syndicate to ensure more latitude when it comes to handling freedom of speech on the Internet and through social media.

Investigative journalism and CSO investigative reporting training held

Baghdad, 12 April 2023 - 26 civil society activists and journalists from across Iraq have received training on investigative journalism and CSO investigative reporting. This initiative aims to

improve the ability of civil society and media organizations to investigate and report on cases of corruption, while fostering constructive dialogue with public institutions detecting,

investigating and trying corruption cases. This training was implemented by UNDP Iraq with generous support from the European Union.

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “What you do not wish upon yourself, extend not to others.”



Erbil, 27 April 2023 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today the launch of Rudaw media network Bestoon talk show. Here is the text of her remarks:

“Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be here today.

To be clear: the United Nations is not in the business of promoting individual television shows. That said, we would not pass up an excellent opportunity to elaborate on the importance of the freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions - and to express these aloud.

Now - when I first learned about this initiative, it reminded me of a Dutch television show: College Tour, it is called. College Tour follows the concept of a townhall meeting, featuring one guest per episode.

The show is hosted by an anchor, but most questions come from the audience: a few hundred students. The guest in question is a high-profile figure.

This person could be a lawyer, a musician, a business executive, a writer, an activist, a sportstar, an actor...or, as is the case here, a politician, an authority figure, a government official or another decision-maker.

And importantly, the questions posed by the students are not pre-screened and there is no censorship.

Why do I appreciate such a concept? Because it gives people – young people – a chance to engage directly with all kinds of leaders. And frankly, any platform supporting such engagement is to be welcomed.

Also, such a platform could shape professional journalism, boost the freedom of expression and lead, for both sides, to a better understanding of certain struggles, issues and complexities.

So, when Bestoon and I ran into each other, and he spontaneously told me about his concept, I could not help but be enthusiastic.

First of all, it is perfectly healthy to have a public exchange on decisions and actions impacting public life. Secondly, it is the younger generation that will lead all of us in the future. And whether some of my generation-fellows like it or not: that future is near.

Ladies and gentlemen, I said this before, but I will happily repeat it today: as a former European and national politician and decision-maker, I can tell you from experience that democracy is - at times - painstaking business.

And also very true is the fact that sustainable democratic societies are the opposite of overnight miracles – they require immense patience and an unwavering willingness to compromise. Inevitably, the democratic process must be given time to truly take root.

And as this happens, of course, the interplay between opposition and coalition, the art of parliamentary scrutiny, and the exchange between decision-makers and civil society, as well as, for instance, the formation of parties and coalitions, must be allowed to function.

Now - part and parcel of all this (no surprises here) are: constant grassroots outreach, public dialogue, and concrete actions, which demonstrate that people, communities and components are listened to.

And while it is the responsibility of the leadership to guide and lead outreach and to unify opposing interests, it is the responsibility of every citizen to recognize and accept the fact that balancing multiple opinions and interests requires constant

compromise.

It is actually quite simple: for decision-makers, politicians and citizens alike, no one can colonize the moral high ground, and no one has a monopoly on wisdom. And to service all citizens in the best way possible, it is essential that a plethora of different voices are being heard. A vibrant and healthy debate is simply essential, at all times.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we all know, the freedom of expression is a fundamental pillar of any democratic society.

It is critical in producing new and innovative ideas. It is a tool for accountability, for letting leaders know when their policies or practices are not having the intended effect, for enabling institutions to adapt and thus to flourish.

So let me emphasize here: silencing, obstructing, dismissing or undermining public discourse achieves two things only: it tarnishes the image of the State and erodes public trust.

A free media is another powerful driver of education and learning. It could shine light into dark corners, allowing us to discover new facts, new perspectives, and new ways of seeing things.

That said, it is well known that, throughout the country, most media outlets have, in one way or another, a link to a party, a politician, a businessperson or a leader. So, if you allow me, I wish to underline the significance of the word ‘free’ once more.

And let’s not forget about the importance of, for example, independent bloggers, columnists, activists, researchers and investigative journalists. They do not only challenge us but also enrich our day-to-day thinking and actions.

Let’s face it: the annals of time - shaped for centuries by philosophers, academics and poets - have now been added to by a new generation of thinkers and speakers, many of whom leverage cutting-edge technology to reach diverse audiences.

And social media is, of course, a tool that can distribute content in a faster and more accessible way than ever before. And not only that: it also creates tremendous opportunities for any politician or decision-maker. Never before has it been so easy to enter into a direct exchange with constituents and citizens. Never before has it been so simple to connect, to engage, to explain

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “What you do not wish upon yourself, extend not to others.” *(continued)*

and to listen.

And yes, as is the case with any tool, there is a downside as well. Trolling campaigns, for instance. Also, fake accounts are easily created, and false information can be quickly disseminated to thousands and thousands of people – as is the case with unnecessarily painful or nasty comments intended to degrade, demoralize or shame a person.

Trust me, again from experience, and particularly as a woman in the public eye, I know all about it. Social media can be brutal.

Having said this, filing a lawsuit when I read an insulting tweet or an article that criticizes me or our policies does not come to mind. We can disagree, including on the tone of voice or language used. But at the end of the day, there is no accounting for taste. And, differences – sometimes even clashes – in opinion and approach ultimately make our society stronger.

So - for any public figure, I have one piece of advice: develop a thick skin. If you meet upon criticism and dissent, choose dialogue over retribution.

And for those who apparently find it difficult to express themselves in a respectful way, my advice is: what you do not wish upon yourself, extend not to others.

Ladies and gentlemen, going back to the freedom of expression as a

fundamental pillar of any democratic society: today's reality is concerning.

Across the country – and increasingly so – we see use of various legislative, administrative and other ostensibly legal means to stifle dissent. Or worse. Violence, intimidation and threats to suppress opinions at variance with those commonly or officially held.

Now, that is not to say that there can be no limitations on the freedom of speech. Of course, while enjoying the freedom of speech, one also has the duty to behave responsibly and to respect the rights of others.

And sometimes there are valid reasons for limitations based on well-defined grounds. But at all times, the relevant public authority must show that the restriction is proportionate and provided for by law.

And yes, when laws are used, not to protect, but to silence, the freedom of speech comes under grave threat. As does, therefore, one of the most fundamental building blocks of a democratic society.

Now, the good news is that there is always an opportunity to correct course.

Human rights, including the right to the freedom of expression, are enshrined explicitly in the Constitution of Iraq.

Both the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government have

adopted action plans on human rights. And both programs set out commitments to strengthen the protection of these rights.

Now - we are eagerly waiting for these commitments to translate into concrete actions, including the advancement of free speech as the common denominator of public and civic engagement throughout Iraq.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion – let me reiterate: any public dialogue without censorship or prescreening of questions empowers people to share their opinions freely and loudly. This is something we can only applaud.

And I truly hope that politicians and authorities do not shy away from such an opportunity.

In other words, I sincerely hope that they will accept the invitation to participate in any respectful televised discussion on actions and decisions impacting public life.

We need young people to inspire and to challenge us - and to do so without fear. The current generation of leaders stand to learn a great deal from them. That goes for me as well, by the way. We need to listen to those who will run the country tomorrow.

Dear Bestoon, I wish you all the best with this new and exciting space for dialogue.

Thank you.”

UNITAD

Special Adviser Christian Ritscher visited Taza Khurmatu in Kirkuk



Kirkuk, 25 February 2023 - UNITAD has been intensifying its investigations into ISIL's development and deployment of chemical and biological weapons through cooperation with competent Iraqi authorities and the

impacted community.

On 25 February, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher visited Taza Khurmatu in Kirkuk, while the town prepares to mark the anniversary of the ISIL attacks during which

prohibited chemical weapons were used against its population and agricultural areas in March 2016.

Special Adviser Ritscher and his accompanying team were received by the Mayor of Taza Khurmatu, Mr. Hussein Adel, and Judge Ali Noaman, Investigative Judge, Taza Investigation Court, as well as several officials, community leaders and survivors, who presented more information on the chemical attack and the long-term repercussions of this atrocious crime on Iraqi civilians in the area.

Special Adviser Ritscher and the team had the opportunity to meet with a group of victims, consisting of the parents of five-year-old Fatimah who died shortly after the attack, and other survivors who lost their children and loved ones, learning more about what they went through, and the

SA Christian Ritscher visited Taza Khurmatu in Kirkuk *(continued)*

implications that they still endure until today, including severe illnesses and social marginalization.

The Special Adviser expressed his compassion to the survivors and reassured them that this line of investigation into ISIL development and deployment of chemical weapons is one of UNITAD's investigative priorities.

During the visit, Special Adviser Ritscher and the team also accompanied Brig. Gen. Mahmoud

Jassem Ali and LTC Raed Nimah Ahmed of the Civil Defense Directorate (CBRN) to two sites where ISIL chemical projectiles hit inside and in the vicinity of civilian homes.

Moreover, Special Adviser Ritscher visited Taza Khurmatu Police Station, where he was welcomed by Mr. Ayoub Shawkat, Chief of the Police Station and was shown the documents of the Taza Khurmatu Investigation Court pertaining to the attacks and their victims. UNITAD is planning to

support the digitization of those documents in cooperation with the Court soon.

UNITAD will exert all effort in its investigations towards the common goal of bringing ISIL perpetrators to justice through evidence-based trials and on charges of international crimes, so that the world hears the voice of the victims including those of Taza Khurmatu and all affected Iraqi communities who suffered from ISIL's criminality.

Anniversary of Taza Khurmatu attack



Baghdad, 8 March 2023 - On March 8, 2016, the predominantly Shia Turkmen subdistrict of Taza Khurmatu in Kirkuk was attacked in what is believed to be the first use of chemical weapons by ISIL.

At least 42 projectiles hit residential neighborhoods and agricultural fields to the south of the subdistrict, including at least 27 that were loaded with chemical weapons. Scientific testing of the affected area identified the presence of three toxic chemicals classified as sulfur mustard and prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In 2021, UNITAD initiated its investigations into ISIL's development and use of chemical and biological

weapons in Iraq, with the attack against Taza Khurmatu as an emblematic attack and primary line of inquiry.

So far, evidence has shown that more than 6000 residents of Taza Khurmatu were treated for injuries as a result of the chemical weapon attack on 8 March 2016, including two children who died within days of exposure.

In addition to the two deceased, thousands of residents sought treatment for symptoms consistent with exposure to a blistering agent in the days and weeks following the attack. Until today, many residents continue to suffer from chronic and ongoing symptoms and illnesses, indicating longer-term harms as a

result of exposure to chemical weapons. UNITAD's investigation has progressed significantly to include further lines of inquiry, seeking to obtain a full understanding of ISIL's development and use of chemical weapons, including command and control, physical infrastructure, research and development, manufacturing and production, procurement and financing, and deployment.

UNITAD investigators and experts are continuously engaged with the affected community in Taza Khurmatu, as well as the first responders and medical practitioners who have witnessed the attack. The Team also works closely with competent investigative judges and is supporting the digitization of documents relevant to this attack.

Most recently, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and a senior team of UNITAD visited Taza Khurmatu and met with several survivors and heard their stories. He reiterated that UNITAD will exert all effort in its investigations towards the common goal of bringing ISIL perpetrators to justice through evidence-based trials and on charges of international crimes, so that the world hears the voice of the victims including those of Taza Khurmatu and all affected Iraqi communities who suffered from ISIL's criminality.

An intensive training course for specialized investigators on digital forensics held

Baghdad, 26 February 2023 – UNITAD Forensic Science Unit conducted a 5-day intensive training course for specialized investigators on digital forensics. This capacity building initiative was facilitated by the Supreme Judicial Council and was conducted at Al-Karkh First Investigative Court.

By transferring knowledge and

equipment to our Iraqi forensic counterparts, UNITAD is supporting the collection and analysis of digital evidence in relation to ISIL international crimes committed in Iraq. This capacity building was made available thanks to the support of Denmark.



UNITAD marks two years of the full operation of its forensic laboratory

Baghdad, 1 March 2023 - Evidence analysis and preservation in line with international standards are crucial aspects to ensure accountability for ISIL international crimes, in line with UNITAD's mandate. To support accountability processes for such international crimes, regardless of when they may take place, UNITAD is required to dedicate resources and capacities of the highest standards to ensure the effective preservation and analysis of huge volumes of information that will be needed to prosecute members of ISIL, even after tens of years have passed.

Today, UNITAD marks two years of the full operation of its forensic laboratory. Originally founded thanks to the generous support of the United States and the United Kingdom, this dedicated space enables UNITAD's forensic experts to deploy the tools and techniques necessary to extract digital evidence, in line with international



standards and while ensuring its integral chain of custody and admissibility before competent courts. The forensic laboratory permits retrieval and analysis of data through a wide range of sources, covering the spectrum of information available on ISIL crimes, allowing UNITAD experts to decipher, analyze and authenticate

the collected data.

Furthermore, this laboratory is used by UNITAD's digital forensic experts as a training space, where practical capacity building sessions were organized for Iraqi counterparts on battlefield digital forensics, including on the collection of evidence as well as retrieving and analyzing deleted data.

Challenges to investigating ISIL gender-based crimes discussed in the 5th thematic roundtable of the UNITAD-NGO dialogue forum

Baghdad, 01 March 2023 - The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) convened the Fifth Thematic Roundtable of the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum titled "Towards holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for international crimes: Investigating Gender-based Crimes", bringing together 50 participants from civil society organizations and UNITAD team members, to reflect on the work that has been done so far in investigating ISIL's gender-based crimes, and exchange thoughts and best practices to strengthen UNITAD's cooperation with the NGO community in this area.

On behalf of Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher, Ms. Defne Akca, Chief of Office of Field Investigations, delivered the opening remarks for this roundtable, emphasizing the importance of investigating gender-based crimes as a cross-cutting theme while looking into ISIL's international crimes against various communities in Iraq, including crimes against Yazidi, Christians and Shia Turkmen. "It is important to highlight that ISIL committed gender-based violence and crimes against children of all communities. Over the past months, UNITAD has expanded its investigations into ISIL's use of child soldiers from different communities. This includes Yazidi and Shia Turkmen boys, and also Sunni boys who were forced into conscription. The scale of ISIL's crimes

impacted a wide range of communities in Iraq, and UNITAD's lines of investigations cover the breadth of crimes committed against all impacted communities", she emphasized.

Ms. Maria Pimentel Biscaia, Head of UNITAD Gender and Children Crimes Unit (GCU) gave an overview of the role of GCU in UNITAD's investigations and what has been achieved so far, including in analyzing the patterns of sexual and gender-based crimes committed by ISIL against women and girls. She also presented challenges facing investigations into such crimes, especially those pertaining to interviewing survivors, while highlighting UNITAD's approaches aiming at overcoming such challenges, setting best practices through the Team's trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches, as well as measures to minimize the risk of re-traumatization by ensuring psychosocial support to witnesses before and during interviews.

Ms. Gergana Yancheva, Investigator at the United Nations, took part in the event remotely, and presented a comparative angle from her experiences investigating sexual and gender-based crimes internationally, stressing that fear of social stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of proper spaces for interviewing victims remain some of the common challenges across different countries when it comes to investigating such crimes. She presented some best practices in dealing with these challenges, including advocacy for justice and against stigmatization of victims.

Ms. Hajir Abbas, Transitional Justice Researcher and Consultant provided insights from her experience on the challenges facing Iraqi survivors in investigative processes, whether for accountability purposes or for other reparative or restorative justice purposes, mentioning also the Yazidi Survivors Law, its drafting and mechanisms for its implementation. She further explained some of the challenges which the survivors face in Iraq, including security and privacy concerns, the spread of misinformation, survivors' fatigue, and the lack of faith in the justice process. She presented recommendations to deal with such challenges, including the importance of effective coordination among NGOs.

Several NGO representatives discussed various challenges that they face while working with survivors. More common were the fear of stigmatization, the need for improvements on the Survivors Law, and the need for tangible support to survivors in justice, protection, and reparations processes.

The UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum was launched in December 2020, with the aim of serving as a platform that brings together all relevant international and Iraqi NGOs for regular collaboration, exchange of ideas and best practices, as well as exploring areas for enhancing cooperation. To learn more about the Forum you may visit UNITAD official website.





Baghdad, 28 February 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met with H.E. **Éric Chevallier**, French Ambassador to Iraq. They discussed developments in UNITAD's investigations, especially into ISIL crimes against the Christian community and ISIL's use of Chemical Weapons. They also discussed mutual cooperation in support of accountability for ISIL international crimes. Special Adviser Ritscher expressed thanks to France for its ongoing strong support to the work of UNITAD.



Erbil, 12 March 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet with **Dr. Dindar Zebari** KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy and OCIA team in Erbil, to discuss ongoing operational cooperation with UNITAD.



Dohuk, 12 March 2023 - During her visit to Iraq, Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** briefed H.E. **Annalena Baerbock**, German Foreign Minister, on UNITAD's work to ensure accountability and justice for ISIL international crimes, and was reassured by Germany's commitment to support justice opportunities in Iraq and globally.

While in Dohuk, Special Adviser Ritscher also discussed with Judge Aymen Mostafa, the latest updates on the work of the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence (CIGE), and ongoing cooperation with UNITAD.



Baghdad, 28 March 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** welcomed **Judge Imad Al-Jabiri**, Head of Appeal Court at Al-Rusafa, at UNITAD headquarters in Baghdad, discussing ongoing cooperation on multiple lines of investigation into ISIL international crimes including the massacre at Tikrit Air Academy (also known as Camp Speicher), and ISIL financial crimes. They also discussed UNITAD's support, funded by the EU, in the digitization of millions of ISIL related records in the court's custody.



Baghdad, 2 April 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to welcome H.E. **Prashant Pise**, Ambassador of India to Iraq at UNITAD headquarters in Baghdad. They discussed UNITAD's work and India's support to the Team's key investigations into ISIL Chemical Weapons (CWs) Program and destruction of Iraqi cultural heritage. Special Adviser Ritscher expressed his gratitude for India's continuous support, and briefed on recent progress in the Team's investigations, especially on ISIL's deployment of CWs in Taza Khurmatu, which Ambassador Pise found very impressive, reiterating India's support for the Team's work.



Baghdad, 3 April 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** welcomed at UNITAD headquarters, H.E. **Mr. Zaidan Khalaf**, Prime Minister's Advisor for Human Rights and accompanying delegation. Special Adviser Ritscher briefed on UNITAD's work, and both discussed progress in various lines of UNITAD's investigations, including ISIL crimes in Sinjar, and the way forward towards prosecuting ISIL perpetrators for international crimes in Iraq.

UNITAD provides a range of essential forensic equipment to the Medico-Legal Directorate

Baghdad, 12 March 2023 - As part of its ongoing cooperation with the Government of Iraq, UNITAD provided a range of essential forensic equipment to the Medico-Legal Directorate, including laboratory consumables and personal protective equipment (PPE) for daily use during their work in anthropology and forensic DNA laboratories.



UNITAD provided digital forensics equipment to the forensics lab of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (ICTS)



Baghdad, 13 March 2023 - Last week, UNITAD provided digital forensics equipment to the forensics lab of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (ICTS). This contribution, which was facilitated by the National Security Advisory, is part of a wider effort to build capacity and knowledge of Iraqi counterparts towards the common goal of pursuing accountability for ISIL international crimes. UNITAD forensic experts ensured complete delivery of the equipment and

discussed with the national specialists on how to operate the lab to its full capacity. This work was made possible thanks to the generous support of the European Union, which aims at building the national capacities in Iraq towards evidence-based criminal proceedings in line with international standards, for eventual use in trials of ISIL members for international crimes. The equipment provided will enable ICTS forensic experts to apply the knowledge gained through a 6-day

training delivered by UNITAD last September on handling battlefield evidence, such as seized computers and storage devices of ISIL.

By being able to assimilate this training and make use of this equipment within their day-to-day work, the Iraqi experts will continue to develop a specialization in battlefield digital forensics, from the collection of evidence to the retrieval and analysis of deleted data or the search for evidence tampering. Such expertise is of utmost value for ensuring the chain of custody and admissibility of evidence before competent courts both in Iraq and internationally.

The participants for this training were nominated by the National Security Advisory based on relevance of their work to the investigation of ISIL crimes. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the training which took the format of an expert exchange among peers rather than lectures and top-down delivery.

UNITAD continues with the capacity building of its national partners in forensics

Baghdad, 4 April 2023 - On 1 April, UNITAD's Forensic Science Unit, in partnership with Nineveh Counter-Terrorism Court, trained Iraqi forensic experts on extracting crucial data from court's compilation of damaged battlefield evidence related to ISIL crimes.

Diagnostics and possible acquisitions were performed on damaged evidence. This expertise will be instrumented in analyzing further evidence, and in providing more info on ISIL international crimes against different Iraqi communities.

In Kirkuk, on 4 April 2023 - As part of

promoting capacities of Iraqi experts, UNITAD, jointly with Judge Omer Hameed, investigative judge - Criminal Court at Kirkuk Federal Appeal Court - conducted a comprehensive training on digital forensics for Ministry of Interior Electronic Crimes Unit in Kirkuk.

This initiative, which aimed to support the capacities of the Electronic Crimes Unit at Ministry of Interior, comes in the context of the continuous cooperation between UNITAD and the Supreme Judicial Council, and with thanks to the financial support of the EU. At his end, Judge Hameed expressed his appreciation to the role of

UNITAD in strengthening and developing the capabilities of the forensic department.

UNITAD continues to work with the Iraqi judiciary to support national capacities, including in forensics by building knowledge, providing necessary equipment, to promote evidence-based prosecution of ISIL members for international crimes in Iraq.



Hamadan: the latest in UNITAD and Iraqi Authorities joint excavation and investigation of ISIL victims' mass graves in Sinjar



Baghdad, 28 March 2023 - The Iraqi authorities, supported by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) concluded the excavation of multiple mass grave sites in the vicinity of Hamadan, near Sinjar town.

The excavations were led by the Mass Graves Directorate (MGD) in cooperation with the Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD) in line with the national strategy for excavation of mass graves and the Iraqi Law on the Protection of Mass Graves. UNITAD provided support to the excavations including financial, technical, and expert support as well as necessary equipment.

In August 2014, ISIL committed

atrocious crimes against the Yazidi community in Iraq, which UNITAD had deemed as amounting to Genocide. The excavation of Hamadan mass graves offers additional evidence that contributes to prove such crimes against the Yazidis. These excavations and investigations of multiple mass graves are critical components in advancing efforts for holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for atrocities committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar. Moreover, the recovered remains were transported to MLD facilities in Baghdad to be identified, allowing for their return to the next of kin to provide their loved ones with dignified burials in accordance with religious or cultural practices.

Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team Christian Ritscher stated that "UNITAD will continue to support Iraqi efforts to excavate mass graves of ISIL victims. The Yazidi community in Hamdan, as other communities impacted by ISIL crimes in Iraq, deserve to see justice served for the international crimes committed against them and their loved ones. It is through our joint endeavors with the Iraqi Government and competent national experts that we are able to move forward towards pursuing accountability and achieving justice."

Mr. Dia' Karim Tehmeh, Director General of MGD pointed that: "usually, MGD and in consultation with all partners, draws an annual plan for the excavations. These activities are the first step in this plan that ensures the opening and excavation of several sites in different governorates."

The identification of the recovered remains will be carried out in accordance with international standards, and using advanced technology, including the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) which was provided by UNITAD to support MLD in its efforts to establish robust scientific identifications of the remains of victims recovered from ISIL mass graves across Iraq. So far, UNITAD has supported the excavation of over 40 mass graves of ISIL victims.

In Memoriam—Mr. Benjamin B. Ferencz

Baghdad, 9 April 2023 – UNITAD is saddened by the passing of Mr. Benjamin B. Ferencz, the last surviving prosecutor of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. Passing last Friday, at the age of 103, Mr. Ferencz was a legend and a constant source of inspiration for all of those dedicated to international criminal law and accountability. He was adamant in his fight for justice and did not spare effort in supporting investigations and prosecutions around the world.

Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher indicated that: "we lost a champion of international criminal justice. Without him, the idea of accountability mechanisms like

UNITAD wouldn't have been successfully spread throughout the world."

An April of 2020, Mr. Ferencz was a guest lecturer at UNITAD, where he spoke with the Team's experts and investigators about his personal account of the Nuremberg Trials, including events that preceded the establishment of the Tribunal. His belief in "law not war", and his words still echo until today: "I have three pieces of advice, one never give up, two never give up, three never give up."

Prosecutors like Mr. Ferencz and the work they have done encourage the work of UNITAD every day, until justice for all victims of ISIL is served.

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Baghdad, 5 April 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet H.E. **Mark Bryson-Richardson**, UK Ambassador to Iraq to brief on progress in UNITAD's investigations, and the Team's vision to build on this work and achievements. They also discussed ongoing cooperation with Iraqi counterparts towards the common goal of holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for international crimes in Iraq.



Baghdad, 5 April 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met Mr. **Dia' Karim Tehmeh**, Director General of Iraq Mass Graves Directorate and Dr. **Zaid Ali Abbas**, Director General of Iraq Medico-Legal Directorate. They discussed ongoing preparations for the Ante-mortem campaign which will be organized in Germany for survivors and families of victims of ISIL. This pioneering campaign supports identifying remains from mass graves of ISIL victims in Iraq for dignified burial, to bring solace to the families awaiting to know the destiny of their loved ones. Identification of victims is key to forensic evidence on ISIL international crimes.



Baghdad, 11 April 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met today H.E. **Walid Ismail**, Egypt Ambassador to Iraq.

Special Adviser Ritscher briefed Ambassador Ismail on UNITAD's ongoing investigations. They also discussed Egypt's support to UNITAD on the path towards justice and accountability for ISIL international crimes.



Baghdad, 12 April 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was delighted to meet in Baghdad H.E. Mr. **Mohammed Hussein Bahr AlUloom**, Under Secretary for Bilateral Affairs and Head of the National Coordination Committee-NCC. Special Adviser Ritscher congratulated H.E. Bahr AlUloom on assuming the position as head of NCC. They discussed progress in UNITAD's investigations and the Team's vision for ways forward. Discussions also involved ongoing mutual cooperation in promoting accountability in Iraq and globally for ISIL international crimes.



Baghdad, 18 April 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** signed today an MOU with H.E. **Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius**, Netherlands Minister of Justice and Security, enhancing mutual cooperation and information exchange between UNITAD and the Netherlands in the areas of justice and the prosecution of ISIL perpetrators for their international crimes. Commenting on the signing, Special Adviser Ritscher indicated that this MOU underscores the Netherlands' continued support to UNITAD's investigations and the Team's leading Witness Protection and Support approaches. It also stresses the importance of supporting justice processes globally.



348 households from Jedda 5 camp returned to their areas of origin

Baghdad, 14 March 2023 - IOM reports that recently, 348 households from Jedda 5 camp returned to their areas of origin! This is part of IOM's Durable Solutions programme. It's a significant step towards a better future for displaced individuals and families. They had been living in the camp since 2017. The departure was voluntary and facilitated to ensure a safe and dignified movement.



IOM conducts a workshop on an in-depth legal identity assessment in Iraq

Baghdad, 23 March 2023 - Many displacement-affected people in Iraq lack the legal identity documents that will help them to rebuild their lives. Last week, IOM conducted a workshop on an in-depth legal identity assessment in Iraq, which outlined gaps and provided recommendations for strengthening Iraq's legal identity architecture. Based on these recommendations, IOM is considering a range of options to further build and expand on the currently available infrastructure. Assistance will be provided in the Government of Iraq's efforts toward digitalization, including by supporting national ID card registration centers and enhancing understanding of the identity management chain in Iraq, namely biometric collection, data analysis and passport examination procedures to detect document fraud and irregular

border crossings.

This assistance comes as part of the project "Enhancing Readmission and Legal Identity Capacity" (RELICA). RELICA's objective is to enhance the Government of Iraq's capacity to

efficiently identify their nationals for better access to state services at home and to improve the durability and rights-based nature of returns. RELICA is made possible with the support of the Government of Denmark.



IOM and UNDP continue to address the most urgent needs of displaced persons and returnees

Anbar, 25 March 2023 - IOM continues to address the most urgent needs of displaced persons who have not been able to return to their areas of origin.

IOM recently provided 400 displaced families in Anbar's Al-Amiryiah/Bzibiz informal site with essential items such as blankets, mattresses and gas stoves. This support improves their living conditions and better enables them to focus their attention on other needs until they can return to their areas of origin or find other durable solutions. This assistance was made possible with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

About 12,000 returnees in Al-Askary district in Baiji, Salah Al-Din now have access to clean, safe, and potable water after UNDP rehabilitated the compact

water treatment unit in the area. UNDP replaced the damaged pumps and cables and installed new collection tanks with sand filters, increasing the unit's capacity.

This was implemented by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization with support from the government of Australia.



People are at the center of all IOM's work!

Duhok, 10 April 2023 - Representatives from Mosul's Governor's office, ministries and directorates visited Tel Ezer and Sibay with IOM to connect with Duhok IDP camp and Sinjar Mountain returnees and their host communities. They gained insights into the current conditions in these communities and later met to discuss future coordination to provide them essential services. Durable solutions to displacement are only possible when we all work together!



More families to return and rebuild their communities

Diyala, 12 April 2023 - The successful return of the first wave of IDP families to Arab Fares and Al-Agedat in Muqdadiya, Diyala Governorate, has led even more families to return and rebuild their communities. With the support of IOM's Durable Solutions programming, families have been able to rebuild their homes, restore vital infrastructure and reestablish their livelihoods. This is a testament to the resilience of the communities and shows that a prosperous, sustainable future is within reach. Representatives from Mosul's Governor's office, ministries and directorates visited Tel Ezer and Sibay with IOM to connect with Duhok IDP

camp and Sinjar Mountain returnees and their host communities. They gained insights into the current

conditions in these communities and later met to discuss future coordination to provide them essential services.



Humanitarian

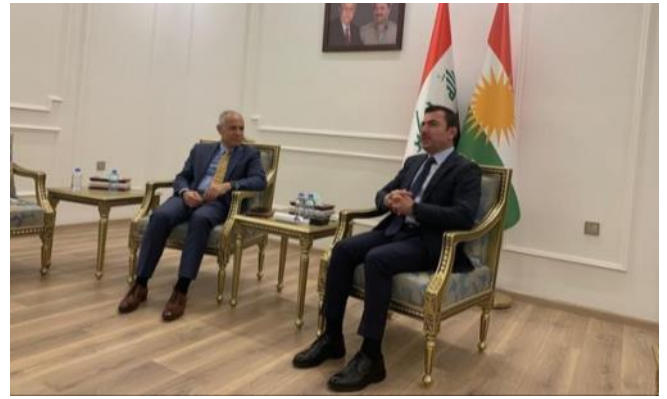
United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Iraq launches the Humanitarian Transition Overview on behalf of the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team

Baghdad, 28 February 2023 – On behalf of the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in Iraq has launched the Humanitarian Transition Overview (HTO) to encapsulate the critical residual humanitarian needs and define the HCT's priorities for programming. The Overview intends to also help donors and agencies prioritize support in 2023. The HTO was produced following extensive consultations within the Iraq HCT, it sets the pace for the transition from humanitarian response to the development phase, with the Government in the lead to deliver basic services and protection to the people of Iraq, including displaced and returnee populations.

“The noticeable drop in the number of people in need, and the return of around five million displaced Iraqis to their homes, as well as the Government's enhanced ability to generate more revenues and provide for its citizens, have naturally created favorable conditions for this transition,” said the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai. The HTO will replace the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2023, which has been the basis that guided humanitarian programming in Iraq for the past nine years. With the humanitarian efforts in the country scaling down, the HCT made the decision to develop this Transition Overview that also provides a summary of the transition process and planning

to durable solutions for IDPs. The UN will continue to work with the Government of Iraq including the Kurdistan Regional Government to integrate the IDPs in national service delivery and protection system. The Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq stressed that “the humanitarian community, which has been a close partner of Iraq for many years, reiterates its commitment to continue supporting the people and the authorities in Iraq.”

The Humanitarian Transition Overview is published on the ReliefWeb and can be accessed at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-humanitarian-transition-overview-2023-february-2023>



Erbil, 9 March 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) for Iraq, **Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai**, met with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister of Interior, Mr. **Rêber Ahmed**. Discussions focused on the humanitarian situation of IDPs hosted by the Kurdistan region and enhancing cooperation to find durable solutions for them. DSRSG/RC/HC also met with Mr. **Dara Rasheed**, KRG Minister of Planning, to discuss durable solutions to IDPs and transition from humanitarian response to long-term development. Photos courtesy of the KRG.

Germany and UNICEF step up their joint efforts to reach over one million vulnerable people in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 March 2023 – The Government of Germany, through the KfW Development Bank, has stepped up its efforts in supporting UNICEF with a €35 million grant to reach more than 1,000,000 people in Iraq, including returnees, vulnerable Iraqis, IDPs, Syrian refugees in and out of camps, host communities and marginalized groups.

This partnership will ensure equitable access to basic sustainable social services through resilience-building and system strengthening. The grant is the largest contribution by Germany to UNICEF for the period 2020-2024 and will support five main areas: water; sanitation and hygiene; education; child protection; social protection, and COVID-19 response.

Over the next two years, and as part of joint efforts to respond to climate change, this grant will enable more than one million vulnerable people, half of them girls and women, to gain improved access to sustainable, equitable and safely managed climate-resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion services.

In addition, 332,000 children and young people will be protected from violence, abuse, and exploitation in accordance with international standards. This will be achieved through preventive and responsive child protection and GBV services, including access to justice, training and mentoring of social service and justice sector, and strengthening the resilience of national systems. As part of support to education efforts, 75,000 children, including those out-of-school, will gain access to basic education and 1,500 most vulnerable young people will acquire skills to better engage in their

own communities.

In addition, as part of Germany and UNICEF support to social protection and inclusion, 10,000 poor children (4,000 of them, girls) will have enhanced access to integrated education, child protection, and social protection services that are shock responsive.

“This contribution comes at a critical time in Iraq’s stabilization process,” said Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. “It will enable us to support the Government of Iraq in improving the lives of over one million vulnerable people, including children and young people.”

“Investing in children is an investment for life,” added SenGupta. “It not only breaks the cycle of poverty, but it can shape the country’s future ensuring stability and prosperity for every child.” “We commend UNICEF’s efforts to support vulnerable children and youth in Iraq including those still being forcibly displaced. Providing access to quality education lays the foundation for a healthy and successful society – we can’t risk losing a generation,” said the German Ambassador to Iraq, Martin Jäger. “Contributing to children

and young people’s well-being is a moral, economic and social imperative to which the Government of Germany is committed to.”

“We value our partnership with UNICEF and the Government of Iraq to improve the lives of most vulnerable children and women,” said Dr. Anna Janke, Country Director of the KfW Development Bank.

Overall, joint efforts will also pay attention to Iraq’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on the health system, including reaching 150,000 people with awareness-raising messages and social behavioral change tools and contributing to reach 60 per cent of the eligible population with COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2024. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Durable Solutions framework for the transition from humanitarian to development in Iraq, this grant will contribute to UNICEF’s efforts to support most vulnerable children, young people, and women after years of conflict, to achieve collective results that contribute to the sustainable reduction of humanitarian needs in the country.



Implemented by:

KfW

unicef 
for every child

Funding shortfall forces WFP Iraq to reduce life-saving food and cash assistance to displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees

Baghdad, 19 March 2023 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced today that due to funding shortfalls it will not be able to continue providing monthly food assistance to 137,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who were being served by WFP in 27 camps. In addition, according to the current funding situation assistance to 38,000 Syrian refugees in 10 camps will cease by July 2023.

WFP conducted a targeting exercise in 2022 to allocate the then-available resources to the most vulnerable families, as the humanitarian response across Iraq has been reduced significantly. The international donor community has generously supported WFP's life-saving efforts when millions of IDPs and Syrian refugees were in need of assistance due to the conflict with ISIL / Da'esh and then the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the funding shortfall coincides, regrettably, with the Holy Month of Ramadan, WFP is urgently seeking USD 10 million from donors to continue

with the provision of food assistance to vulnerable IDPs until June 2023 and refugees until 31 December 2023. This will provide the Government of Iraq with the time needed to complete the survey of IDPs to include them into its social safety nets.

"There will always be humanitarian residual needs in Iraq and these are the ones we are now actively fundraising for. WFP Iraq serves the most vulnerable caseload in the camps. At the same time, the climate crisis risks further displacing people in Iraq, potentially triggering another humanitarian crisis

this time triggered by water scarcity, desertification, and lack of agricultural prospects. WFP Iraq find itself forced to make difficult choices on who we assist and who we cannot. As an agency with a dual humanitarian and development mandate, we continue to advocate for the needs of thousands of Internally displaced people and Syrian refugees living in camps and the long-term impactful work that WFP is doing in Iraq," said Ally Raza Qureshi, WFP

Iraq Representative.

"We cannot turn our backs to those in need of essential food assistance, those who are most vulnerable and have no other source of livelihood. We have intensified our communication with the Government of Iraq and the International donor community to ensure that means to provide food are found urgently, especially since the cessation of assistance to IDPs is coinciding with the Holy month of Ramadan."

WFP remains a major partner to the Government of Iraq and has been providing assistance to the humanitarian crisis since its onset in 2014. Currently the World Food Programme is engaged with long-term sustainable development programmes that aim to address the root causes for food insecurity and provide practical, achievable and scalable solutions to the adverse effects of climate and reforming the country's Public Distribution System.

Japan provides US\$2.6 million to improve food security for vulnerable communities in Diyala

Baghdad, 05 April 2023 – Supported by the Government of Japan, UNDP Iraq is implementing a new project for "Improving food availability for communities vulnerable to food insecurity in Diyala Governorate of Iraq." This project is aimed at supporting small-scale farmers and micro/home-based food businesses vulnerable to food insecurity in Diyala to maintain and improve their production and reduce food losses and waste.

Through this new project, small-scale farmers in Diyala Governorate will receive training and in-kind/cash grants to enhance their production capacities and adapt to climate induced shocks – drought - in the plant and animal sub-sectors. Building upon UNDP's work to ensure gender equality and increase livelihood opportunities for women, female trainers will be engaged through the project to conduct female-only information sessions. The project will also focus on micro/home-based food businesses working across the food value chain in targeted areas of the governorate to diversify their production, improve food safety, and

reduce food waste through training, mentoring, and cash grants.

To ensure an inclusive and informed participation process, UNDP will conduct a detailed vulnerability assessment to select beneficiaries in collaboration with the Government of Iraq and local authorities.

Auke Lootsma, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative, states, "We are grateful to the Government of Japan, our steadfast partner in development, for their contribution to such an important project to benefit the people of Diyala. Working closely with the government and local authorities, this project will ensure that local, climate smart and resilient solutions are provided to sustain community needs related to food security. Our goal is to prepare community members to adapt and be able to respond to future shocks and stresses beyond to ensure long-term impact and improved resiliency."

"I commend UNDP for its attentive and detailed response to the needs of people of Diyala, which is increasingly complex and multi-dimensional", said Mr. MASAMOTO Kenichi, Charge d' Affaires ad interim, the Embassy of

Japan in Iraq. "I respect UNDP's continuous and tireless endeavor to mitigate sufferings of those most vulnerable people. I hope that this project will alleviate the hardships of those people in Diyala, who also have been most affected by current food security in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine."

This project is part of UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme, which works to provide locally tailored interventions that combine short, medium and long-term solutions for post-conflict recovery and development, emphasizing resilience and building back better.



Japan and UNICEF will work together to provide access to services for more than 88,000 children living in areas of origin and returning from northeast Syria

Baghdad, 10 April 2023 – As announced today, UNICEF has received almost \$7 million from Japan to promote equitable access to life-saving child protection, health, nutrition, and education services for returnees from northeast Syria. The project will be finalized by the end of 2023 and will benefit more than 180,000 people, including 88,000 children and more than 47,000 women. The situation in northeast Syria remains a humanitarian and human rights challenge, and this new project will support the Government of Iraq-led efforts to scale up the returns process. The agreed interventions will address the reintegration needs of children and women in areas of origin as well as returnees. Support includes prevention and response to gender-based violence, mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS), health, nutrition, and education services. Unaccompanied children in detention and young people detained and released from detention will also be supported.

“UNICEF deeply appreciates Japan’s continued support to most vulnerable children in Iraq. This joint effort between UNICEF and Japan will enable returnee children and young people, especially girls to realize their rights, equipping them with critical skills and strengthening their ability to meaningfully contribute to society, promoting cohesion of communities affected by conflict and displacement,” said Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. “By protecting and empowering the most vulnerable children and young people, with a special focus on girls, we can ensure



that no one is left behind.”

“The needs of returnees remain high in Iraq, and it is critical to enhance a protective environment and ensure that returnees have better access to quality basic services,” said Kenichi Masamoto, Charge d’Affaires ad interim in the Embassy of Japan in Iraq. “Japan and UNICEF share a vision of a seamless transition from humanitarian action to development and peace in Iraq, and this project aims to build social cohesion and acceptance of returnees. Japan is committed to work with UNICEF to support children, women and youth returning from northeast Syria and to address key challenges in their safe return and integration.”

The project will reach children below the age of 5 years as well as women, targeting both those who have returned to Iraq from northeast Syria, including Al-Hol camp, and those living in areas of origin. It will provide access to health and nutrition services, where children and adolescents will have

access to formal and non-formal education, including life-skills based education and social cohesion programmes.

The funds will provide services that benefit returnees and other children in the areas of origin, including improved child protection services. Social cohesion and acceptance will be built through the provision of inclusive services to a wider population as well as targeting assistance to the returnee population.

By combating stigma and discrimination, the proposed interventions will foster social cohesion, peace and stability. In addition, UNICEF will work with communities to prevent discrimination based on gender and will promote equity by reaching the most vulnerable girls and young women who are excluded from various socioeconomic areas. Gender-related issues specific to both girls and boys will be identified to ensure unique needs are met and addressed.

Statement by the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq on the closure of Jeddah 5 camp

Baghdad, 19 April 2023 – The Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq calls on the Government of Iraq to ensure the safety and well-being of the 342 families who had to depart from the Jeddah 5 IDP camp in Ninewa Governorate following its closure.

The humanitarian community is concerned by the impact of the closure of the camp on 18 April by the Government of Iraq, without adequate notification and preparation for the IDPs and the receiving communities. The United Nations in Iraq will continue to work in close coordination

with the Iraqi authorities, to ensure the sustainable reintegration of those 1,566 former camp residents, with almost two thirds are children.[i]

The United Nations reiterates its longstanding principles that call for the voluntary, informed, safe and dignified return of all IDPs. The UN also urges the relevant authorities to ensure IDPs are able to return to their homes or places of habitual residence, integrate locally or relocate voluntarily to another part of the country in a safe and dignified manner.

The UN stands ready to provide further

assistance to those former camp residents and is working with the Government of Iraq to find durable solutions for all the remaining IDPs in and out of camps.



Energizing Hawija's future

Hawija, 5 March 2023 - Abboud Taha, a father of four who operates an automobile repair shop in Hawija Industrial Area, has seen a significant improvement in his business since the power supply was stabilized.

"The power supply has been a game-changer for us. It used to flicker and fail constantly, but now we can operate our equipment without interruption," says Abboud, highlighting the stability of the power supply.

However, this was not always the case. During the ISIL conflict in 2015, the industrial zone was left devastated, and the power supply was disrupted. This affected not only businesses but also residents, who had to endure prolonged power outages, unstable voltage, and poor-quality electricity.

In 2021, UNDP's flagship program, the Funding Facility for Stabilization, partnered with local authorities to rehabilitate and manufacture the mobile substation and electricity network across the industrial area. The project aimed to bring stability to the power supply, improve the quality of life, and enable businesses to resume their economic activity.

The electrical distribution network directly benefits over 2,600 people, including around 1,650 workers in various businesses and over 700 residents. Additionally, the stable power supply indirectly benefit over 345,000 people living in the surrounding area, thanks to reinvigorated economic activity.

Prior to this, like others in the area, Abboud's business had to rely heavily on its generators, leading to high fuel costs and losses. But today, his workshop has reduced fuel consumption from 100 to 20 liters a week. "The stable power supply has enabled our business to grow and



become more profitable. We are looking to expand our operations further," he says, with a smile.

Just a short walk from Abboud's workshop is a bustling falafel restaurant, the only one in the area. During lunchtime, the eatery becomes a hub of activity, serving delicious falafel to patrons, providing a much-needed break from the day's work.

Speaking to the owner, Faisal Ali Saleh, he shared his plans to expand the restaurant and add new dishes to the menu, including shawarma, thanks to the stable power supply. "We used to experience constant power outages and had to close the restaurant on several occasions. But now, with the stable power supply, we can stay open and serve our customers better," he shares.

The work included the installation of 325 electricity poles, 20 transformers, and over 37 kilometres of cables. Additionally, a mobile substation was manufactured and installed to stabilize the power supply, enabling all equipment to function properly. "Our aim was to provide a stable electricity supply to residents, allow businesses to

operate throughout the day, and reinvigorate the local economy," adds Kamaran Yasin, UNDP's electrical engineer responsible for the project.

The stable power supply has also encouraged small and medium factories to restart their operations.

The stable power supply has not only enabled businesses to reduce their costs but also improved the quality of life for residents. "The quality of the electricity was bad and didn't even operate home appliances. The voltage was weak, and it is better now," notes Zaki Mohammed Saeed, a resident. The power supply is now stable, and the area receives approximately 17 hours of electricity daily.

The rehabilitation of the mobile substation and electricity network has been a beacon of hope for the area, bringing stability to the power supply and transforming lives. Businesses are growing, costs have been reduced, and the quality of life has improved.

The project was implemented through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, with support from the Government of the Netherlands.

Ba'aj Court House in Ninewa officially reopens after rehabilitation

Ba'aj/Baghdad, 8 March 2023 - The Ba'aj Court House in Ninewa has officially reopened after extensive rehabilitation, aiming to improve judicial infrastructure in western Ninewa. The facility was inaugurated during a two-day visit by the UNDP Resident Representative to western Ninewa, where he took stock of the progress made and explored new opportunities for intervention.

The Court House, severely damaged during the ISIL occupation, forced judges to operate from a makeshift facility lacking sufficient space and

capacity to support court operations. With generous support from the Netherlands, the UNDP rehabilitated the facility through its Funding Facility for Stabilization.

Today, the spacious and purpose-built facility serves over 70,000 people across western Ninewa. The reconstructed court will offer various judicial services, including marriage contracts, legal authorizations, dispute resolution, and arrest warrants.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative, Auke Lootsma, says, "Rehabilitation of

the Ba'aj Court House is not only about improving the infrastructure, but it is also about strengthening the capacity of judicial services to ensure the rule of law is protected in Ninewa. By providing a safe and accessible space for judges and prosecutors to carry out their duties, we are helping to restore confidence in the judicial system and ensure equal access to justice for all."

"We extend our deepest gratitude to the international community, and in particular the Government of the Netherlands, for their commitment to the rehabilitation of the Ba'aj Court

Ba'aj Court House in Ninewa officially reopens after rehabilitation *(continued)*

House. This project demonstrates the impact of international cooperation and solidarity in building a stronger Iraq," Auke Lootsma adds.

In response to the completion of the project, the Netherlands' Ambassador Hans Sandee explains, "The Netherlands has been a strong supporter of the Funding Facility for Stabilization in Iraq, as implemented by our partner UNDP. The Netherlands sees great value in contributing to strengthening the rule of law in Iraq, and by rehabilitating the Ba'aj Court House, we hope to ensure access to justice and accountability in western Ninewa."

With the Netherlands' support, UNDP rehabilitated 46 law enforcement facilities, including three courthouses, four national security buildings, 28 police stations, one police training centre and ten police directorate offices in Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Salah al-Din. This also complements UNDP's ongoing



security sector reform initiatives, including training law enforcement officers and police to improve local police effectiveness, leadership, and criminal investigation.

The project was implemented through UNDP's flagship programme, the Funding Facility for Stabilization, with generous support from the Government of the Netherlands. Since 2015, the

Netherlands has contributed over US\$ 107 million to the Funding Facility for Stabilization and US\$ 8.5 million to security sector reform, making it one of UNDP's largest contributors in Iraq. The funding has focused on infrastructure rehabilitation, restoring local police services, and building the capacity of the Iraqi government to meet citizens' needs.

UN-Habitat facilitates and supports the return of IDPs

Tel Afar, 8 March 2023 - Today, Fadeela Mohammed received her in situ core-housing unit in Ayadia Sub-District as part of the activities implemented by UN-Habitat in Tel Afar District. Over the last three years, with generous EU funding, UN-Habitat facilitated and supported the returns of 924 people through the construction of 108 core housing units, rehabilitating and expanding a football park in Ayadiah Sub-District and two mixed primary schools in Kasr-e Al Mehrab and Qazal Qiew villages targeting about 250 students. In addition, to boost livelihood activities, UN-Habitat

offered vocational training to more than 400 participants. Moreover, UN-Habitat conducted a COVID-19

awareness campaign targeting about 10,000 people and supported 1,563 people through HLP rights activities.



United Nations Deputy Secretary-General meets with UN Resident Coordinators from across the Arab region

Beirut, 14 March 2023 - UN Resident Coordinators from across the Arab region are gathered in Beirut with United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J Mohammed. They are leading UN Country Teams to help shape just transition pathways for achieving the 2030 Agenda for SDGs in the region.

The strategic engagement of UN Resident Coordinators with their government counterparts is critical to advancing the summit on the SDGs in September. We must put the SDGs back on track as a unifying framework to pave the way for a better future.

UN Resident Coordinators support countries focusing on policy transformations, partnerships, and coalition building, to accelerate the momentum for implementation of the SDGs to achieve results.

In Beirut, DSG Amina J. Mohammed with Resident Coordinators visited Access Kitchen, supported by UN Women Lebanon and UNICEF Lebanon to meet with women with disabilities. Despite barriers of discrimination and accessibility, these women are empowered and actively involved in their communities through their work and skills.



ITC and UN WFP sign an agreement to promote development and strengthening of entrepreneurship



Baghdad, 09 March 2023 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) signed an agreement on 6 March 2023 to collaborate on improving the efficiency and competitiveness of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Iraq.

The partnership will leverage the technical support of ITC and community level presence and operational capacity of WFP to equip small holder farmers with climate adaptation tools to build competitiveness, develop agribusiness alliances for selected value chains and strengthen food systems in the country. Increased local production and value addition activities will improve farmers' incomes and will create new jobs, promoting sustainable economic growth and helping Iraq achieve zero hunger goal for all.

“Our partnership underscores the importance of promoting private sector development, particularly that of micro small and medium-sized enterprises and developing agriculture value chains to end hunger and achieve food security. These efforts are crucial in our collective quest to eradicate poverty and achieve sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth in Iraq,” said Eric Buchot, ITC Representative, Head of Country Programme, Iraq.

“This agreement will allow WFP to further help young Iraqi entrepreneurs and business owners, who brave the odds and choose to pursue their own livelihoods with and perseverance. We at WFP have strong faith in the future of private, small economies and the impact that they will have on diversifying the economy of Iraq,” said WFP Iraq Representative, Mr. Ally Raza Qureshi. “With the expertise of

our colleagues at ITC, we are confident that we'll be able to contribute greatly to strengthening the growing private sector of Iraq.”

WFP is invested in promoting gender mainstreaming in collaboration with the Government of Iraq and key implementing partners. This is evident in the work done to support evidence-building and capacity strengthening the policies required best support vulnerable women and their families and to help mitigate and adopt to climate change, as women and children are facing the main brunt of its perceivable impact.

ITC is creating agribusiness alliances between farmers and major agri-food companies through the European Union funded Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy (SAAVI) programme. Agribusiness alliances are strengthened with technical assistance, providing farmers with emphasis on women and youth, with support in adopting less resource-intensive agriculture, enhanced post-harvest practices, quality improvement and food safety standards in alignment with buyers' requirements. The five-year SAAVI project seeks to enhance competitiveness of agriculture and agri-food value chains and improve trade policy in Iraq. SAAVI is in close collaboration with the Government of Iraq, NRC, and other implementing partners.

Ally Raza Qureshi, WFP Representative, Iraq
Eric Buchot, ITC Representative, Head of Country Programme

Italy and the ILO support private sector development in Southern Iraq's green economy

Baghdad, 09 March 2023 - (ILO News) A new agreement between Italy and the International Labour Organization (ILO) will enhance support to private sector development and decent job creation in Southern Iraq, with a focus on promoting sustainable green businesses.

Under the agreement, hundreds of young women and men looking to grow or develop their micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) will be provided with skills trainings in business management and financial literacy, as well as with access to much-needed financial services.

At the same time, better support to entrepreneurs and MSMEs - to unleash their full potential - will be provided by

capacity-building of staff from non-financial and financial institutions,

including partner banks, microfinance institutions and service providers.



Italy and the ILO support private sector development in Southern Iraq's green economy *(continued)*

The agreement between Italy and the ILO was officially launched on Thursday (March 9), at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, one of the main partners that will work closely with the two counterparts to implement the project. The support from Italy will be delivered through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Ahmad Al-Asadi, Italian Ambassador to Iraq Maurizio Greganti, and ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq Maha Kattaa attended the signing ceremony.

"We welcome this new initiative by Italy and the International Labour Organization, which is aligned with our Government's strategies to promote economic growth, private sector development, employment, and the green economy," said Minister Al-Asadi. "The Prime Minister launched last week the Riyadh initiative to support entrepreneurship and decent work creation among students and youth in Iraq, allowing youth to unleash their potential and encourage the establishment of small and medium enterprises. This is aligned with the government's approach to reduce unemployment and enhance the reality of investment in a way that contributes to promoting the private sector."

A thorough assessment of the business environment will be conducted, using ILO's assessment tool 'Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises,' which provides evidence-based recommendations on how to

improve the business-enabling environment. The assessment, which will be developed in consultation with ILO's tripartite constituents and national partners, will help define priorities for a business environment more conducive to sustainable enterprise creation, especially in relation to the development of the green economy.

"We are proud to partner with the International Labour Organization to enhance support for private sector development and job creation in Southern Iraq, with a focus on promoting sustainable green businesses. The partnership will provide critical skills training and access to financial services for entrepreneurs, as well as build the capacities of financial institutions to better support MSMEs, with a specific focus on climate-change resiliency," said Ambassador Greganti.

"Support to private sector and better jobs has been one of the main priorities of the Italian Cooperation in Iraq since many years and we are eager to work with ILO in support to the green economy priority. During the next three years, we will support the implementation of this project, aiming at the strongest positive impact for entrepreneurs, employees and the sector of financial services that plays a key role in enterprise development," said Emilio Cabasino, Head of Office at the AICS office for Jordan and Iraq.

The ILO will train and certify trainers from across the spectrum on its well-established business management and financial literacy tools, so they can in

return deliver the trainings to potential entrepreneurs.

It will work closely with the Central Bank of Iraq, its partner under financial inclusion initiatives, to further provide access to affordable loans, and build the capacities of partner banks to design products and services to meet their clients' needs.

"The generous contribution of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, coupled with the involvement of AICS will support efforts to encourage more young women and men to establish green businesses and create decent green jobs that will promote sustainable development and inclusive growth," said Kattaa.

In addition, the project will collaborate with a range of partners to identify bottlenecks to the formal registration of businesses and seek practical solutions for reducing those barriers, while conducting at the same time awareness-raising campaigns to encourage the registration and formalization of businesses.

The project is part of broader efforts under the Iraq Decent Work Country Programme signed by the Government, employers' and workers' organizations and the ILO to promote employment opportunities and decent work. It is in line with the new government Riyadh initiative for development and employment, which was launched by Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani earlier this week.



UNDP launches a series of coaching sessions for ten civil society organizations and local authorities

Baghdad, 16 March 2023 - It is vital to ensure that projects have a sustainable impact.

UNDP have launched a series of coaching sessions for ten civil society organizations and local authorities from across Iraq. These sessions will ensure sustainability of projects implemented through the 'Supporting Recovery and Stability through Local Development in Iraq' Programme with generous funding from the European Union.

These coaching sessions aim to introduce innovative ways of addressing needs on the ground, and to ensure that solutions are sustainable. Participants will be equipped to scale up their local projects and ensure that the benefits extend to the wider population.



UN-Habitat is currently conducting an assessment in Sinjar

Sinjar, 16 March 2023 - UN-Habitat is currently conducting an assessment in Sinjar area under the new project titled “Recovery Support to Returnees in Iraq to Strengthen Socio-Economic Stabilization, including Improved Food Security” funded by the Government of Japan. The project will focus on (a) the rehabilitation of housing units damaged or destroyed by the conflict, (b) improving returnees’ access to public infrastructure such as water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, and basic services, including schools and marketplaces, using environmentally friendly approaches, (c) and providing opportunities for capacity development



and raising awareness on food security and resource efficiency in particular.

The project is planned to be completed in January 2024.

IOM Iraq steppes in by implementing a cash for work program

Mosul, 14 March 2023 - The people of Dakat Barkah, a community in the old city of Mosul, were greatly impacted by the conflict. Among the areas that were affected was education, as schools needed to be repaired and cleaned. IOM Iraq stepped in by implementing a cash for work program to: clean the schools, plant trees, increase awareness.

The program also trained 35 women on awareness promotion to educate others about hygiene promotion.

In a similar activity, the youth of Bashiqa came together to restore the sidewalks, adding vibrant colors and installing tourist seats.

With the support of IOM’s Cash-for-Work Programme, 40 beneficiaries worked for 40 days to make this project

a reality. Not only did it make the street more beautiful, but it also helped improve the lives of those involved.



UNICEF installed a solar-powered water desalination unit at the Martyr Ahmed Al Amiri School in Basra

Basra, 20 March 2023 - As a result of climate change, Iraq is the 42nd most water-stressed country in the world, with Basra being the hardest hit. Given Basra’s location where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers reach after meeting Shatt Al-Arab, coupled with the constant reduction in water flow in the rivers due to climate change, this led to an increased flow of highly saline water from the Arab Gulf, making the water salty and undrinkable.

With funding from the Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq, UNICEF installed a solar-powered water desalination unit at the Martyr Ahmed Al Amiri School in Basra to provide safe and clean drinking water benefiting 300 students. In a similar effort, more than 150,000 people in the Amedi district, northern Duhok, now have access to safe drinking water. UNICEF, with support

from the German Government through the KfW Development Bank, has handed over a water project to the Governorate of Duhok. This upgraded

infrastructure will secure access to clean water for vulnerable communities and help build resilience to climate-related risks.



A development partners forum titled "Towards Effective and Efficient Management of Official Development Assistance" held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 20 March 2023 - A development partners forum titled "Towards Effective and Efficient Management of Official Development Assistance" was chaired jointly with His Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning for Iraq, Dr. Mohammed Ali Tamim, and the Resident Coordinator for the United Nations in Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai and the Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Mr. Auke Lootsma. Attendees included development partners and international agencies.



The rehabilitation of the Darbandikhan dam is complete

Dyala, 23 March 2023 - The rehabilitation of the Darbandikhan dam is complete, and 500,000 people living in six water-stressed districts downstream of the dam now have access to safe water in Sulaymaniyah and Diyala Governorates.

The project, completed by UNICEF and the Directorate of Darbandikhan Dam, was made possible by funding from the German Government through Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ).



WFP Iraq partners with the Ministry of Trade to reform the public distribution system in Iraq

Baghdad, 26 March 2023 - On Sunday, 26 March, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) signed a Letter of Cooperation (LoC) with the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Trade (MoT) to formalize their collaboration to reform the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Iraq.

By signing the LoC, WFP and MoT commit to providing access to a comprehensive, inclusive, shock-responsive, and end-to-end digitalized Public Distribution System. The joint goal is to ensure that no one is left behind and that vulnerable groups, including children, youth, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities inside Iraq will benefit.

WFP and MoT have successfully introduced end-to-end digitalization in the governorate of Najaf in record time and are currently preparing to scale it up in other parts of Iraq, gradually moving towards a reformed

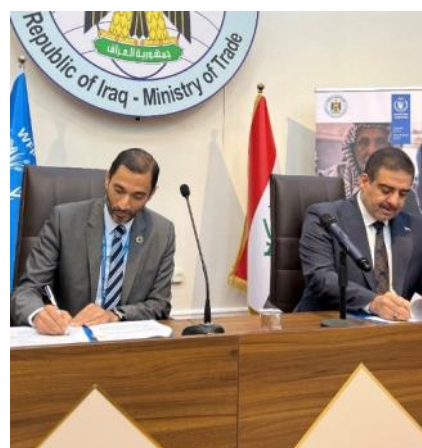
PDS in Iraq. Further down the line, WFP and MoT aim to incorporate the results of this collaboration towards integration with the Single Registry platform.

As part of its strategic support to the Government of Iraq, WFP has been providing technical assistance

bringing in best practices to ensure citizens have improved access to social protection. In addition to building the capacities of MoT staff, WFP has supported the Government by providing equipment and increasing public awareness of the PDS reform, including through a social behavioural change communication campaign.

"I trust that this solid collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Trade will stand as a testament to the will and perseverance of both parties to give their utmost to support the people of Iraq," said WFP Iraq Representative, Ally Raza Qureshi. "This collaboration will pave the way towards more efficient and meaningful change in Government processes towards helping the people of Iraq."

WFP thanks its donors, the EU, BMZ and BHA, who, through their generous support, have ensured that this reformative work can be carried out.



WFP Iraq and KRI Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs signed an agreement to collaborate around food security and social protection in the Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 26 March 2023 - WFP Iraq and KRI Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs signed an agreement to collaborate around food security and social protection in the Kurdistan Region.

The partnership will focus on ensuring the vulnerable communities in the KRI region will benefit from fair access to the social protection system that is comprehensive and sensitive to children, age, food security considerations, gender, disability, and more shock responsive.



Ahmed received IOM support to develop the app and expand his company from 2 to 6 employees, half of whom are women

Baghdad, 28 March 2023 - Photonect is an app that connects individuals and businesses with the photography services they need, with over 350 photographers listed throughout Iraq. Through IOM's Enterprise Development Fund, Ahmed received support to develop the app and expand his company from 2 to 6 employees, half of whom are women.

"Photonect is the first app in Iraq that enables you to browse photographers' portfolios, ratings, reviews, packages and rates. With Photonect, you can easily choose and book a photographer, and set a date, time and location for your shoot – all within the app."



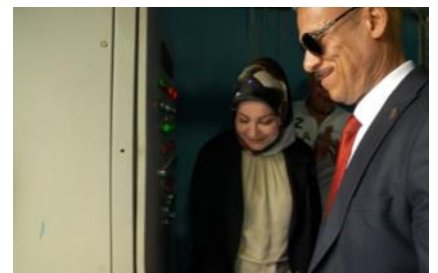
Clean water access for Hussein Lafta village

Baghdad, 28 March 2023 - Until recently, residents of Hussein Lafta village, Baghdad Governorate, lacked pipes for potable water. Out of necessity, they turned to the nearby river for their drinking water instead.

Together with the Baghdad Department of Water and the Mahmoudiyah Water Center, IOM

supported the rehabilitation of a local water treatment plant to provide potable water to 1300 people in Hussein Lafta, as well as to three schools and one health centre in the area.

This clean water access was made possible by support from the Government of Germany through KfW.



UN-Habitat delivers two 5-days training courses in Microsoft Access and SQL (Structured Query Language)

Baghdad, 29 March 2023 - "Digital data has long become an essential asset for local authorities aspiring to make a difference in the efficiency of public services they deliver, not least the performance of their revenue departments. But being able to maintain a database largely depends on

each institution's in-house capacity to manage the data and keep it up to date. To put such skills at the fingertips of governmental staff, UN-Habitat has recently delivered through its implementing partner Aid Gate Organization (AGO) two 5-days training courses in Microsoft Access

and SQL (Structured Query Language) to 32 employees from the Municipality, Water, and Sewerage directorates of Mosul, Baiji, and Fallujah. This initiative is funded by the European Union under its programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development'.

Iraq's accession to the United Nations TIR Convention will boost trade and growth in the Middle East

Vienna/Baghdad, 03 April 2023 - Iraq's has become the 78th contracting party to the TIR Convention. All its neighbours: the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, the Syrian Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, are also contracting parties, opening up perspectives for more efficient and secure flow of goods across the region, connecting with markets across all of Europe, Asia – including India, Pakistan and China – and beyond. "One week after welcoming Iraq to the Water Convention, I am happy to

congratulate Iraq for its accession to the TIR Convention", declared UNECE Executive Secretary Olga Algayerova. "This opens new opportunities to foster economic growth as a driver of development through efficient trade procedures across the Middle East." The TIR system, used by over 34,000 transport and logistic companies, reduces cross-border transport time by up to 80%, and costs by up to 38%. The TIR Convention (1975), serviced by UNECE, is the only global customs transit system in existence.



IOM rolls out specialized training on mapping of service providers

Baghdad, 4 April 2023 - In order to prepare staff from the Ministry of Migration and Displaced to operate the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), IOM rolled out specialized training on mapping of service providers. Once identified, these providers will work with the Ministry to support and assist return and reintegration of migrants back home.

Here is what one of the participants shared about the training: "The

National Referral Mechanism supports returns to Iraq. The programme is also important for supporting young people to reintegrate and settle into society," said Rana, a case worker at the Ministry of Migration and Displaced. The training is part of the COMPASS initiative designed to promote #safemigration. For more information, visit: www.iom.int/compass

This project is supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq.



A KfW delegation recently visited the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF)-supported Farooq Mosaic Factory

Fallujah, 5 April 2023 - A KfW delegation recently visited the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF)-supported Farooq Mosaic Factory in Fallujah district, Anbar Governorate. Owner Farooq Farhan, 65, makes several types of marble and mosaics to meet local market demand.

His business was forced to close down twice: initially when ISIL invaded Fallujah and drove him to abandon his factory (2014-2017), and again due to

COVID-19. But eager to get back to work, Farooq managed to reopen his factory at a reduced capacity.

With IOM EDF support, he was able to rehabilitate his business and expand, hiring on 9 additional employees.

When livelihood opportunities are available there, returning home becomes more feasible for IDPs. Support to small and medium-sized businesses makes durable solutions possible!



Sowing seeds of hope: how EDF-a supported Haitham's farm

Ninewa, 06 Apr 2023 - Haitham is an Iraqi farmer from the village of Tobzawa in Bashiqa district, Ninewa Governorate. When ISIL attacked the village in 2014, his life quickly spiraled: "The events of 2014 caused immense devastation and damage to all our property and agricultural areas," he said.

Haitham and his famil were forced to flee to Erbil's Daratu district, where they experienced many difficulties.

"I mean, we are five brothers who live

in one house and work together. With all five of our families, we number about 30," he continued. Feeding and keeping a roof over the heads of 30 people is no easy feat in the best of times, let alone in the midst of displacement.

Haitham and his family farmed and produced different crops on their land for many years. Even before the emergence of ISIL, the family faced several persistent challenges, including competition from foreign products that

made it difficult for them to sell their goods.

Indeed, agricultural producers in Iraq are mainly made up of small family-run farms in rural areas, that often lack the capital to expand their production and linkages to the sector's value chains, and struggle to compete with bigger farms and imports. Access to electricity is also a challenge. Haitham explains, "Our main problem both before and after the events of ISIL was the lack of electric power, which is necessary to

Sowing seeds of hope: how EDF-a supported Haitham's farm (continued)



operate the water pumps that we use to spray and water our crops.”

But Haitham doesn't take things lying down, and he was determined to rebuild his farm and start a new life. With grants provided by IOM Iraq, Haitham established an electricity system for his land, powered by 70 solar panels – a climate-smart response to the lack of electricity access, which is especially timely as Iraq faces a major climate crisis.

He then began to plant a variety of crops in high demand in the Iraqi market. He even hired six employees to help him around the farm and purchased two tons of potato and

yellow corn seeds to plant. His farm, once devastated, is now thriving.

The aims to improve access and linkages to existing value chains for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in all stages of agri-business, from production to final retailers. The approach is informed by value chain analyses based on IOM assessments conducted in targeted areas.

Haitham's farm is one of the 158 SMEs that have been selected thus far to participate in EDF-a. It is estimated that 220 female job seekers will access jobs created as a result of these EDF grants, and that 1400 formal jobs in the agri-business sector will be created by

the end of the project. Haitham's success story is a testament to the effectiveness of small-scale grants in contributing to job creation, post-conflict economic recovery and inclusive, sustainable development of the Iraqi agricultural sector. EDF-a helped Haitham rebuild his farm and start a new life. He was able to provide for his family and create jobs for others in his community.

The EDF programme continues to support livelihoods in Iraq at the community level through private sector revitalization and economic development by targeting SMEs. EDF provides financial capital to SMEs in economic sectors with a high demand for labour, addressing the critical gap that limits the capacity of businesses to expand and hire new workers, making it possible for SMEs like Haitham's Farm to flourish despite the challenges they face.

These activities were made possible thanks to support from the European Union.

By Aram HAKIM with contribution from Rifaah JUMAAH, IOM

Rebuilding life after war and displacement: Salim's story

Ninewa, 06 April 2023 - Salim's journey has been a long and difficult one marked by war and displacement, financial instability and uncertainty about the future. However, through determination and hard work, along with the support of IOM Iraq's Individual Livelihoods Assistance (ILA) programme, Salim has been able to rebuild his life and support his family. Salim's troubles began in 2014, when the Qairawan district of Ninewa Governorate was engulfed by war. Before the conflict, Salim owned a blacksmith shop in the district, which provided him a steady source of income to support his wife and nine children. However, when the fighting broke out, Salim was forced to flee with his family to Mosul in search of safety and security.

Unfortunately, Salim's troubles were far from over. With his blacksmithing tools and car lost in the conflict, Salim struggled to find work that would provide him with a stable income. He resorted to odd jobs like transporting materials for shop owners to make ends meet.

Salim's fortune took another turn for the worse when he was displaced to a



camp, where he was unable to find any work at all and was forced to rely on assistance from kind-hearted friends and neighbours. His debts began to mount, and he found himself losing hope in life, with no source of livelihood to sustain him and his family.

Despite the difficulties, Salim did not give up. After three years of displacement, he returned to Qairawan district, where he found his blacksmith shop in ruins. Although he longed to rebuild it, he lacked the resources to do so, and was forced to continue relying on the assistance of others to make ends meet.

It was at this point that Salim learned about IOM's ILA programme, which is designed to help individuals improve

their skills; encourage entrepreneurship; generate employment opportunities; and support rural economic recovery through assistance to micro-enterprises, vocational training and on-the-job training.

Salim enrolled in the programme and was thereby able to equip his blacksmith shop with the tools necessary for it to run smoothly. He also received training and skills reinforcement that boosted his confidence and renewed his positive attitude.

"My dream of rebuilding and restarting the blacksmith shop has come true," Salim said with a smile. "During the days of training, I felt optimism and

Rebuilding life after war and displacement: Salim's story *(continued)*

hope that overwhelmed me after several tiring days. After that, I started working and earning money, meeting my family's needs and my children's requirements for studying, and also paying my debts."

Thanks to the ILA programme, Salim was also able to pay off his debts and begin to rebuild his life. Through its tailored approach, the ILA programme is able to support people like Salim to develop their skills, practice their trades and build better lives for themselves and their communities.

ILA equips individuals with the competencies they need to enter the job market and develops their occupational

skills to practice a trade or other occupation. As Iraq's agricultural sector continues to face decline, farmers in particular are provided with the skills necessary to enhance their knowledge of agriculture. The programme also provides access to micro-finance in the form of cash grants for new and expanding micro-enterprises.

Today, 90 per cent of participating households have reported an increase in their monthly income, with an average increase of 53 per cent. In addition, 89.24 per cent of micro-businesses assessed after three months of support remain operational, with 91.16 per cent of their owners believing

that their business will continue to operate.

In difficult and even seemingly impossible circumstances, a little bit of livelihood support can make a huge difference – empowering individuals and communities to improve their lives and build sustainable economic futures. This assistance was made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

By Aram HAKIM with contribution from Mohammed ALESI, IOM

IOM builds accommodations for teachers at the Al-Hamdaniya complex in Ba 'aj district, Ninewa Governorate

Ninewa, 9 April 2023 - Teachers at the Al-Hamdaniya complex in Ba 'aj district, Ninewa Governorate, finally have new accommodations.

Before, teachers had to either commute long distances, or else sleep in classrooms or bunk with local families during the week. Now, they and their families can live comfortably nearby their jobs.

"Once the accommodation is completed, I will bring my family here and be closer to my students," one teacher said.

More than 12 teachers and 400 students will benefit from the construction, done by IOM, and made possible by support from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.



UN-Habitat, with EU support, rehabilitates Mahaba Mixed Primary School

Ninewa, 10 April 2023 - As part of efforts to improve the educational environment and facilitate voluntary returns in Western Ninewa, UN-Habitat, with EU support, rehabilitated Mahaba Mixed Primary School, which accommodates 325 students.

Before the rehabilitation works, the school had no electricity, windows and doors were damaged and the walls were covered with ISIL slogans and drawings. Now the staff, students and their families feel comfortable, happy, and safe to resume their normal activities in the school," said Hussein Hasso, the school headmaster of Mahaba.



Development Coordination Office hosts coordination meeting

Baghdad, 11 April 2023 - Over 70 United Nations and Iraqi government officials had a lively exchange in a two-day workshop in Baghdad this week to better coordinate their development work around the country on the economy, environment, public services, protection, and displacement.



Qairawan Electricity Department finally have a brand-new crane



after years of struggling to rent equipment to lift heavy transformers. This infrastructure improvement is a big success for the community, as it will not only make the Electricity Department's job easier in Al-Qairawan, but it will also benefit nearby districts like Sinjar and Baaj. Made possible by U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, IOM was able to provide this support based off needs assessments in Qairawan district.

Al-Qairawan, 11 April 2023 - Exciting news at the Qairawan

Electricity Department! They finally have a brand-new crane



Developing a GIS platform depicting information on underserved neighbourhoods in Basra Governorate

Basra, 12 April 2023 - UN-Habitat and the Head of the Municipality in Basra have discussed developing a GIS platform depicting information on underserved neighbourhoods in Basra Governorate and installing the equipment in the municipality building. With generous funding from the European Union and in coordination with Basra Municipality, a technical working group established by UN-Habitat is organizing training for the maintenance and sustainability of this platform.



UN-Habitat completes the first phase of Al Ghadir Park's construction in Basra

Basra, 12 April 2023 - Children need a safe playground, and communities need a place to relax and enjoy quality family time. Funded by the European Union, as part of UN-Habitat efforts to improve public spaces, the first phase of Al Ghadir Park's construction, including the football court and the boundary wall in Jurf Al Malah Neighbourhood in Basra is completed and handed over to Shatt Al-Arab

District, in the presence of Mayor Mr. Haider Toama Khdir and community representative Mr. Ali Hussian So'abir Sayber. During the handover, the UN-Habitat team and Mr. Khdir discussed Shatt Al-Arab District's contributions and collaboration to launch the construction of the next phase of Al Ghadir Park.



IOM Iraq trains 130 men and women from Al-Qaim, Anbar Governorate in preparation to receive Business Support Packages

Anbar, 13 April 2023 - IOM Iraq has recently trained 130 men and women from Al-Qaim, Anbar Governorate in preparation to receive Business Support Packages, a form of IOM's Individual Livelihood Assistance. This tailored response aims to: improve people's skills, encouraging entrepreneurship, generating decent employment opportunities to support rural economic recovery.

The Business Support Packages provide access to technical business advisory services that support the development and expansion of micro-enterprises. By providing access to microfinance, vocational training and on-the-job training, IOM is empowering

communities to meet their basic needs and build prosperous, sustainable futures.

This project was made possible with support from UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.



IOM hosts PRM delegation at project sites in Ninewa



Ninewa, 18 April 2023 - A representative of the U.S. Department of State: Population, Refugees and Migration Bureau (PRM) visited a number of PRM-funded projects in Qahtaniya sub-district of Ba'aj, Ninewa Governorate.

The representative had the opportunity to see the IOM-rehabilitated Sibay Water Station and Network and witness the project's impact on the local community. The representative also

met community members in central Sibay Town who had received PRM-supported housing assistance to rehabilitate their destroyed homes. Together they discussed the challenges and progress of the returnee community.

The visit continued with a meeting at the local Youth Centre with the Sibay Youth Group, with whom IOM has been working as part of PRM's Community Revitalization Programme (CRP). The

representative had an engaging interaction with the enthusiastic youth group and learned about its initiatives and aspirations for the future.

Afterward, the representative visited the site of IOM's project to restore the electrical network in Tel Ezer, seeing firsthand the improvements in the electrical infrastructure, which have had a direct impact on the daily lives of the local community.

The visit concluded with a meeting with returnees from Berseve Camp, who were supported by IOM's Durable Solutions programme and received assistance to rebuild their damaged homes. It was inspiring to hear the personal stories and experiences of the returnees, and to bear witness to their resilience and determination to rebuild their lives.

IOM is grateful to U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration for its support in Ninewa and across Iraq, and we look forward to continuing our partnership in creating sustainable solutions for people affected by displacement.

IOM Iraq completes the rehabilitation of Al-Ameen Water Treatment Plant in Fallujah district, Anbar Governorate

Anbar, 19 April 2023 - Having access to clean water is essential to improving the overall health and wellbeing of a community!

IOM Iraq has just completed the rehabilitation of Al-Ameen Water Treatment Plant in Fallujah district, Anbar Governorate.

Around 10,000 individuals will now have access to clean and safe drinking water. This project will help reduce the

incidence of water-borne diseases, which can cause significant harm to people's health, particularly children and the elderly.

Supported by the Government of the United Kingdom.



UN-Habitat inaugurates the new Al-Qahira Park located in Al-Baker neighborhood in Heet



Heet, 21 April 2023 - Marking the completion of projects funded by the European Union in Heet, under its umbrella program “Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq Through Local Development”, UN-Habitat

recently inaugurated the new Al-Qahira Park located in Al-Baker neighborhood.

In his speech, Mr. Jassim Mohammad, Deputy Governor of Anbar for Administrative Affairs, stated that "one

of the key reasons for the success of the projects implemented by UN-Habitat in Heet is their spatial focus on a single neighborhood, which created a model for reconstruction that can be applied successfully in other cities of the province of Anbar and the rest of Iraq". Mr. Muhammad Zabar, Mayor of Heet, praised the efforts of UN-Habitat in implementing vital projects that have contributed to the reconstruction of the city of Heet and supported the stability of the district after its liberation from ISIL. He emphasized the role of parks in “providing one of the critical necessities for the return of life to the region”. The new 3,570 sqm Al Qahira Park in Al-Baker includes large green spaces and a composite playground for children and teenagers, an open-air gym, gazebos for families, and a modern multi-tiered and colorful water fountain surrounded by seating.

Bringing back hope: Sustainable livelihoods build community resilience in western Iraq

Anbar, 25 April 2023 - Rummanah is a sub-district on the north side of the Euphrates River, in western Anbar, Iraq. Controlled by ISIL from mid-2014 until November 2017, community members from the area are still healing from displacement, turmoil, and trauma experienced throughout this period.

To ensure returnees to the area and remaining community members are supported, UNDP and local partner World Vision Iraq, supported by the Government of Japan, are providing a combination of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and livelihoods assistance. Through this integrated approach, sustainable solutions ensure that community resilience is enhanced, preventing the “push factors” that can lead to joining extremist groups, such as lack of employment and income.

Several factors influence unemployment, including lack of educational background, vocational training opportunities, and available positions, among others. Various interventions by UNDP in Iraq have proven time and time again that there is no lack of motivation among youth if they have proper access to opportunity. In the small community of Rummanah, Anbar, young people have demonstrated motivation and willingness to work hard to improve their futures.

A group of nine young participants who have received vocational training on water installations have joined together

to open a private office to provide a wide array of services, including establishment and repair of water networks. Partnering with a local plumbing and electricity expert, the group rented and renovated a space and purchased equipment and office necessities with a stipend provided following their training.

The new office has been endorsed by the local government with emphasis on its importance in stimulating the labor market and creating future job opportunities for additional youth. Local government officials have committed to employ the business for maintenance work required by government departments.

“The Rummanah center is now open, and around 60 young men and women have received training to strengthen their skills,” said Mayor of Rummanah, Khalid Abdullah Mahna.

“The opening of the center received a positive response, and the training that

UNDP provided has enhanced our skills. I think that the center is helping a lot of youth in Anbar. It brings hope back to the governorate,” said Waleed, previously unemployed.

“This center helped to employ twelve young men and women in Rummanah district thanks to UNDP and World Vision. We would like the opening of more centers to provide more training in the future,” said Kaled Ahmad Turki, Electrical and Water Installations.

UNDP’s Socio-economic and Community Resilience for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (SERVE) Project is working to encourage reintegration in communities of Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din by providing livelihoods and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support with partner World Vision Iraq, supported generously by the Government of Japan. Through phase one of the project, 334 individuals have received support.



FAO launching training workshop on Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable Land Management in the south

Basra, 27 February 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources, and local governments launched a seven-day training workshop for 30 agriculture extension officers from Muthana governorate as part of a cohort-training program. The workshop is under the "Sustainable Land Management for Improved Livelihoods in Degraded areas of Iraq" project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and is focused on Conservation Agriculture as a Sustainable Land Management practice through Farmers Field School approach.

The extension officers trained as trainers of farmers, who will in turn spearhead a farmer-to-farmer extension delivery on Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable Land Management across the project locations. The training covers thematic subjects such as the roles and responsibilities of farmers field school trainers, criteria for selection and management of farming demonstration sites, principles of conservation agriculture, diagnosis and combating



land degradation, climate smart agriculture, and the design and implementation of an action plan on rural participatory farmer-to-farmer extension service delivery.

"By enhancing the capacity of extension officers and lead farmers, FAO aims to promote sustainable land management practices in Iraq and improve the livelihoods of farmers in degraded areas," said FAO Iraq Representative Dr Salah El hajj Hassan. "This training is a milestone in our efforts to support the agriculture sector in Iraq, and we remain committed to working with our

partners to ensure sustainable food systems in the country."

FAO's training workshop on Conservation Agriculture is a crucial step towards improving the livelihoods of farmers in degraded areas of Iraq. By empowering extension officers and lead farmers with knowledge and skills, we aim to positively impact agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability. FAO is committed to supporting the agriculture sector in Iraq and working with partners to ensure food security and sustainable development.

FAO strengthens Iraq's animal disease surveillance and reporting system capacity through the Event Mobile Application (EMA-I)



Erbil, 03 March 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Agriculture and water resource-KRG and with the financial support of the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), conducted a follow up-training workshop on the Event Mobile Application (EMA-i) in Erbil from 21 to 23 February 2023.

For the first time in Iraq and in collaboration with veterinary services, FAO introduced the Event Mobile Application (EMA-i) services. The first workshop was organized between 17 and 19 October 2022, in Baghdad, to facilitate real-time disease reporting and improve quantity and quality of notified disease reports, and to display disease situations, support decision-making, and prevent potential disease

spread and early response to emergency cases. Therefore, it is crucial to apply a system at the national level, to enhance veterinary services' capacities in disease reporting from the field to decision-makers, ease and speed information sharing among stakeholders. FAO has developed EMA-i for data collection and to facilitate real-time disease reporting to support veterinary services' capacities in disease surveillance and notification implemented in the field.

Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, underlined the importance of this collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (KRI) to improve early warning system and response to exceptional disease events, offer a better knowledge of animal health situation in regions and in the country for targeted disease control to protect and improve animal health of the livestock and livelihoods of farmers and

FAO strengthens Iraq's animal disease surveillance and reporting system capacity ... (continued)

livestock owners in the country and in the whole region. He added: "This training of trainers on the Event Mobile Application (EMA-i) aims at enhancing early warning systems and will ultimately contribute to the reduction of the food and health security threats arising from emerging, transboundary as well as endemic pathogens."

The use of an electronic system for data collection by EMA-I application on smartphones, as well as data management, analysis, and reporting using Global Animal Disease Information System (EMPRES-i) will support veterinary services capacities

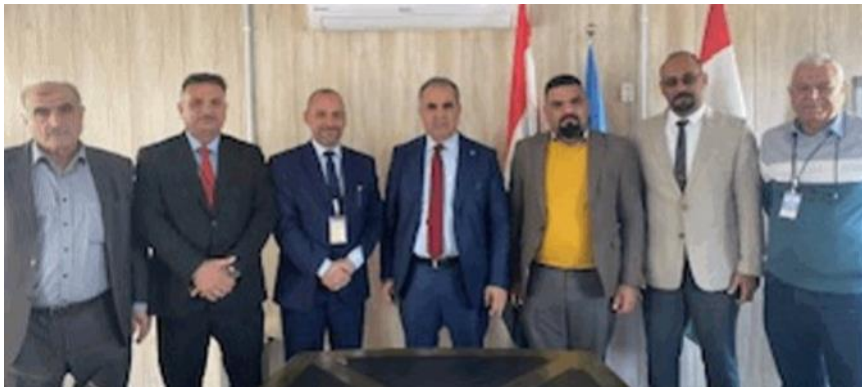
in disease surveillance implemented in the field. Using the application will significantly increase the number of reports received from field veterinarians. Moreover, it will improve the coherence in sharing epidemiological information between neighbouring districts, regions, and national governments.

Following the requests raised after the first training held in Baghdad, Iraq, an updated version of the application was developed considering participants' notes and recommendations. A training, integrating these new requested functionalities, is conducted amongst trainees from the first session

to strengthen their skills. Practical exercises were conducted to guide them in mastering the application. A particular focus was given to the web-based platform (EMPRES-i+) allowing the completion of disease report workflow (for data management).

The activity involved 33 participants from the veterinary departments from Al-Anbar, Al-Muthanna, Basrah, Duhok, Ninawa and Wasit in addition to Baghdad and Erbil central departments, and representatives from the Ministry of Health were invited to strengthen collaboration and exchange information related to zoonotic diseases as part of the One Health concept.

FAO Iraq trains ministry of agriculture staff on good agricultural practices



Baghdad, 03 March 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq held a training of trainers' workshop for the Ministry of Agriculture's staff under the project funded by the Belgian Government. The workshop aimed to train farmers on Good Agricultural Practices, which

develop capacity building and technical skills in crop production, fertilization, irrigation, pest control, harvesting, and equipment maintenance, leading to improved agricultural productivity, food security, and farmers' income.

Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, inaugurated

the workshop and emphasized the importance of raising farmers' awareness and improving their technical skills. He also stressed that the training aimed to equip the Ministry of Agriculture's staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to train farmers, including the new approach of Good Agriculture Practices contributing to reducing production costs, preserving natural resources, protecting the environment, and increasing farmers' income.

The workshop was a part of FAO's ongoing efforts to support the development of Iraq's agricultural sector and enhance food security through a project that aims to improve the farmers' technical skills and increase their productivity, leading to the sustainable development of Iraq's agricultural sector.

A high-level delegation visits FAO field activities

Nineveh, 5 March 2023 - A high-level delegation from Ministry of Agriculture, Council of Advisors to the Presidency of the Government and Engineers Syndicate visited the successful field activities achieved by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq project funded by the European Union in developing dairy/fodder value chain and empowering rural women and youth in Nineveh. A number of milk collection processing and marketing centres were inaugurated in the presence of the FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan.



FAO hands over IT equipment to the Veterinary Hospital in Anbar

Anbar, 7 March 2023 - Today, FAO Iraq Representative, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, and Deputy Veronica Quattrola handed over IT equipment to the Veterinary Hospital in Anbar, under the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency funded project. This will help enhance the delivery of veterinary services and support the livelihoods of farmers.



Anbar, 7 March 2023 - Today, FAO Iraq representative, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, met with the First Deputy Governor of Anbar, Dr. Jasim Mohammed Abdullah, to discuss support for the animal health sector and future collaboration in agriculture and livestock. At FAO Iraq we believe in the power of partnerships to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development.



Baghdad, 8 March 2023 - Collaboration is the key! FAO Iraq representative Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, had a fruitful discussion on rural and sustainable development with the Turkish Ambassador to Iraq, Ali Rıza Guney. FAO Iraq reaffirms its commitment to strengthen collaboration in achieving #ZeroHunger.

FAO participation in the 14th Agricultural Week exhibition in Baghdad to support rural women

Baghdad, 15 March 2023 - The 14th edition of the Agricultural Week exhibition was officially launched yesterday at the Baghdad International Fair, under the patronage of His Excellency the Prime Minister and the auspices of His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture. Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO representative in Iraq, participated in the opening ceremony and welcomed the Minister of Agriculture at the FAO-MOA stand, where women beneficiaries from FAO-EU-funded projects showcased their dairy products. He highlighted the efforts in supporting these women and building their capacity, saying: I am proud of the progress these women beneficiaries have made in milk processing and cheese production. Thanks to the EU support and the commitment of FAO and MOA teams in supporting and building their capacities, they are now able to produce natural, local, and new brands of dairy products with exceptional high-quality. The FAOR also highlighted the

importance of this partnership Those women, who fled their lands and houses years ago because of ISIL's takeover of their regions and facing not only the challenges of the aftermath of war but also climate change, are playing an important role in rebuilding their communities and livelihoods, bringing hope and employing youth." Dr Chedly Kayouli, Senior FAO Livestock Expert who has been accompanying and training these women since the beginning of the projects, praised the quality of their products and new brands of cheeses and that the hygiene, high quality, and variety of the produced cheeses are exceptional and well appreciated by stand visitors, customers, and even restaurants in Erbil and other regions in Iraq. FAO projects funded by the EU implemented in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and local governments aim to diversify and improve livelihoods while addressing climate change and water scarcity challenges facing Iraq through the

implementation of smart agricultural practices to be more climate-resilient and contribute to food security and increase employment opportunities. The Agricultural Week is being held during the period from the 14th to the 19th of March, the exhibition is an excellent opportunity to showcase the potential of Iraq's agricultural sector and the country's economic development. FAO is proud to participate in this exhibition and invites all colleagues from UN agencies and partners to visit and support these women by promoting their excellent local products.



FAO Iraq showcases its innovative projects at the Agricultural Week at the Baghdad International Fair



Baghdad, 14 March 2023 – The FAO Iraq Representative, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, attended this morning the opening ceremony of the 14th edition of the Agricultural Week at the Baghdad International Fair with his Excellency the Iraqi Minister of Agriculture. The visit of the Iraqi Minister of Agriculture to FAO stand at the Baghdad International Fair was a great opportunity for FAO Iraq to

showcase the hard work of its team and partners, especially EU in Iraq and MoA in supporting agriculture across the country.

FAO representative joined the FAO team and beneficiaries to welcome the minister and share more about the innovative projects and products on display at our stand.

On the margins of the 14th edition of Agricultural Week, FAO Iraq

Representative, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, met with the technical deputy of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), farmers and ID program director to discuss the ID program, the technical support to the national wheat program and the crucial role of FAO in supporting them.

The tireless efforts of general managers, employees and farmers in revitalizing the sector were also recognized during a ceremony.

Dr El Hajj Hassan was delighted to participate in the distribution of certificates of appreciation.

FAO is also proud to have received a Certificate of Thanks and Appreciation from MoA for FAO Iraq's remarkable contribution and participation in the 14th edition of Agricultural Week!

FAO is committed to supporting Iraq's agricultural development.

Improving the tomato value chain

Basra, 16 March 2023 - The FAO office in Basra recently organized a training session as part of the FAO-EU project "Restoration and Strengthening the Resilience of Agri-Food Systems in Southern Iraq".

In line with Improving the tomato value chain FAO in Basra introduced new production techniques aimed at improving soil texture, content, and productivity. The training also presented environmentally friendly methods for securing and increasing farmers' income.

Through this specialized training, fodder crops such as alfa-alfa, berseem and Sudanese sorghum are being intercropped in tomato fields. These

techniques not only improve soil fertility and structure, but also provide an additional source of income for farmers while improving the livestock feeding system in southern Iraq.

Twenty extension people (FFS Facilitators) from the directorate of agriculture of the governorate of Basra attended the training, which was conducted by Dr Chedly Kayouli, Senior FAO Livestock Expert. Twenty-five (25) kg of alfa-alfa and berseem seeds were provided to a pilot farmer for an early test.

The next step for the project is a Farmer Field School (FFS) training in the field, on the first week of April. The training will include sowing



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



Baghdad, 22 March 2023 – FAO Iraq's representative, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan met with the under-secretary of prime minister's Directorate for Women Empowerment and representatives of few ministries. Directorate recognizes FAO's excellence in empowering rural women and seeks to leverage FAO's experience for their strategy.



Baghdad, 10 April 2023 – FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, met Mr. Nizar Amidi, Iraq's Minister of Environment. They discussed shared priorities and updates on sustainable development including projects on #ClimateChange. Opportunities for further cooperation were also explored to achieve zero hunger.

First SAAVI local agribusiness development and investment plan endorsed

Basra, 22 March 2023 - Iraq's agriculture sector is set for a transformational boost, as Al Zubair farmer alliance's first local agribusiness development and investment plan is now endorsed by local authorities, private sector, and international partners.

The plan was prepared by stakeholders themselves, giving them an opportunity to prioritize their own needs under the framework of the International Trade Centre's EU-funded "Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq" (SAAVI) project.

It was officially signed by the alliance's representative, a buyer (retail stores), the Director of Agriculture, and ITC's SAAVI implementing partner (NRC) earlier in Al Zubair.

The five-year local agribusiness development and investment plan was developed as part of a participatory process which culminated with a workshop to define the priorities of the alliance's members: improving their profitability and overall competitiveness in the market.

It outlines key activities and provides a detailed costed plan for investment to improve production and productivity, enhance quality, improve efficient marketing, and create a conducive business environment.

The plan also includes clear strategies for inclusion of various groups, adaptation and contribution to climate change mitigation, and overall impact on employment.

It will also be instrumental in preparing micro-project proposals that will be competitively selected to receive block grants through SAAVI project. It will be used to provide support to the alliance from various agencies including FAO, IOM, WFP, ACF, and Eco-consult in the same location. The



representatives readily expressed support for the plan, and willingness to work in a coordinated manner towards its implementation.

SAAVI has established 10 similar agribusiness alliances across Iraq, each linked with reputable buyers, and it is anticipated that this market-based model will improve the competitiveness of over 1500 farms and SMEs. The SAAVI Agribusiness alliance model is an innovative business model that offers farmers support to improve their production capacities, upgrade their business models, develop their own local business plans, and establish long-term mutually beneficial partnerships with buyers.

SAAVI has also formalized partnerships with major private sector actors to be lead buyers in the agribusiness alliances, including Zuhour Alwatan, Rawnaq aldur, Waffir, Beirut Erbil Potato Company, and Finest Foods Germany. Additional potential partners include Carrefour, MONRO Company, VANO Group, and Pepsico.

Dr. Hussain, Director of Agriculture in Basra speaking on the occasion said, "We warmly welcome this agribusiness development and investment plan, which is closely aligned with our own goals of revitalizing and transforming

Iraq's agriculture sector for the benefit of our farmers and communities. Our doors are always open to support such initiatives that drive sustainable economic growth and job creation, and we look forward to working hand in hand with our partners to turn this vision into a reality."

Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation for the EU Delegation said, "The European Union is proud to support the SAAVI project in Iraq, which is unlocking the potential of the country's agri food sector and creating opportunities for inclusive economic growth and job creation. Through strategic partnerships and innovative business models, SAAVI is driving sustainable development and strengthening the resilience of Iraqi farmers and agribusinesses. We are confident that this project will have a lasting impact and pave the way for a brighter future for Iraq."

Eric Buchot, who leads the International Trade Centre's operations in Iraq said, "We are thrilled to see the SAAVI alliances recognized as powerful instruments of sustainable development, backed by strategic partnerships with local and international organizations that amplify our impact and transform Iraq's agriculture sector for the better." SAAVI project contributes to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth in Iraq, by improving the country's agriculture competitiveness and supporting trade development.

The project is funded by the European Union (EU) and forms part of the overall EU Special Measure 2019 for Iraq which aims at supporting stabilization and governance through building the capacities of key Iraqi institutions to deliver public services, as well as sustainable job creation through the development of human capital and the private sector.



Building competitiveness of the potato sector in Iraq



Ninewah, 28 March 2023 – (ITC News) In a country mired by unemployment and over-dependence on oil resources, the Iraqi potato sector holds untapped potential for growth. Over the next few years, potatoes are expected to be the second highest in demand after tomatoes in the Iraqi horticulture sector.

Ahmed Hussain Mohammed grows potatoes on his farm in Ninewah, an area that was still occupied by ISIS five years ago.

He attended a governorate level round of consultation held in Mosul recently, as part of efforts to support the development of the potato sector strategy in Iraq.

“Ninewah is considered the breadbasket of Iraq, as it provides food to all governorates. Potatoes are a strategic product for the region,” Ahmed said.

A similar governorate level consultation was also held in Baghdad on 14 February.

Public and private sector representatives, including farmers, processors, traders, retailers, and agri-support business services, as well as development partners actively engaged in the rounds of consultations.

These consultations are a milestone towards the elaboration of the national strategy for the potato sector.

The strategy will provide a roadmap to improve competitiveness of farmers and small and medium enterprises, in line with the priorities set by the government. It is accompanied by a detailed 5-year Plan of Action with measurable and prioritized actions. It builds on structured discussions with farmers and small businesses.

The Ministry of Agriculture is leading the preparation of the strategy with the International Trade Centre facilitating the elaboration of the potato sector strategy within the framework of the European Union-funded project, “Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq” (SAAVI).

Beyond the participatory nature of the process, the development of the strategy is also based on solid evidence and research. More than 500 competitiveness surveys focusing on agribusinesses and farmers were completed throughout the country. Over 3000 interviews were conducted at the national level with consumers as well as with representatives from various stakeholder groups, such as

traders, wholesalers, and retailers, to help better understand market demand, and identify areas of improvement and market opportunities.

The efforts built upon the successful development of ITC-facilitated Iraq’s Tomato and Poultry Sustainable Development Strategies (2022-2026), under the leadership of the Government of Iraq. The strategies were endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture and officially launched in July 2022 and are currently under implementation. A National Core Team formed by key public and private sector representatives has been established to provide guidance to the implementation of the strategies. It also oversees the design process of the potato sector strategy.

The next round of consultations will be held in May, in the presence of international potato sector experts, prominent companies, and senior government officials.

About SAAVI: The ‘Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-Food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy’ (SAAVI) project, funded by the European Union, focuses on the development and implementation of sector strategies for high-potential products, as well as on defining market-oriented policies to improve predictability and efficiency in the business environment. SAAVI also helps enhance Iraq’s trade policy and supports the country in its WTO accession process.

SAAVI is implemented under the leadership of the Government of Iraq through the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade.

The project forms part of the overall European Union Special measure for supporting employment creation and improving economic governance in Iraq.

FAO Iraq continues to assist buffalo farmers in the Southern Iraqi Marshes

Basra, 15 April 2023 - Supported by the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq (FAO Iraq) continues to assist buffalo farmers in the Southern Iraqi Marshes through strategic assistance, to adopt climate-smart agricultural practices for sustainable feeding systems, including promoting drought-resistant forage crops. Extension officers and farmers from Al-Uzair sub-district in Al-Kahla district of Maysan governorate took part in the

distribution of 9 tons of green fodder seeds, specifically fodder sorghum, for

spring planting provided by FAO Iraq with European Union support.



FAO and partners working on an operational plan to advance agricultural sector in Iraq

Baghdad, 11 April 2023 - Under the directives of Iraq Prime Minister, Mohammed S. Al-Sudani, the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, met with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture's Technical Deputy and Agricultural Engineers Syndicate president to formulate an operational plan to advance agricultural sector in Iraq. Concerted efforts with the Ministry and partners are essential to develop an operational plan for sustainable and inclusive agriculture that meets market needs and provides jobs and investment opportunities.



The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and partners continue to boost agricultural livelihoods in Nineveh

Nineveh, 15 April 2023 - FAO representative in Iraq, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan led a mission to several sites in Nineveh to follow up on the implementation of FAO-EU funded project, "Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) joined by Dr Rabea Yousef Elias, the Director of Agriculture, FAO experts and MoA team.

The mission started in Baashiqqa, where 50 cooling tanks of different capacities were received and will be distributed to milk collection centres. According to Dr Chedly Kayouli, FAO livestock expert, "This new equipment for cooling milk is used for the first time in rural areas at a large scale in Iraq and will prevent and reduce milk post-harvest losses and improve milk quality." The project is also empowering additionally 30 women households with milking machines that will enable them to have less physical work and more time dedicated to their families.

The delegation visited one of the wheat producers in Mosul who is already implementing the FAO wheat improvement package where the FAOR in Iraq highlighted the importance of scaling up the successful examples implemented on wheat production improvement through the complete package jointly introduced by FAO and MoA under this EU funded project that will allow inclusion of other crops like fodder crop in the crop rotation with wheat which improved productivity and may promote further food security. Ahmed Rashad Ajaj, owner of the



wheat field, acknowledged the techniques and inputs introduced by FAO which enabled him to increase wheat productivity by up to 50%.

Water scarcity and crop adaptation were discussed during a meeting with the Deputy Director of Al-Mhallabia district.

The mission also visited additional fodder-producing beneficiaries adopting fodder production package which achieved great success, according to one of the beneficiaries, Muhammad Adel Ibrahim, who was able to increase his production as well as better quality of produced milk, and positive results on animal health.

Under further rural empowerment activities and support the visit ended with the inauguration of two village milk collection and processing centres run by two women groups for dairy products in Al-Bakr neighbourhood in Mosul and Al-Mahalabiya. These centres will contribute to improved milk productivity, hygiene, and overall food safety.

At the end of the mission, Dr. Rabea Yousef Elias, stressed on the importance of conveying new ideas to



local farmers, including the adoption of modern techniques and praised the distinguished interventions of FAO in Ninawa.

FAO representative in Iraq stated: "FAO is committed to supporting the agricultural sector throughout the development of the main value chains. Our cooperation with the EU and the Ministry of Agriculture is a significant step towards achieving sustainable agricultural livelihoods in Iraq, and we will continue to work diligently to support the country's farmers and agricultural communities. We are proud of the progress made so far and are confident that these projects will make a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people in



UNIDO and Government of Japan collaborate on Sustainable Development of the Food Industry in Iraq



Baghdad, 20 April 2023 - The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Government of Japan are proud to announce their collaboration on the "Emergency livelihood support to mitigate the food insecurity crisis among vulnerable people in Iraq" project. This project is part of Japan's long-running support through the Japanese Supplementary Budget to the Iraqi people.

The project will enhance sustainable livelihood opportunities and food security in Iraq and builds on the foundation of previous projects supported by the Japanese Government and UNIDO to strengthen resilience and employability.

The project will address the critical issue of food insecurity by revitalizing traditional food processing industries in Nineveh and Duhok Governorates, which have been heavily impacted by

the ongoing crisis in Iraq. The project will also target internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to scale-up domestic and household-level food production and support the transition from subsistence to self-reliance.

As part of the project, UNIDO will provide hands-on training and market-oriented growth guidance to MSMEs producing traditional food products with business and food safety and hygiene training. This will help to strengthen the capacities of communities to address the lack of livelihoods, dependence on food imports, significantly decreased income, and increased food prices. In addition, UNIDO will also support the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Agriculture in these governorates and non-government institutions to provide training and extension services to the MSMEs producing traditional food

products.

The project directly contributes and promotes women's economic empowerment through income generating activities and livelihood opportunities. Women who are extensively involved in agricultural activities, food processing, and preservation will be provided training for improved business management, tools, and equipment as well as extension services.

The emergency livelihood support project is aligned with the overall country's strategy to support longer-term development objectives in rural areas. The project will contribute to improving the lives of vulnerable people, particularly women, in Iraq.

"We recognize that there are still tremendous basic needs of vulnerable groups including IDPs, returnees and refugees in Nineveh and Duhok. I commend UNIDO for its tireless efforts to respond to those people's needs", said Mr. MASAMOTO Kenichi, Charge d' Affaires ad interim, the Embassy of Japan in Iraq.

"I trust that UNIDO will improve the people's livelihood in Nineveh and Duhok backed by the coordination with the authorities and communities of these governorates, through completing this project and making use of UNIDO's excellent expertise" added Mr. Kenichi.

UNIDO and the Government of Japan are committed to continue their long-running support to Iraq and its people through projects that foster sustainable development and promote economic growth.

FAO Iraq with EU in Iraq support equips farmers with 50 milk cooling tanks of different capacities

Basra, 30 April 2023 - Rural Small Dairy Producers in Iraq regularly suffered considerable post-harvest loss of milk and milk products, due to high temperature coupled with absence of cooling facilities and lack of adequate transportation means which accelerate the spoilage of milk.

The absence of small/medium processing units, equipped with cold chain in rural areas in Iraq obligates Om Khaled and her Women Group (as well as Eman and her group, including her daughters) to process the whole quantity of milk until late night.

For the first time in rural areas in Iraq and at a large scale in Nineveh Governorate, FAO Iraq with EU in Iraq support has empowered 61 farmers

groups, mainly women (more than 600 beneficiaries), by equipping them and securing 50 milk cooling tanks of different capacities.

Milk cooling tanks have been introduced and installed for the first time in dairy centers in the 27th of April in Shaquili village. Women beneficiaries stored 400L in each unit of milk for processing into laban and cheese.

The provision of such equipment shows the continuous interventions and significant progress made by FAO Iraq in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture in supporting and developing the milk production and processing value chain, which will increase employment opportunities in rural areas in Iraq.

Relieved of heavy chores, the beneficiaries

enjoyed their first peaceful night's sleep before delivering their products to the Baghdad market.



The journey of Samar, female entrepreneur in Iraq



Mosul, 7 March 2023 - (ILO News) When Samar returned to her home-city of Mosul, following years of conflict and displacement, she knew she had to rebuild her life from scratch.

With no home or a job to return to, Samar's life was full of uncertainties.

"The first year we had nothing. We did not even have a proper home. We had to rent a place and buy things. And there were no work opportunities at the time for young women and men," said the mother-of-five.

Despite the challenges, Samar was determined to set up a small business to help support her family. She slowly began operating a small home-based business of making and selling sweets and pastries to neighbours and friends, with the help of two other women who were also looking to generate some income.

"Making pastries and sweets was always a hobby of mine. I learnt it from my mother and my grandmother and I always loved it," explained Samar. "I spoke to my husband about setting up a small business and he was very supportive. This way I would be able to fulfil my dream and at the same time, contribute to our income."

Samar started building her client base,

receiving orders for weddings and other celebrations, eventually allowing her to rent a small public space to display some of her products. "At the start, the work was modest but I got creative, and I started coming up with new ideas to make the products look good, with different designs, colours and packaging, based on my clients' needs." In 2022, Samar found out about an ILO initiative supporting entrepreneurs to start or expand their businesses, through financial services and loan disbursement in partnership with local banks, and trainings on ILO's business management and financial literacy programmes.

Samar attended a five-day Financial Education programme, which introduced her and other participants to various concepts aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills in financial management. Topics included setting smart financial goals, managing money wisely, creating a budget to ensure prudent debt management, choosing saving products, and establishing good relationships with financial institutions.

"This was the first time that I took part in a financial education training. I learnt about budgeting and ensuring

that all my monthly expenses are calculated in terms of paying my bills and buying new products. And of course, I also have to make sure there is emergency money in case I need it."

"What was also important is that we learnt that we should make use of every product and material we have, and not leave anything to waste, and that we should work hard and be proactive," added Samar.

The initiative is implemented under the PROSPECTS Partnership, with the support of the Government of the Netherlands. The ILO launched a financial inclusion initiative with the Central Bank of Iraq and partner banks to facilitate access to affordable financial services for young Internally Displaced Persons and host community members in Dohuk and Ninewa.

Through this initiative, Samar was able to secure a loan with the National Bank of Iraq, which has now helped her rent a bigger space and buy machinery to run her business at a greater scale. "Before, I would sometimes turn down orders which I could not accommodate because I lacked supplies. Now I can buy products and machinery to run my business, like this new juice and ice cream maker, which will be extremely popular in the summer months."

In addition to helping the business grow, the loan has ensured more long-term jobs for three women who work with her.

Samar says she is proud of her achievements and hopes to be able to expand even further in the future.

"People congratulate me on my achievements and tell me how well my business has done. This means the world to me. So, I would like to tell other women not to give up on their dreams. Women have great business ideas, creativity and innovation. They should make use of those talents."

ILO opens new office in Basra

Basra, 13 March 2023 - ILO is delighted to open its new office in Basra to strengthen coordination with its tripartite constituents and provide better support to women and men workers in southern Iraq. The ILO will work with partners to implement programmes that support labour-intensive approaches, business management and skills development, employment services, and the private sector development.

Action to address climate change and promote a greener economy and green decent employment will be central to ILO's efforts.



Introducing labour and social security laws to university students in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 06 March 2023 - The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, together with the International Labour Organization, held a symposium in Erbil on Monday (March 6) to discuss the introduction of labour and social security laws into university curricula.

The event brought together representatives from the government, Members of Parliament, employers' and workers' organizations, key policymakers, academics and representatives of universities, career development centres and several other entities.

It included panel discussions on the changing outlook and prospects of young graduates towards employment in the private sector and some of the key obstacles and challenges in this regard. Discussions also highlighted the importance of introducing the labour and social security laws into university curricula and the modalities and mechanisms needed to ensure these topics are taught in higher education.

"Access to job opportunities and developing the capacities of our youth is an important national issue," said Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Aram Mohammad

Qadir. "We, at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, are doing our utmost to develop the capacity of our youth and university graduates, so they can compete for job opportunities. We are currently working to better align the content of the curricula with the needs of the labour market, ensuring they are relevant to the needed skills of the labour market."

"This event is important as coordination between the two ministries concerning the labour and social security laws is of great importance and we have a Memorandum of Understanding between the two ministries in this regard," said Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Zakia Syed Saleh. "We invite all partners involved to strengthen their coordination, especially in implementing these policies and for the ILO to continue to provide its specialised technical support, so we can ensure that workers in the private sector and those who are self-employed are well protected."

Introducing the laws to graduates would allow students to understand the benefits of social security and cultivate broader support for social security coverage among young workers as well as the wider public.

The discussions are part of broader efforts to extend social security coverage, strengthen legal protections and guarantees for workers and to improve the business environment.

With the support of the European Union, the ILO has been working with its tripartite constituents - government, employer, and worker representatives - as well as parliamentarians, to review the draft retirement and social security law. Key improvements under the draft law include extending coverage to workers in the informal sector, self-employed, and business owners. It also introduces new benefits to all workers in the private sector, both formal and informal, such as those related to maternity and unemployment.

It has also provided technical support in the review of the Labour Law to ensure the law meets international standards and best practices. The law was approved by parliament recently.

"We commend the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for the recent development in relation to parliament's approval of the labour law, which seeks to protect workers and enhance working conditions particularly for women and youth and address child labour, including its worst forms," said ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Maha Kattaa. "Introducing the labour law and social security law into university curricula is an excellent step in enhancing the awareness of young graduates on their rights in the world of work" Kattaa added.

The ILO will provide technical support to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in simplifying the two laws in a booklet to be used as learning material for students. It will also support training university lecturers in conducting sessions on labour and social security laws and rights.



Over 600 graduates from across Basra received trainings in ILO's career guidance and Know About Business programmes

Basra, 14 March 2023 - Over 600 graduates from across Basra received trainings in ILO's career guidance and Know About Business programmes. The three-day activity was implemented in collaboration with the Agriculture College of Basra University.

The trainings focused on supporting young women and men in choosing their future professions, develop their job search techniques, improve their

understanding of the job market and employment services available to them, and develop a positive approach to entrepreneurship for those interested in setting up their own businesses.

The sessions were guided by ILO career development tools, namely "How to organize my job search? A step-by-step guide for job seekers and those who support them" and "How to choose my future profession? A step-by-step guide for job seekers," as well as ILO's

flagship "Know About Business" entrepreneurship education programme.

Similar trainings took place in Erbil, Duhok and Shaqlawa in February.

With the support of European Union in Iraq under an ILO project to enhance labour governance, inspection and working conditions in Iraq.



ILO on Twitter

Geneva, 22 March 2023 - Gilbert F. Hounbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization, on Twitter: "Very pleased to receive @IraqiGovt's ratification of two key ILO Conventions: Social Security (Minimum Standards, 102) and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. I look forward to continue working with the govt and social partners to promote decent work and advance social justice."

Iraq and ILO intensify efforts to strengthen social security system, in light of recent ratification of ILO flagship Social Security Convention (C102)

Baghdad, 26 March 2023 - Iraq (ILO News) The Government of Iraq ratified ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006) on March 22.

This makes Iraq the second country in the region to ratify ILO Social Security Convention No. 102, after Jordan.

ILO Social Security Convention No. 102 is the foundation of all ILO Social Security Conventions. It outlines the minimum standards of the nine branches of social security: medical care, family benefit, maternity benefit, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, employment injury benefit, old-age benefit, invalidity benefit, and survivors' benefit.

"The ratification of Convention No. 102 by Iraq emphasizes its commitment to enshrining social security as an inherent right and to reforming national legislation and regulations to strengthen legal protection and safeguards for workers and improve the business environment," said Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, Ahmed Jasim Al-Asadi, when depositing the instrument of ratification to Director-General of the ILO Gilbert F. Hounbo in Geneva.

The Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government is already in the process of revising its social security legislation.

Currently, the social security system for private-sector workers in Iraq has very minimal coverage, and lacks two branches of social security - maternity and unemployment benefits - leaving covered workers vulnerable to poverty in the event of job loss or pregnancy.

Supporting the process to ensure the extension of social security coverage to workers in the private sector has been one of ILO's key priorities under a European Union funded programme to reform social protection, which is being jointly implemented by the Government of Iraq, ILO, UNICEF and WFP.

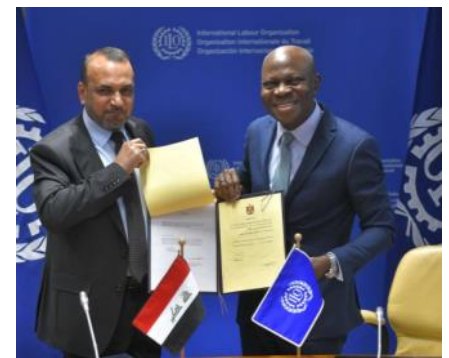
The ILO has been working closely with government, workers' and employers' representatives, and Members of Parliaments on the proposed amendments to the legal instruments in Federal and the Kurdistan region. The proposed amendments are based on legal assessment and actuarial valuations, conducted by the ILO.

The current drafts for Federal Iraq and Kurdistan Region, upon endorsement by both governments, will strengthen the sustainability of the schemes,

expand the range of entitlements to include maternity and unemployment benefits, and support the extension of legal coverage to informal workers, which represent 66.6% of total employment.

"The legal reform process aims to bring national legislation more closely in line with the Convention. This is critical in ensuring a more inclusive social protection system for workers and future generations in Iraq," added ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq Maha Kattaa.

Moving forward, the ILO will continue to provide technical assistance, as required, to the legislative reform process and support the Government of Iraq in its reporting responsibilities towards the ILO supervisory bodies.



Fostering youth employment through sports

Basra, 30 March 2023 - It was a day for realizing career aspirations, when more than 100 youth participated in a job fair organized recently in Basra. Over the course of two days, they were



interviewed by 10 companies for more than 5,000 vacancies.

The venue was the Sports City Basra where the UEFA Foundation, Common Goal and Palestine Sport4Life (PS4L), the Iraq Ministry of Youth & Sport and the International Trade Centre (ITC) hosted the first Kick for Trade football festival.

Selected youth interacted with prospective employers, and representatives from private sector organizations gained access to a potentially skilled workforce.

The festival featured social and educational events, including a youth forum designed to help with developing

leadership skills and promoting important social messages.

Other activities organized at the fair included helping young people to develop their CV writing and interviewing skills, developing life-skills opportunities through the Kick for Trade initiative and workshops on opportunities in the agri-value chain.

"PS4L is glad to have led the football festival, contributing to the development of life skills for youth such as respect, adaptability and leadership," said Sameh Masri, chairman of PS4L.

The Kick for Trade Football Festival was organized under the framework of

Fostering youth employment through sports *(continued)*

the European Union-funded 'Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy' (SAAVI) project.

David Cordobes, Head of Youth & Trade programme at ITC said, "With the SAAVI project, ITC is closely engaged with youth to build their skills for employment, expanding young people's entrepreneurship capacities, ultimately creating job opportunities and promoting the socio-economic

inclusion of youth in Iraq."

The collaboration will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, through promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all. SAAVI focuses on the development and implementation of sector strategies for high-potential products, as well as on defining market-oriented policies to improve predictability and efficiency in the business environment. SAAVI also

helps enhance Iraq's trade policy and supports the country in its WTO accession process.

SAAVI is implemented under the leadership of the Government of Iraq through the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade.

The project forms part of the overall European Union Special measure for supporting employment creation and improving economic governance in Iraq.

Iraq's recent ratification of ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) celebrated in Baghdad



Baghdad, 5 April 2023 - Government, employer and worker representatives, Members of Parliament, policymakers, think tanks as well as journalists, artists and scholars, came together to celebrate Iraq's recent ratification of ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). The event was organized by the ILO and Beit Alhikmah, "House of Wisdom," - an Iraqi intellectual and scientific

establishment.

Partners discussed the importance of the convention for Iraq and next steps to be taken in light of its ratification. ILO Social Security Convention No. 102 is the foundation of all ILO Social Security Conventions. It is the only international instrument, based on basic social security principles, that establishes worldwide-agreed minimum standards for all nine branches of social

security.

Iraq deposited the instrument of ratification to Director-General of the ILO Gilbert F. Hougbo in Geneva on March 22, making it the second country in the region to ratify ILO Social Security Convention No. 102, after Jordan.

Currently, the social security system for private-sector workers in Iraq has very minimal coverage, and lacks two branches of social security - maternity and unemployment benefits - leaving uncovered workers vulnerable to poverty in the event of job loss or pregnancy.

The Government of Iraq is in the process of undertaking significant reforms of its social protection system, and the ILO is providing technical support in these efforts under the EU-funded Social Protection Programme: Leveraging Effective Response and Accelerating Reform project, and in line with the ILO's 2019-2023 Decent Work Country Programme for Iraq.

ILO and UN-Habitat implement vocational training sessions in Basra

Basra, 7 April 2023 - Fifty-five young women and men from Al-Ahrar, Al-Kubiyah, and Jurf Al-Melah neighbourhoods in Basra Governorate participated in vocational training sessions focused on decorating buildings, plumbing, and cosmetology, equipping them with market-relevant technical and professional competencies that can improve their employability and transition to decent jobs.

The ILO, jointly with UN-Habitat (UN-Habitat Iraq), implemented the training sessions under the European Union-funded project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-

19 Crisis".

Around 450 young women and men from the targeted neighborhoods will

participate in these vocational training sessions covering professions based on the labor market needs.



A job fair was held in Duhok



Duhok, 26 April 2023 - With Prospects ILO support, a job fair was held in Duhok, connecting job-seekers

from displaced, refugee and host communities with employers from the private sector, employment service

providers and NGOs. The fair was organized by Duhok Employment Directorate, in collaboration with the Duhok University, advertising over 250 job opportunities for young women and men from across the spectrum.

The fair was opened by Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Kwestan Mohammed, and attended by other senior officials.

The ILO through the Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq support is working with the Duhok Employment Directorate to improve career guidance, job-matching and employment services for forcibly displaced and host community members in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq aiming to enhance their access to decent work opportunities.

Other farmers need the knowledge I learned on Occupational Safety and Health

Basra, 27 April 2023 - I am Ziad Sa'ad, a beekeeper from Al Qurnah, a district in the southern Iraqi city of Basra. I also own a small farm which I manage with the help of my relatives and occasionally temporary farm workers.

I have a degree in media and communications, but I have always been a farmer and a beekeeper.

Our community has a relationship with our land that is hard to describe. Our fathers and grandfathers were also farmers. We love our farms, especially our palm trees. Our work and life cycle on these farms are interdependent.

Through our work, we take care of our environment and ensure our trees flourish. Our trees provide us with greenery, they provide us with oxygen, they provide us with shade. Our trees provide us with happiness.

At the same time, our work in agriculture promotes economic opportunities, security and self-reliance. It allows us to be independent. This is why we try to plant awareness among our community on the importance of our farms, especially in these areas here, which are poor.

I like to be active in my community; I do volunteer work on farms to ensure that the quality of trees is high, and I raise awareness among other farmers on issues which are important to them. We have set up different groups on Facebook and WhatsApp that specialise in Sidra trees, date farms, and beekeeping, among other things. We discuss issues related to agriculture – the challenges that farmers face – and we try to provide suggestions or



guidance.

In October last year, I joined a six-day training programme by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Peace and Freedom Organization (PFO) on Occupational Safety and Health. The training covered issues relating to safety at work, and to different types of work-related injuries and ways to prevent them. We also discussed the importance of having safety guidelines at work, and the importance of training sessions for farm owners and workers to raise their awareness on the dangers associated with farm work.

Following the training, we began discussing the issue of health and safety at work in all our social media groups. Through these groups, I try to transfer the knowledge that I learned on Occupational Safety and Health to other farm owners and farm workers, and this has been very useful for

farmers who could not attend the training.

We also added some of our instructors to these groups, so if we have any questions or concerns, we can contact them directly. They help raise awareness among farmers on the use of fertilizers and pesticides and the dangers associated with them, the use of protective gear such as goggles and gloves, and other issues that concern the farmers.

Many of the farmers do not have access to this information. But they all need to be made aware of these issues. We were told during the training that over two million people die each year around the world from occupational injury or illness. This is why it is so important for workers to have the knowledge they need to ensure their safety and health in the workplace.

Ziad Sa'ad took part in a six-day Occupational Safety and Health training of trainers programme in Basra, implemented by the International Labour Organization and the Peace and Freedom Organization under the framework of an ILO project titled "Enhancing labour governance, inspection and working conditions in response to COVID-19," which is supported by the European Union. The training, which also took place in Dohuk, targeted a total of 42 women and men from different backgrounds, covering issues related to Occupational Safety and Health and training techniques, based on ILO guidelines.

By Ziad Sa'ad

IOM commemorates World Day for Safety and Health at work

Baghdad, 28 April 2023 - April 28th is World Day for Safety and Health at Work, aimed at raising awareness of and promoting occupational health worldwide. Every year, 2.78 million work-related deaths occur, of which 2.4 million are due to occupational diseases. Migrants are often employed in high-risk and hazardous sectors such

as mining, agriculture, and construction, which are associated with increased occupational accidents and diseases.

In Iraq, 1 in 4 workers are employed in the construction or agriculture sectors, known to be among the most hazardous in the world. IOM supports access to essential healthcare for all migrants,

including those at risk of occupational diseases.

We highly endorse and encourage employers to improve labor conditions for workers in line with International Labor Standards. For more information, please visit: www.un.org/en/observances/work-safety-day

Security Sector Reform

Building capacity to fight corruption in Iraq

Baghdad, 17 March 2023 - Investigation and adjudication of corruption offences is vital in ensuring cases are handled in a timely manner, brought before a court of law, and result in actual convictions. Training investigators, judges and prosecutors on investigation and adjudication of public sector corruption, including corruption in public procurement, is necessary to deal with corruption cases effectively and efficiently.

From 05-06 March, with generous support from the European Union (EU), forty investigators from the Federal Commission of Integrity and Federal Bureau of Supreme Audit came together for a capacity building workshop on corruption in procurement, investigation, and adjudication.

In addition to capacity building, the workshop provided a unique opportunity for the investigators to learn and exchange ideas with other professionals in their field. The participants attended from governorates across Iraq, including Baghdad, Basra, Diwaniya, Kirkuk, Muthana, Najaf, Salah al-Din, and Thi Qar.

Over the course of two days, the workshop covered a wide range of topics, including the nature and forms



of corruption in procurement, procurement laws and regulations, proper conduct of investigations, adjudicating corruption cases, ethics and professional conduct, and international best practices. Participants asked insightful questions and shared their own experiences, deepening shared understanding of the issues at hand.

“The training had a great impact on me personally. I would like to see the continuation of these workshops due to their significant value in capacity building and allowing the exchange of experiences between international trainers and the trainees,” said Haider Abd Atiyah, Assistant Director General, Investigation Department, Muthanna Governorate.

“The workshop included both theoretical and practical aspects, and

the methods were highly effective in terms of facilitating brainstorming and dividing the participants into panel discussions. The participants were keen to interact during discussions,” said Saad Abdul Karim Zughair Jabr, Director of the Basra Investigation Directorate, Commission of Integrity. The EU and UNDP are currently working together on the 'Anti-Corruption and Arbitration in Iraq' Project, which builds on Iraq's efforts to improve transparency and accountability across state institutions. The project supports Iraq's fight against corruption by supporting institutions to revise anti-corruption laws and providing specialized on-demand training for corruption investigators and integrity judges.



UNDP supports efforts by the Government of Iraq to implement international obligations to combat corruption

Baghdad, 10 April 2023 - 50 parliamentary staff from the council of representatives have received training on the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and anti-corruption legal reform in Iraq.

This initiative is implemented by UNDP Iraq in partnership with the Federal Parliament with generous support from the European Union.



Signature of the Regional Framework for Arab States (2023 – 2028) and launch of the Arab Plan for Prevention and Reduction of the Dangers of Drugs to Arab Society: Towards Effective Handling of the Issue from a Social Perspective

Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 March 2023 - In continuation of the strong cooperation between the League of Arab States (LAS) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the “Regional Framework for the Arab States (2023 – 2028)” was signed and the “Arab Plan for Prevention and Reduction of the Dangers of Drugs to Arab Society: Towards Effective Handling of the Issue from a Social Perspective” was launched today Sunday the 26th of March at the LAS Headquarters. H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of LAS and H.E Ms. Ghada Waly, UNODC Executive Director co-signed the aforementioned Regional Framework (2023 – 2028).

The signature of the Framework and the launch of the Plan included the participation of H. E. Ms. Nivine El Kabbaj, Minister of Social Solidarity of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Permanent Member of the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, H. E. Maryam Bint Nasser Al-Misned, Minister of Social Development the State of Qatar and Chair of the 42nd session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, and with the presence of the Permanent Member States’ Ambassadors at LAS, a number of Ambassadors of different countries, in addition to Heads and Representatives of United Nations bodies and agencies.

The Regional Framework for the Arab States 2023-2028 acts as the overarching strategic framework for cooperation between UNODC and LAS. It frames how UNODC will strengthen, prioritize, customize, and deliver support to the Arab region in effective response to some of the most pressing challenges faced by these countries and in connection with UNODC’s mandates



and specialties.

The Regional Framework articulates six focus areas for guiding UNODC-implemented programming at the regional and national levels and they are: a balanced approach to drug control, strengthening the response to organized crime, combating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, action against corruption and financial crime, preventing and countering terrorism and violence, and strengthening crime/violence prevention and criminal justice.

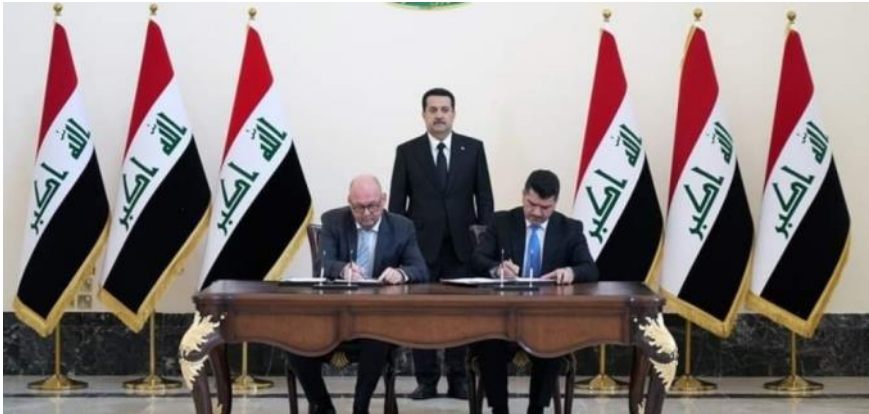
Furthermore, the Regional Framework applies six key accelerators across all programmatic interventions to speed up progress and maximize efforts towards fast-tracking the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and they are: partnerships, women and girls, innovation, science, and forensics, human rights, youth and children, and inclusive and people-centered programming. The programme will also support UNODC’s partnership expansion with Member States in the region to include current vital Ministries and Institutions relevant to youth, solidarity, education, culture, human rights, countering corruption; in addition to previous partnerships with the Ministries of Justice, Interior, and Health.

The event also saw the launch of the Arab Plan for Prevention and Reduction of the Dangers of Drugs to Arab Society: Towards Effective Handling of the Issue from a Social Perspective. This important plan represents a regional social framework for combating drugs in the Arab States by highlighting the social dimension of drug demand reduction in the context of its negative impact on social

development in specific and sustainable development in general. This is also at the heart of efforts to achieve the Arab Declaration adopted by LAS in 2016 to implement the Sustainable Development Agenda 2023. The present document provides an indicative vision for guiding Arab action towards a comprehensive and integrated response based on scientific evidence and consistent with Arab specificity of this phenomenon. The Plan aims to build national strategies and action plans that meet national requirements and includes a number of initiatives, projects and activities that achieve their objectives in complementarity with Arab efforts to combat the supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through comprehensive actions that include proactiveness and social resolution.

The Arab Plan’s dimensions showcase the methods of how to address this phenomenon from a social perspective and in line with Arab countries’ regulations and conditions in order to implement effective interventions including related multidimensional social and development consequences and to strengthen Arab efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The important dimensions of the Plan include community prevention, rehabilitation and social integration, addressing drug-related harm and its consequences, as well as the dimensions and themes in support of the Plan’s areas of action, namely international cooperation, scientific research and innovation, coordination mechanisms, governance, implementation, measurement and impact assessment.

Government of Iraq and UNDP sign Memorandum of Understanding to boost the fight against corruption



Baghdad, 12 April 2023 – The Government of Iraq, represented by the Prime Minister's Office, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have reaffirmed their partnership and commitment to preventing and combating corruption in Iraq by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) designed to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity in the public and private sectors.

The MoU, signed for a two-year period, builds on UNDP's current support to respond to anti-corruption priorities in Iraq, including capacity development of

anti-corruption bodies and support to strategic and legal frameworks in line with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. Joint efforts will also focus on creating an enabling environment for constructive dialogue with civil society, the private sector, academia, and media on reporting corruption, and empowering key national stakeholders to play a stronger role in enhancing transparency and accountability systems.

His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mohammad Shia' Al-Sudani, while attending the signing ceremony, affirmed that countering corruption

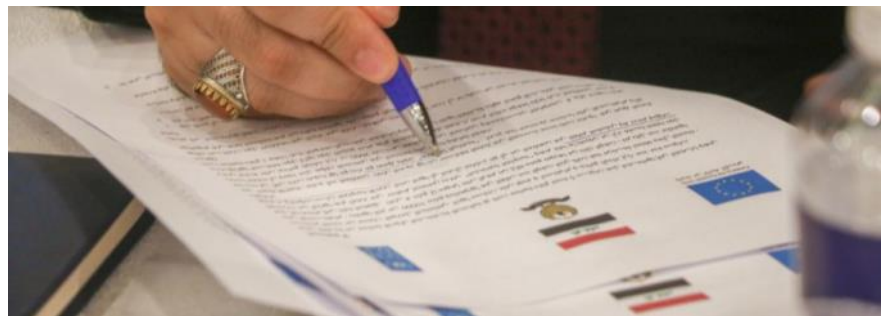
through enhanced transparency and public accountability is one of the most important priorities of his government, and thanked UNDP and all international development partners for their support to Iraq in this field.

“Corruption is a serious issue in Iraq. It is our duty and commitment to work side by side with the Government of Iraq to enhance the accountability of Iraqi institutions. With this MoU, we will work together to help improve public services, reduce inequalities, strengthen rule of law, create a more resilient society, and rebuild trust between Iraqi citizens and public institutions. This MoU encourages us to revisit our ambition to expand anti-corruption engagement in key strategic areas that are urgently needed to improve the investment environment in Iraq and open new avenues for public-private partnerships,” states UNDP Resident Representative, Auke Lootsma.

Combatting corruption is imperative for progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including job creation, protecting the environment, increasing gender equality, and supporting access to basic services.

Promoting judicial integrity through proper understanding of judicial ethics

Baghdad, 30 April 2023 - A comprehensive knowledge sharing session was conducted for 30 judges and prosecutors from Iraq's federal courts from 28-29 April in Baghdad. The session focused on the importance of codes of conduct in promoting judicial integrity through proper understanding of judicial ethics. This initiative was generously funded by the European Union in Iraq.



Mine Action

UNMAS supports and works closely with UNITAD in Iraq

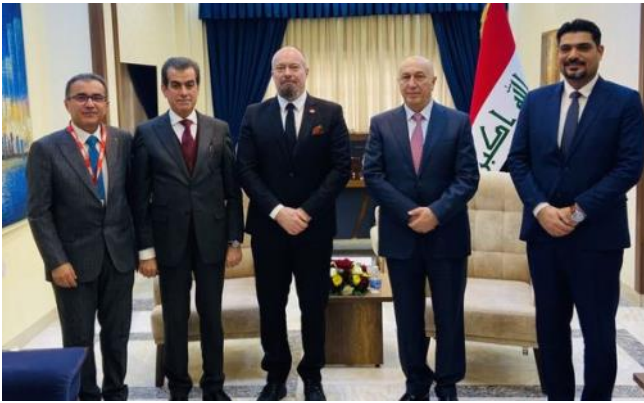
Baghdad, 22 February 2023 - Over the past few years, UNMAS has supported and worked closely with UNITAD in Iraq.

This collaboration was highlighted recently when the UNMAS Iraq Technical Support Coordinator provided a briefing session for UNITAD

personnel covering UNMAS operations in Iraq since arriving in 2015.

Other work between the two entities include information sharing, explosive ordnance briefing sessions and joint field visits to UNMAS historical and ongoing clearance sites, including Al Shifa hospital complex.





Baghdad, 24 February 2023 - UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme Manager, Pehr Lodhammar, recently met with the Iraqi Minister of Environment (MoE), His Excellency Nizar Mohammed Saeed Amidi, Deputy Minister, Dr. Kamiran Ali, and the acting Director-General for the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), Mr. Bakir Sahib to provide an overview of UNMAS Iraq history, current activities, funding and the various coordination mechanisms between the Government of Iraq and UNMAS. During the meeting, H.E. Amidi and Lodhammar discussed the need for continued collaboration and support from UNMAS and other national and international mine action stakeholders in ridding Iraq from explosive hazards. The UNMAS partnership model was also discussed, as a means to ensuring national and sustainable capacity. Lodhammar also used the opportunity to congratulate H.E. Amidi on the recent appointment and invite the Minister to first-hand visit ongoing field operations. UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the MoE and DMA for their commitment to creating an environment free from explosive ordnance and enabling the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of displaced people.



Baghdad, 30 March 2023 - The UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar, met with the newly appointed Director General of the Iraqi Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), Dr. Sabah Al- Hussieni. Discussions covered the continuous support to national implementing partners to ensure smoother implementation of mine action projects as well as the various mine action challenges in Iraq. In addition, the excellent level of coordination between UNMAS Iraq and Iraqi government entities was highlighted, which will continue to positively impact the success of the Iraq national mine action programme. UNMAS would like to seize this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Al-Hussieni on his appointment as Director General of the DMA!

German Minister of Foreign Affairs visits UNMAS clearance site



Sinjar, 1 April 2023 - UNMAS Iraq recently organized a field visit for a German delegation, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Her Excellency Ms. Annalena Baerbock, and the German Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Martin Jäger, to

Barbarosh in the Sinjar district. The UNMAS Iraq team and implementing partner, Global Clearance Solutions, delivered a comprehensive briefing on clearance efforts undertaken to rid the area from unexploded ordnance. In addition, the visit demonstrated the

impact of UNMAS Iraq residential area clearance operations that are funded by the Government of Germany. During the visit, the delegation met the female searchers and spoke to them about their experience in mine action and the importance of their contribution to the recovery efforts and freeing their communities from explosive ordnance. The Government of Germany has been a staunch supporter of UNMAS programme activities in Iraq since 2016, with the cumulative financial assistance of over USD 73 million. UNMAS Iraq would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Germany for its generous support towards mine action activities in Iraq and look forward to further collaboration.

Children in Iraq have been harmed by explosives weapons

Baghdad, 4 April 2023 - Imagine going out to get school supplies for the upcoming school year... you wake up a few days later and you can't feel your leg. This is the story of 18-year-old Dalia and the numerous other children in Iraq who have been harmed by explosives weapons. Dalia can no longer run, walk, or dress herself alone. She needs a wheelchair and her

mother's help for practically everything. No matter where they are used, explosive weapons endanger a child's most fundamental rights. UNICEF calls on governments to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and to speak out to protect children worldwide from conflict. #foreverychild #MineActionCannotWait #IMAD2023



On International Day for Mine Awareness, UNICEF calls for strengthened investment in mine action and explosive ordnance risk education

Baghdad, 04 April 2023 — On International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, UNICEF expressed grave concern as children continue to be victims of explosive weapons in Iraq. In the first three months of 2023 alone, 16 children were affected by unexploded ordnance (four were killed and another 12 maimed) in seven incidents, with close to 80 per cent of the victims being boys. This trend marks a tragic continuum with 2022, when unexploded ordnance killed 38 children and maimed 47. Despite UNICEF advocacy efforts last year to put an end to these practices, through the support to the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, Iraq numbers show

how conflicts continue to affect children years after they are over.

"These figures are extremely alarming considering the will and the efforts deployed by the Government of Iraq and their partners to ensure children are protected from explosive weapons," said Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. "National and international stakeholders must do more to achieve an Iraq free of explosive weapons, right now. Mine action and explosive ordnance risk education cannot wait", she added. UNICEF continues to work with partners, including the Directorate of Mine Action within the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency to raise awareness and increase safety for children, their families and communities in highly contaminated areas. Only last year,



28,031 children and 8,303 adults were reached with explosive ordnance risk education.

No matter where they are used, explosive weapons endanger a child's most fundamental rights. UNICEF calls on governments to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and to speak out to protect children worldwide from conflict.

Iraq remains among the countries most contaminated by landmines and explosive devices worldwide

Baghdad, 03 April 2023 - "After the incident, life became very complicated. I had to drop out of school because I couldn't stand being bullied. They don't accept me in any job. I would like to work in a store. I see myself as capable and useful, despite my disability," says Ali, now 17. He lost both hands during a shelling in 2017 when he was only 12 years old.

Through UNICEF and partners support, Ali was provided with psychosocial support, child protection awareness raising activities, explosive ordnance risk education, and referred to the hospital for prosthetic limbs.

Iraq remains among the countries most contaminated by landmines and explosive devices worldwide. It's crucial

to take proactive measures to protect every child in Iraq to safeguard their future and ensure their safety.



Conflict can have lasting impacts, and some leave behind deadly remnants like landmines

Baghdad, 5 April 2023 - Iraq is one of the most contaminated countries with deployed mines, but the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Iraq programme is working to clear explosive ordnance left from the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Since April 2019, UNMAS and partners have cleared over 2,207,837 square meters of contaminated land in the Sinjar district, paving the way for restoration projects by UNDP. Thanks to UNDP, the Sinjar Court House has reopened,

and over 9,500 people now have access to clean drinking water. Let's support

UNMAS and UNDP in their joint efforts for a brighter Sinjar.



Swedish Ambassador visits UNMAS clearing sites

Mosul, 10 April 2023 - Last month, UNMAS Iraq organized a field visit for Her Excellency Ms. Jessica Svardstrom, the Swedish Ambassador to Iraq, and Mr. Felix Bengston, the Deputy Head of Mission, to Mosul Old City (Al-Maidan area) in Ninewa Governorate. During the visit, the UNMAS Iraq team briefed them on previous clearance operations in the old city and highlighted the impact of the remaining explosive ordnance from the recent conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant on the people of Iraq, particularly the citizens of Mosul. UNMAS Iraq would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Government of Sweden for its continuous support to the Iraqi mine action sector.



Baghdad, 18 April 2023 - Recently, the UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar, met with Ms. Laetitia Van Asch-Pieters, Deputy Head of the Mission of the Netherlands to Iraq. The meeting covered an update on UNMAS Iraq operations and various joint advocacy initiatives. The Government of the Netherlands is one of the key supporters of mine action in Iraq and has contributed to the UNMAS Programme efforts with over USD 7.2 million since 2016. The generous contributions from the Netherlands has enabled UNMAS Iraq to deliver essential support to protect civilians from the threat of explosive ordnance and enhance the capacity of the national implementing partners implementation of mine action projects. UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Government of the Netherlands for the generous support towards mine action activities in Iraq and looks forward to continued collaboration.

Erbil, 19 April 2023 - UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar, met with the head of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency, Jabar Mustafa. They discussed continuous support to national implementing partners to ensure smoother implementation of mine action projects as well as the various mine action challenges in the Kurdistan Region.

Healthcare

A multi-sectoral Public Health Awareness Committee launched in Baghdad

Baghdad, 26 February 2023 – WHO Iraq, with support from Germany, initiated a multi-sectoral Public Health Awareness Committee, bringing together 70 focal points from 21 ministries and public institutions. This #OneHealth approach brings us a step towards effective health security in Iraq.



WHO delivers 25 tonnes of medicines and medical supplies allocated to 11 primary healthcare centers serving IDPs

Baghdad, 26 February 2023 - With support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid, the World Health Organization (WHO) delivered 25 tonnes of medicines and medical supplies allocated to 11 primary healthcare centres serving internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Erbil, Sulaimaniyah and Duhok. WHO pleased to support the population's health needs in partnership with Heevie Organization.



WHO celebrates 75th anniversary of the organization's establishment

Baghdad, 27 February 2023 - The World Health Organization (WHO), along with the Iraq Ministry of Health and partners, held a celebration today in Baghdad to honour the 75th anniversary of the organization's establishment and acknowledge the extraordinary progress that has been made over the past decades around the world and in Iraq.

WHO Representative in Iraq, Dr Ahmed Zouiten said: "The health systems of tomorrow are built today. Together we can secure health, give hope to our future generations, and make their dream come true" said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq and added – "We are proud of the WHO's 75-year legacy of health successes, but what is more vital now is investing in our present health system to ensure a healthy future for our children and future generations. We will never forget the many health workers who lost their lives to COVID-



19 worldwide while serving on the front lines of the pandemic. Today, we honour the memory of 305 health workers in Iraq who sacrificed their lives over the past three years trying to save ours".

"As a Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, I've witnessed the work of the World Health Organization in

many areas around the world and continue to be proud of the work performed, specifically in strengthening the health system as a whole" – said Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai.

WHO Iraq, along with the Federal and Kurdistan Ministry of Health, began a training program to enhance the intensive and critical care skills among medical and nursing staff

Erbil, 01 March 2023 - As part of the humanitarian-development transition plan, WHO Iraq, along with the Federal and Kurdistan Ministry of Health, began a 2-month training program to enhance the intensive and critical care skills among medical and nursing staff at Hawija, Sinjar and West Erbil Emergency hospitals.



UNDP and USAID reopen Ninewa’s Medical Fluids Factory to strengthen Iraq's health system



Mosul/Baghdad, 01 March 2023 - Today, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Alina Romanowski, and Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, Ghimar Deeb, participated in the reopening of the Ninewa Medical Fluids Factory, which will provide over 300 jobs and strengthen Ninewa's capacity to produce essential medical fluids.

The Factory, which had been severely damaged during the ISIS conflict, was rehabilitated through UNDP's flagship

programme, the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), with generous funding provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The reopened facility will produce a range of general medical fluids, including saline, dextrose, and other essential products for patient care in hospitals and health centers across Mosul and greater Ninewa.

"The opening of the Ninewa Medical Fluids Factory is a major achievement and an important milestone in UNDP's stabilization efforts in Iraq," said

Resident Representative of UNDP in Iraq, Auke Lootsma. "The factory will provide jobs and support the delivery of essential medical supplies to hospitals and health centers in Mosul and greater Ninewa, benefiting over 800,000 people. The reopening of this factory is a testament to the resilience of the Iraqi people and their determination to rebuild their lives and communities."

The factory's rehabilitation included installing state-of-the-art equipment and validating existing equipment to meet current specifications. The rehabilitation was also done following international standards to ensure the quality of the products produced.

"We are here today because of the generous funding provided by USAID. As one of the founding partners of the facility, USAID has made important contributions to Mosul and to stabilization in Iraq," added Mr. Lootsma.

The reopening of the Ninewa Medical Fluids Factory will strengthen the region's health system and the availability of essential medical supplies to patients across the region.

Raising awareness on health needs for girls

Baghdad, 5 March 2023 - Gender inequality, cultural taboos, and lack of awareness can widen the gap in health needs for girls. With funding from Canada’s International Development – Global Affairs Canada, UNICEF trained 23 staff from Ninewa and Duhok Directorate of Education on menstrual hygiene management and community engagement in support of schoolgirls’ well-being.



Raising awareness and informing the public about potential vector-borne diseases in Iraq

Baghdad, 07 March 2023 - WHO Iraq in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Iraq, and with support from the European Union, began a 2-day workshop today, bringing together 74 epidemiologists, physicians, veterinarians and health education specialists to develop a multi-sectoral preparedness plan aimed at raising awareness and informing the public about potential vector-borne diseases in Iraq.



Joint WHO and JICA partner to enhance IPC implementation strategy in Iraq

Baghdad, 23 March 2023 – The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), completed a pilot project aimed at enhancing the comprehensive COVID-19 infection prevention and control (IPC) implementation strategy in Iraq.

The project was designed to reduce avoidable morbidity and mortality in Iraq by cutting the transmission chain of COVID-19 and other diseases in health care and construction settings through enhanced IPC strategies, primarily targeting Basrah and Dhi Qar governorates.

"The project's geographical scope was limited to southern governorates, but its success paves the way for future expansion to all governorates in Iraq," said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq.

"Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) remains one of the most important threats to public health in recent history. Yet, with an effective IPC, we not only control diseases but also get closer to reducing AMR countrywide."

The project supported 10 primary health care facilities and two hospitals with comprehensive training in IPC practices, enabling health professionals to better protect patients and staff in the fight against infectious diseases, handling and managing oxygen cylinders for clinical use and peripheral devices, and enhancing their

capabilities in providing critical care to patients in need.

The contribution also enabled WHO to procure and distribute essential equipment, including 4 medical waste management devices, 3 anaesthesia devices, and 405 medical oxygen cylinders.

All equipment has been delivered and installed at the project locations. These have enabled thousands of people to benefit from the enhanced capacity of the supported health facilities.

The contribution also enabled WHO to procure and distribute essential equipment, including 4 medical waste management devices, 3 anaesthesia devices, and 405 medical oxygen cylinders

The project team also developed an IPC training manual tailored for pilot construction sites to ensure infection prevention measures are implemented in high-risk environments. This manual is a blueprint for future

construction projects to enhance safety and health standards.

As part of the project, WHO conducted a seminar today that brought together stakeholders from various governorates to share the project's achievements and lessons learned from the pilot phase of implementing IPC with relevant stakeholders.

"I am glad to learn that our contribution has enabled the hospitals to strengthen their response to the diseases in Dhi Qar," said Mr Masamoto Kenichi, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of Japan to Iraq. "Japan remains committed to supporting Iraq to make the life of people better and protect the vulnerable."

This project, which was made possible through collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the partnership with JICA, proved that significant accomplishments could be achieved when organizations join forces and work together.



Pangs of isolation: Kha'azal's journey to recovery from TB

Baghdad/Mosul, 24 March 2023 - Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the world's top infectious killers, infecting 10 million and killing 1.5 million people every year.

In Iraq, TB remains a public health threat, where more investment and resources are needed to eliminate the disease.

IOM Iraq supports the National TB Program in strengthening national surveillance and reporting mechanisms, ensuring provision of medication and diagnostic tools for patients and improving TB case management.

Khaza'al, 32, is a father of three. In 2014, his family was displaced from Tel Afar – a town in Ninewa Governorate – to Mosul, due to the conflict with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). He had always hoped to one day return to his home, but before life could give him a break from the strains

associated with living in displacement, he started having serious health problems.

For weeks, a bloody cough, digestive disorders, dramatic weight loss, and other debilitating symptoms took a heavy toll on Khaza'al's health and mental well-being. Khaza'al suffered a lot until, after visiting multiple doctors, he was finally diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) in January 2020

"For a long time, I went to doctors trying to find out what was ailing me. I lost the ability to eat and drink and could not walk. I was so shocked when I was told that it was TB," Khaza'al recalled.

"For a long time, I had to be cautious around my family. I was there, but it didn't feel safe to hug my three children or feel their warmth; those two years of suffering were the worst period of my life, especially after my situation deteriorated to what doctors call

multidrug-resistant TB, which meant recovery was more difficult."

Khaza'al revealed that his condition made him feel "depressed," especially after losing a lot of weight. "I was severely malnourished. I was weak and it was hard for me to move, work or have a normal life," he added.

Iraq is considered to have one of the highest rates of TB in the Middle East and North Africa. Since 2014, the ISIL crisis and subsequent military operations to retake the areas under ISIL control further deteriorated capacity to manage TB across the country.

The humanitarian situation in Iraq continues to be volatile, and over one million people remain in displacement, with around 180,000 still living in camps for internally displaced persons. People in and out of camps often struggle to access basic services, including quality health care.

Pangs of isolation: Kha'azal's journey to recovery from TB (continued)

“I used the treatment that I received from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and over the past one year and a half, I have been receiving regular visits from their Mobile Medical Team (MMT),” Khaza’al explained. “They call every day to check that I am taking my medication as prescribed and visit from time to time to see how I am doing.”

Saif Muhannad, an IOM Iraq MMT nurse in Ninewa said: “Early detection makes the treatment more effective and reduces the possibility of infection spreading among other people. TB has become a curable disease due to the availability of tests and treatments.”

“We advise anyone who has been coughing for two weeks or more, or experiencing sudden weight loss or fever at night, to visit the nearest centre for a sputum examination. Following diagnosis, treatment will be given free of charge,” he continued. IOM deployed team members to provide direct observation therapy (DOT) to ensure completion of the treatment course and avoid treatment interruptions for people with TB.

IOM’s MMT in Ninewa and other locations support the Government of Iraq’s National TB Programme (NTP) in implementing activities to curb TB,

including awareness-raising campaigns, initial screening, sputum sample collection, presumptive TB case transportation, contact tracing, Directly Observed Therapy (DOT), food distribution, and TB treatment follow up.

IOM also supports the NTP with joint supervision visits to all NTP clinics across Iraq, on job training for lab staff, procurement of TB medication and laboratory supplies, updating and printing guidelines, providing personal protection equipment and infection and control materials, diagnostics tools such as GeneXpert machines, capacity-building training, and more.

Although efforts by the NTP and IOM have been fruitful in treating thousands of people with TB across Iraq since 2014, more needs to be done to curb the spread of TB in Iraq. This includes increasing the number of MMTs across the country to widen the geographic coverage and help treat cases among vulnerable populations in camps, returnee communities, and host communities where care might otherwise be hard to access; increasing TB management units and opening diagnostic centres in each governorate (currently there are 135 functional TB management units in Iraq); making TB



medication more available; and organizing additional mass awareness-raising campaigns.

With assistance from IOM’s MMT and regular access to medication, Khaza’al’s situation has considerably improved since his original diagnosis. “I am recovering; I have gained more than 10 kilos and I feel settled here in west Mosul with my family with me,” Khaza’al explained. “For almost two years, I couldn’t walk for more than five minutes; thankfully, I can walk again for hours and enjoy my family life again.”

IOM’s TB response in Iraq is possible thanks to support from the Global Fund.

By Sarah Ali, IOM Iraq.

WHO Representative in Iraq, visited Warith International Foundation for Oncology in Karbala

Karbala, 04 April 2023 – Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, visited Warith International Foundation for Oncology in Karbala, where he witnessed their impressive quality care that not only ensures good survival but also helps children dream and fulfil their dreams.

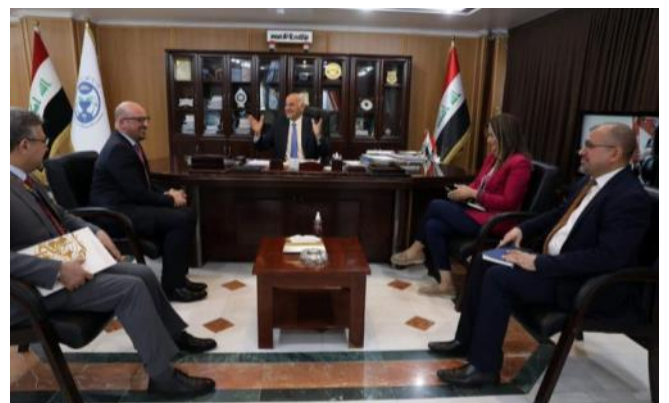
As we celebrate #WHO75, WHO remains

committed to partnering with the foundation to support cancer patients across Iraq.

Dr Zouiten was delighted to meet 10-year-old Abbas who was receiving treatment for cancer. Abbas’ dream is to become a policeman one day. WHO Iraq stands with Abbas and other young fighters who seek healthier and brighter futures.



Baghdad, 02 April 2023 – Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met H.E. Dr Salih Al-Hasnawi, Minister of Health, to discuss the joint collaboration between WHO Iraq and Iraqi Government. Dr Zouiten reaffirmed WHO’s commitment to achieving Universal Health Coverage, fostering health security and celebrating the health digitalization advancements in Iraq.



Baghdad, 5 April 2023 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met H.E. Awn Diab, the Minister of Water Resources in Iraq, to discuss areas of collaboration between the ministry and WHO Iraq. They agreed that there is no quality health without adequate water quality. WHO will actively participate in the upcoming Water Conference in May and promote health education for sustainable water use.

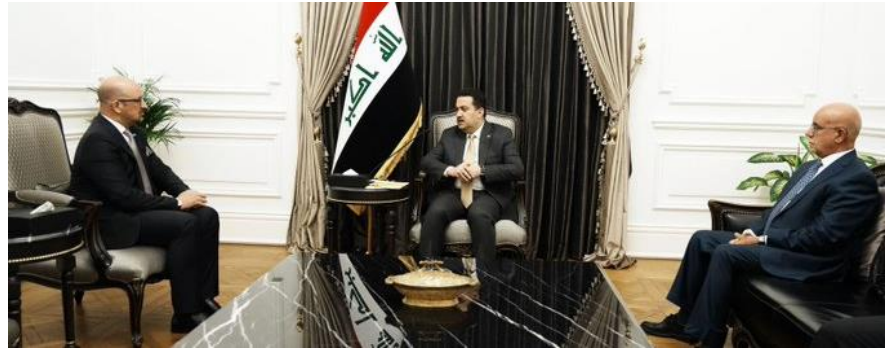
WHO Representative in Iraq meets with the Iraqi Prime Minister on World Health Day and 75th anniversary of WHO

Baghdad, 06 April 2023— The WHO Representative, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, met today in Baghdad with the Iraqi Prime Minister, Mr. Mohammed S. Al-Sudani, on the occasion of the celebration of World Health Day, which also commemorates the 75th anniversary of the establishment of WHO on 7 April 1948.

The meeting discussed the collaboration between the Government of Iraq and WHO and the progress made in the health sector over more than three decades of WHO presence in Iraq.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister congratulated WHO on its 75th anniversary, emphasizing that the WHO theme of providing health is perfectly in sync with the Iraqi government program that placed the health sector at the top of its priorities.

"WHO has witnessed significant efforts from the Iraqi government in improving the healthcare sector, as demonstrated by H.E. Prime Minister's commitment, who prioritized hospitals for his first field visit soon after being nominated the head of the Iraqi Government," said Dr Ahmed



Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq.

"We're grateful for the government's focus on primary healthcare, health security and health promotion. WHO is committed to partnering with the Iraqi Ministry of Health to support the development of the National Plan for Health Development, aiming to achieve the targets of the health-related sustainable development goals and ensure the highest attainable health status for everyone everywhere in Iraq," he added.

The Prime Minister also emphasized the importance of providing healthcare services and working to achieve this through various initiatives. These include adopting joint management programs for large hospitals in line with international best practices, completing stalled hospital projects, supporting specialized centers, allocating unprecedented budgets for the Ministry of Health within the federal budget, and implementing the national health insurance program.

WHO Representative in Iraq received by the President of Iraq on 75th anniversary of WHO

Baghdad, 9 April 2023 - On the occasion of WHO 75th anniversary, WHO Representative in Iraq, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, was received by H.E. President Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid, in the presence of Minister of Health, Dr Salih Al-Hasnawi. They discussed possibilities for the advancement of Iraq's health sector and further consolidation of collaboration with WHO Iraq.

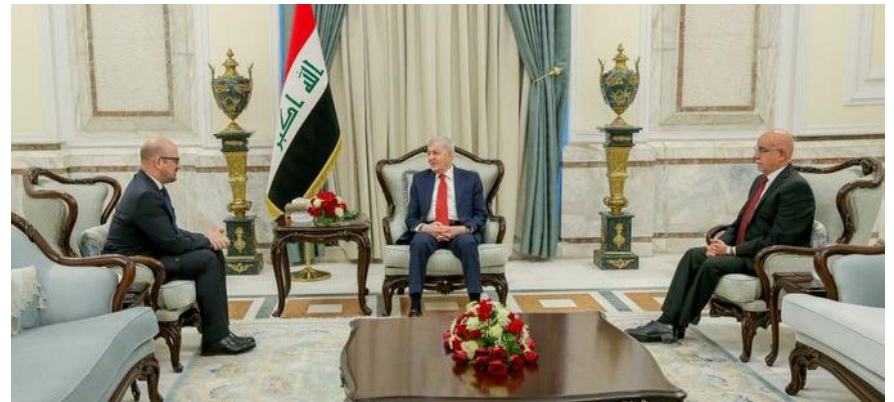
Dr Zouiten thanked His Excellency for his strong commitment to #HealthForAll Iraqis.

The WHO's 75th anniversary year is an opportunity to look back at public health successes that have improved

quality of life.

It is also an opportunity to motivate

action to tackle the health challenges of today and tomorrow.



WHO Representative in Iraq meets with the Kurdistan Region Prime Minister and Minister of Health

Erbil, 17 April 2023 - The WHO Representative in Iraq, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, met today with Kurdistan Region Prime Minister H.E Masrour Barzani and Kurdistan Minister of Health H.E. Dr. Saman Barzangy. The two parties discussed ways of consolidating ongoing partnership and future plans between WHO and the Kurdistan Regional Government to achieve #HealthForAll people in the region.



UN family in Iraq commemorates World Immunization Week

Baghdad, 28 April 2023 - It's World Immunization Week! This year's theme is #TheBigCatchUp – Let's work together to accelerate progress in countries to ensure more people, particularly children, are protected from preventable diseases. Immunization prevents 3.5-5 million

deaths every year from diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, influenza, and measles.

IOM supports the Ministry of Health in Iraq to provide immunization services to internally displaced populations, IDPs returning to their areas of origin and host communities. We also support

health promotion activities in hard-to-reach areas to enhance routine childhood vaccination uptake.

Families, please stay up-to-date with your children's vaccination schedules to protect their health from vaccine-preventable diseases. Let's catch up on missed vaccines! #TheBigCatchUp

Mental Health

Homecoming: finding hope and rebuilding resilience after the war

Ninewa, 14 February 2023 - Qutayba had just turned 18 in 2014 when Daesh invaded his city of Tel Afar, Ninewa, in northwestern Iraq. Many families like his fled the violence and sought safety in other parts of the country. Through many trials and tribulations, they sought temporary safety in Karbala city, in central Iraq. Qutayba and his brothers took on many jobs to support his family and cover day-to-day expenses.

But Qutayba always wanted to return home.

"We left everything behind: our house, our clothes and all our memories of Tel Afar," he shares. "Every step we took away from our home was full of fear and panic."

Qutayba and his family returned to Tel Afar following a displacement journey that lasted four years. The journey to rebuild and recover would take even more time. Those affected by displacement face extreme difficulties in securing safe housing and adequate livelihoods, which negatively impacts their mental health and well-being.

As part of IOM's commitment to supporting displaced persons like Qutayba, IOM Iraq developed an Information, Counselling and Referral System (ICRS) to provide integrated service that supports individuals to

build their resilience through activities on mental health; improved access to services including specialized psychosocial support, legal and protection services; and livelihoods support. ICRS targets young people aged 18-35, as well as diverse groups facing heightened vulnerabilities, such as women and persons with disabilities. Over 1700 people have benefited from the system.

"I received courses on mental health, development and time and work management. I also learned how to deal with psychological pressures," says Qutayba, who was supported by an additional grant to start his car wash business and secure a stable flow of income. He is now planning for further expansion.

"This program enabled me – mentally and practically – to restore my life little

by little," he says.

Integrated programming helps beneficiaries stand on their own feet: socioeconomic assistance available through IOM and mechanisms like ICRS provide a safe space for community members of different backgrounds to interact with one another and address social tensions in the post-conflict setting. They also provide sustainable and positive coping measures to support the path to recovery.

"I am happy with what I have achieved," concludes Qutayba. Now at 27, he is married and lives in a rented house in Tel Afar.

The IOM Iraq implements ICRS in Ninewa, Anbar and Najaf Governorates, with support from the Government of Germany.

By Sarah Ali, IOM



IOM's MHPSS and livelihood integration programming

Baghdad, 08 March 2023 - The experience of displacement – losing a home, losing a community, for many, losing everything – can have a profound, negative impact on individuals' relationships with themselves and others.

44-year-old Ahlam experienced this first-hand when she, her husband and her five children returned home from displacement to Fallujah, Anbar Governorate, in 2017.

"We used to live on agriculture and livestock, but we lost everything, and

our house was destroyed," she says, catching us up. "Now, we stay in a rented house and live on the social welfare salary and aid that comes from well-to-do people."

Ahlam continues: "Because of these difficult experiences, my psychological health was affected – and it went from bad to worse. Displacement and its painful events greatly affected the whole family, including my children. I had difficulty raising them, especially my eldest son."

Her eldest had a hard time dealing

with displacement and return and, struggling to manage her own emotional and material circumstances, Ahlam had a hard time connecting with and supporting him. They both felt isolated, and as Ahlam searched for ways to support her household as the single breadwinner – her husband is blind and struggles to find employment – her son was searching for ways to leave it.

"I was nervous and cried on my own a lot. I would burst into tears because I couldn't bear everything any longer. My

IOM's MHPSS and livelihood integration programming (continued)



husband needed great care, and I felt like I was about to lose my son. There were also the anxiety attacks,” she reveals.

When she heard from her neighbors about IOM Iraq's cash-for-work sewing programming, Ahlam registered in the hopes of developing marketable skills and making some money to support her family.

“I did not have any knowledge of sewing and learned a lot from the trainers, alongside my female colleagues. I have experience and skills now, and also benefited financially from the sewing workshop. I spent most of the money I earned through the workshop on doctors because my husband suffers from joint problems and muscle spasms,” she says.

“However, I was still suffering from problems in my home, and they were reflected in my personality, as well as in my relationship with my eldest son, which was not good. He neglected his studies because of his psychological challenges, and we had constant problems. This really affected the atmosphere of the house,” Ahlam explains.

“After the sewing workshop, I joined the psychosocial support sessions – we learned a lot of things, such as stress and time management, problem-solving skills, teamwork and conflict resolution skills, all of which contributed positively to my psychological state and my ability to deal with problems.”

IOM Iraq integrates mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services into existing livelihood interventions as part of its MHPSS and Livelihood Integration (MLI) approach, aimed at helping individuals build positive coping mechanisms to apply at work and in other homes.

“I learned how to manage time, as my schedule was scattered between delivering the children to school, going to [the IOM] sessions and taking care of household matters, like cleaning and cooking. I learned about time management methods and techniques

that have since helped me better organize my daily schedule,” Ahlam goes on.

“But the sessions gave me more than just the psychological benefit,” she continues. “I was afraid that I was going to lose my eldest son forever – I was at a loss dealing with him, but I worked on implementing all the ideas that I got from the sessions, and their impact was positive.”

She tells us: “I am very happy to have restored my relationship with my son because he is at a critical age, and he was trying to move out of the house. But I got my son back, and my relationship with him is good now. I learned through dialogue to coexist better with him.”

Better able to manage the present, Ahlam now looks to the future with ambitions to open her own sewing shop. For more on MLI, please go to: <https://iraq.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11316/files/documents/mhpss-and-livelihood-integration-mli-manual-en.pdf>

This assistance was made possible with support from the Government of Germany, through KfW.

By Rafal Abdulateef, Senior Public Information Assistant, IOM

Toward comprehensive rehabilitation: Mental Health Service Referral System launched for genocide survivors in Iraq

Erbil, 28 March 2023 – On March 26, the Directorate for Survivors Affairs and eight NGOs from across Iraqi Kurdistan and Ninewa Governorate signed an Agreement of Cooperation for the establishment and activation of a formal referral system through which beneficiaries of the Yezidi Survivors Law (YSL) – individuals who survived the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL, also referred to as Daesh) genocide – can receive referrals for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services in their areas of residence.

Under the Agreement, Directorate staff will refer survivors to and follow up with these organizations, which have committed to the ethical provision services according to their respective capacities. Located in areas of displacement and return, the eight organizations include: Dialogue Organization for Development and Relief, Farida Global, Free Yezidi Foundation, Hope Makers, Jesuit Rescue Services, Jiyan Foundation, SEED Foundation and Yazda.



“Iraq is showing the world what commitment to transitional justice looks like – first with the passage of the YSL in March 2021 and establishment of the Directorate for Survivors Affairs; then with the opening of the application process last September for survivors to begin receiving reparations; this month with the first distribution of monthly salaries promised to survivors under the YSL; and now through the activation of the

MHPSS Referral System,” said Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, Mr. Giorgi Gigauri. “IOM Iraq is proud to have been able to support every step along the way, and we remain committed to a trauma-informed, survivor-centred transitional justice process.”

The aim of the Directorate's MHPSS Referral System is to bridge the

Toward comprehensive rehabilitation: Mental Health Service Referral System launched for genocide survivors in Iraq *(continued)*

institutional gap in the MHPSS services available to survivors in Iraq as they undergo rehabilitation in the genocide's aftermath; Indeed, the need for such services and care among genocide survivors is immense, but state facilities and resources for MHPSS provision are almost non-existent, with local and international organizations acting as the main providers of such services for survivors. "Many survivors who escaped ISIL in 2014 have not seen any MHPSS providers at all," said Khawla, a Yazidi survivor and member of the Survivors Voices Network. "It is very important for survivors to know that there are people who think about them, there are people supporting them to rebuild their lives. And it is crucial that the MHPSS services are sustained because many survivors will need MHPSS support over a long period to be able to overcome their trauma, heal and rebuild their lives."

The Referral System will function as the main framework through which beneficiaries of YSL can access MHPSS services, until the official MHPSS institutional framework is properly equipped and effective. IOM Iraq will

help to strengthen the Referral System over the course of 2023 through capacity building, in-kind support and funding. In parallel, the Directorate will initiate work to build a specialized MHPSS facility for YSL beneficiaries in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

Director General of the Directorate for Survivors Affairs, Ms. Sarab Elias Barakat, said, "This is an important step in the implementation of the YSL. We are happy with this cooperation with NGOs to provide MHPSS services to the survivors who have been suffering greatly and are in desperate need of this support. This referral mechanism will enable survivors to have access to MHPSS services in their own areas of residence."

"The UK continues to champion the rights of survivors and remains a strong advocate for the implementation of the Yazidi Survivor's Law. We are delighted by the launch of the referral system – the atrocities committed by Daesh have had a profound impact on minority communities; mental health and psychosocial support remains essential. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with

IOM and the Directorate for Survivor Affairs to further help survivors," said British Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Mark Bryson-Richardson.

"The Dutch Government is a very proud partner of IOM for their advert support in the making and implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Law. We are very pleased to see this step – hopefully one in line of many – to have a direct effect on the lives of those impacted so devastatingly nine years ago. This is really a strong sign that successful steps are being made in the pursuit of transitional justice and a major step towards a more hopeful future for those who were affected," said Mr. Jelle-Jochem Duits, Second Secretary of the Dutch Consulate General.

The YSL represents a key institutional framework for addressing the legacy of ISIL's genocidal crimes against Yazidis, Shabak, Turkmen and Christians, and also stipulates a variety of rights and benefits – including monthly pension, rehabilitation support and a plot of land – for women and girls who survived conflict-related sexual violence and children who survived abduction at the hands of ISIL.

An MHPSS and livelihoods integration (MLI) series: Duaa and Marwa

Baghdad, 19 April 2023 - Feelings of anxiety and isolation are not uncommon among people who go through displacement. The trauma of leaving home and community, the sustained pressure of being on the move and the stress of rebuilding after returning home can have serious negative impacts on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.

Duaa, 48, was displaced to Baghdad Governorate in 2014 alongside her husband and seven children. They returned home to Fallujah, Anbar Governorate, in 2017 after the city was reclaimed by Iraqi forces. Four years later, Duaa was left a widow by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When my husband died, raising my children became very hard, as [most] were in their teenage years, which is a difficult age to deal with. I really tried to raise them properly," she said, but as a single mom trying to get the family back on its feet after several shared traumatic experiences, this was not easy. Duaa and her children found

themselves feeling isolated and unhappy.

Marwa, Duaa's daughter, was facing a particularly hard time, having gone through a separation from her husband of five years and dealing with the resulting personal and social repercussions. Marwa heard through some neighbours about an IOM project offering sewing courses alongside mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) sessions – under the MHPSS and Livelihoods Integration programme (MLI). She joined, hoping to learn something new and maybe end her feelings of isolation.

"I participated in the sewing course – I had no ideas about it ahead of time or any prior information," said Marwa, who ended up gaining marketable skills through the livelihood activity and integrated psychosocial support. "I observed [those who soon became] my friends and how they sewed, and I learned a lot from them. They passed on their ideas, they guided me, and then I relied on myself. When I made a

mistake, I started again and sewed again."

She continued, "At the beginning, I used to avoid talking to people. I did not socialize, and I did not like to mix, but all that changed. I began to forget the past and to mix and get along with them."

Seeking a change of atmosphere and a break from the pressures of life, Duaa joined her daughter in the MLI programming.

The two would go to psychosocial support sessions together and share freely with their peers. They attended psychosocial support sessions and learned healthy mechanisms for interacting with their children and discovered positive ways to deal with stress.

"My daughter's psychological state was not good because of the separation (after a marriage that lasted five years). There has been good progress in her condition," Duaa expressed with love. "Her condition is better now, and she spends her time with her children."

Recently An MHPSS and livelihoods integration (MLI) series: Duaa and Marwa *(continued)*

No longer isolated from her community and now equipped with new tools both mental and practical, Duaa too is feeling more able to confront the difficulties of rebuilding life after returning home from displacement.

IOM's MLI programming works to build the social, soft and other life skills of livelihood participants, providing them with important coping mechanisms to address work-related psychosocial stressors through

integrated MHPSS support. The skills gained and developed through the MHPSS sessions help participants address challenges at work and in other life situations in the short and long term.

This assistance was made possible with support from the Government of Germany, through KfW.

By Rafal Abdulateef, Senior Public Information Assistant, IOM



Mental health is just as important as physical health!

Baghdad, 23 April 2023 - In Salah al-Din, IOM Iraq conducted a series of psychosocial support sessions with more than 70 girls around: the importance of emotional wellbeing, the benefits of expressing their feelings and thoughts to family members.

Assisted by the psychosocial support team, the girls then walked around their village surprising parents and caregivers with greeting cards they made expressing love and gratitude.



Environment

UN delegation attends the meeting devoted to Iraq's participation in the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York on 22-24 March chaired by the President of the Republic

Baghdad, 26 February 2023 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, led a UN delegation representing FAO, UNDP and UNICEF today to the meeting devoted to Iraq's participation in the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York on 22-24 March.

The meeting was chaired by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq, Dr. Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid, at the Baghdad Palace. Also present at the meeting were Mr. Aoun Diab, Minister of Water Resources, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Representatives, Mr. Hans Sandee, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Iraq, a representative of World Bank in Iraq.

The agenda of the meeting included how to facilitate and coordinate Iraq's active engagement and participation at the event, regarding involvement in

plenary sessions, interactive dialogues, and side events, while raising awareness for its water issues, climate change, Transboundary Water Management, and in-country water challenges towards specific actions

(Water Action Roadmap) – SDG 6.

In addition, DSRSG Isaczai emphasized on Iraq's accession to the 1992 Water Convention ahead of the conference.

Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Iraqi Presidency.



UNICEF supported an innovative water recycling project in Basra to conserve water, energy and land use

Basra, 26 February 2023 - "Recycling water at Al Khutwa water treatment plant enabled us to provide safe drinking water to an additional 4,000 most vulnerable people, more than half children adding the total of beneficiaries to 120,000 people," said Khaled Al Musawi, Engineering Director at the Governorate of Basra while visiting a water recycling project supported by UNICEF and funded by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ).

Due to climate change, Basra faces acute water scarcity. To adapt to climate change, UNICEF supported an innovative water recycling project to conserve water, energy and land use by

capitalizing on an already existing water treatment plant that provides 1,200 m³ of water per hour, benefitting 116,000 people. By recycling the wasted clean water, the project reaches an additional 4,000 most vulnerable

people. This enabled the Basra Directorate of Water to conserve 10% of water loss where for every 1m³ of freshwater processed, at least 100 liters of fresh water is saved.

#ForEveryChild, safe drinking water.



FAO Iraq Representative takes part at the Erbil Forum 2023

Erbil, 28 February 2023 – FAO Iraq Representative, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, took part as a panelist at the Erbil Forum 2023 roundtable on climate change, water issues, and their impact on Iraq and Kurdistan Region. Dr Hassan was proud to highlight FAO Iraq's role in supporting the government to address these challenges.



SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: "Water scarcity in this region is not just a threat on the horizon. It is real. It is here, now."



Basra, 12 March 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, participated at the Iraq Climate Conference held in Basra today. Here is the text of her speech: "Excellencies, Distinguished guests, good morning. I'm very happy to be here and, if you allow me, I would like to open my remarks by paying tribute to Mr.

Jassim al-Asadi. His lifelong commitment to environmental conservation is not only appreciated, but also essential. We need people like Mr. Jassim. They open our eyes. They wake us up. They are the critical drivers for change, adaptation and progress. Ladies and gentlemen, I decided not to bother you with numbers, rankings or percentages. There are other experts

far better placed to do so, and you will surely hear from them during this conference. Instead, I wish to convey a sense of urgency.

The fact is that environmental challenges present a looming threat. They are far too often overlooked - preoccupied as we are with managing our daily lives. Ultimately, however, climate change is one of the greatest global challenges we collectively face. Hence, we cannot afford to get distracted. We need to focus; we need to keep our eye on the ball.

Nearly a year ago, I visited the Mesopotamian Marshes. I was received by Mr. Jassim. He shared his concerns and explained what is at stake.

Like many of you, I had the opportunity to witness first-hand a dramatic, beautiful landscape. A landscape whose biodiversity is equalled only by its cultural significance.

But sadly, as explained by others, water scarcity in this region is not just a threat on the horizon. It is real. It is here, now.

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “Water scarcity in this region is not just a threat on the horizon. It is real. It is here, now.” (continued)



This is, by the way, also the case for other parts of the country. True, southern Iraq remains the most affected region - but drought has also severely damaged agricultural activities in the north, Iraq's food basket.

Ladies and gentlemen, the salinization of water and soils, desertification and the disappearance of arable land are nothing less than existential environmental concerns. As I said, here in Iraq, the water crisis is real.

When I raised the issue in a public briefing a year ago, a “climate change non-believer” questioned me. I was expected to focus on peace and security, so he said. As if there is no connection...

So, let me emphasize here: climate change and water scarcity are threat multipliers. If left unaddressed, they will come with heightened risks of poverty, food insecurity, biodiversity loss, displacement, forced migration, instability and conflict. And, to be clear: it is already happening. Iraq is acutely vulnerable.

We do not have to go far. I have discussed this with the Governor, many times; look around in Basra. Families happily farming their lands for generations now increasingly move to the city. Not because they prefer it, but simply because they are forced to. They are losing their livelihoods; they are running out of options to provide for income. In turn, the city is confronted with an influx of people for which it is not equipped, leading to slums with poor living conditions.

Of course – it is also important to mention here that many, but not all, of Iraq's environmental challenges can be attributed to climate change.

For instance, potable water, and irrigation infrastructure and maintenance are significantly lagging behind. Regrettably, Iraq's water resources have been ineffectively

managed for too long.

Also of relevance here, Iraq's water flows are actively being reduced by neighbouring countries. Population growth is, of course, another factor.

But again, Iraq's water crisis is real. And, desertification remains a central concern. Last year's wave of intense dust- and sandstorms is just another case in point.

The country got battered by storms that obscured the sky, sent people running for shelter, and even resulted in sickness and death. And, in the absence of concerted action and political resolve, the risks thereof will only be further exacerbated.

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference provides an important platform. A platform for building partnerships. A platform for cooperation, coordination and collaboration.

And I would like to thank His Excellency, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, for bringing us all here in this room.

Mr. Prime Minister, I know that this is a priority for you and rightly so. And I can only emphasize that shared ownership of this crucial file - across the political spectrum - will prove essential.

And while we must speak out about the need for collective action, about the need to mitigate and adapt, it is - of course - equally important to also highlight the associated opportunities and possibilities.

Take for example – the Prime Minister mentioned it himself - the gas flaring. Along with methane leaks, flaring and venting of natural gas make up a significant part of Iraq's emissions. So, yes, as made (yet again) crystal clear by the Prime Minister a few weeks ago: these practices need to end.

That said, this end can spawn a new beginning. If Iraq was to capture the gas it currently flares, it would provide electricity for the entire south. Need I say more?

Another example is the transition to clean energy. This is not, simply, a move away from oil and gas – rather it is a move towards a new, green economy.

One that comes with jobs, with new infrastructure. One that feeds into the need for Iraq to build a diversified economy. I mean, I think we can all agree that an overreliance on oil is not a solid strategy – for many reasons.

What I am essentially saying is: let's not just talk in terms of risks. A crescendo of doom has the tendency to

paralyze things.

So, let's also explore the many possibilities that are out there. Even the non-believers will have to admit that efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change also produce opportunities, such as resource efficiency and cost savings, as well as the development of new products and services.

Ladies and gentlemen, some call “climate change” the great equalizer.

And, true, it is coming for all of us – no matter our passport or pay grade. But the fact is, we are not all equally vulnerable.

Rural communities. Poor or marginalized groups. Minorities. People with disabilities. Women and girls. These are the people who stand to suffer most. Particularly when vulnerabilities intersect.

For example, rural women, who bear the brunt of a changing climate, are often the ones with the least access to resources and services, decision-making capacity or mobility needed to respond.

Involving these groups in adaptation and mitigation decision-making processes is not an act of charity. Again, it is an opportunity – one that can enrich our responses and bring new ideas to the table.

Lastly, ladies and gentlemen, let me emphasize: the environmental challenges facing Iraq are not all homegrown. I just referred to neighbours that are actively reducing the inflow in Iraq's rivers. What does that mean? It means Iraq cannot solve these challenges alone. No country can. All stakeholders will have to play their part. From the Government, neighbouring countries, private companies, international organizations and financial institutions to think tanks, start-ups, local advocacy groups and NGOs. Each and every one of us must play a role in the mammoth tasks ahead.

And as climate-related challenges grow in complexity – spilling across borders, deepening fractures among societies, multiplying existing threats – I can only underline the need for stepped up regional cooperation. It will be ever more critical, as explained by the Prime Minister.

And it goes without saying: at all times, the UN stands ready to support regional water diplomacy, provide technical assistance on water negotiations or act as a convening partner for effective dialogue.

The harsh reality is that many of

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “Water scarcity in this region is not just a threat on the horizon. It is real. It is here, now.” (continued)

today’s challenges do not recognize borders. And, facing these challenges requires close cooperation. We need each other to be at our best. It is as simple as that.

Within this context, let me also welcome Iraq’s participation in the upcoming UN 2023 Water Conference in New York later this month. And yes, certainly, joining the Water Convention

in advance would send a strong message about Iraq’s seriousness to engage at the regional level using normative frameworks.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, it is our sincere hope that, through this conference - here in Basra - Iraq will embark on an inclusive planning process.

One with strong institutional

coordination and sufficient budget allocation. One which the United Nations and many other partners can support in following up.

A process that will enable Iraq to effectively deal with the many environmental challenges and associated risks ahead.

I wish you all a fruitful conference.

Thank you.”

United Nations at the Basra Climate Conference



Basra, 12 March 2023 - Today at Iraq Climate Conference in Basra the **Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczi**, participated in high-level Panel discussion on priorities in the National Vision for Climate Change. He emphasized addressing climate change in an integrated manner through a whole of government, whole of society approach.

As part of the Iraq Climate Conference in Basra, the **FAO Iraq Representative Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan**, moderated the second session of the day, entitled 'In-depth discussions on the problem of water scarcity in Iraq and the additional impacts of #ClimateChange'.

This session was attended by their excellencies the Minister of Water Resources, the Minister of Agriculture, the French Ambassador, Technical deputy minister of Environment and representatives from UNDP, UNICEF and civil society.

The aim of this session was to shed light on the problem and causes of water scarcity, to present the challenges and proposed solutions, to discuss the status of natural systems, the most important of which are the marshes, and the technical role of the United Nations .

“More than 50% of schools, hospitals, and health centers lack essential water and sanitation requirements, and 2 out of every 5 children in Iraq lack access to clean drinking water”, said Dr. Ali Al-Khateeb, UNICEF Chief of WASH, during the climate conference in Basra today. The Climate Conference in Basra - one of the Iraqi regions most afflicted by climate issues - was an opportunity to draw attention to the challenges that the current generation is facing to have a safe and clean environment to grow and prosper.

WFP hosts German Foreign Minister in Iraq’s southern marshes

Basra, 12 March 2023 - WFP was honored to host German Foreign Minister, Ms. Annalena Baerbock, who showed keen interest in WFP's vital work in Iraq's southern marshes.

#ClimateAction is necessary and critical to preserve this world heritage site and the lives of its inhabitants.

Germany is WFP’s 2nd biggest donor globally and biggest here in Iraq. Thanks to Germany’s flexible funding this year, WFP implemented innovative pilots centered around nature-based solutions that WFP is advocating for the government to take over.



GreenScape's solution: building resilience in the face of climate change



Erbil, 12 March 2023 - Dana Kamal is a young Iraqi entrepreneur and the owner of GreenScape, a landscaping company that provides high-quality and cost-effective landscape solutions for residential, commercial and urban projects in the Kurdistan Region and wider Iraq. He founded GreenScape in 2013 with a group of ambitious, creative, highly-skilled landscapers and engineers, with a vision of helping clients achieve their ideal outdoor experience.

But in water-strapped Iraq – among the top five countries most affected by climate change globally – those interested in this sector need to get creative. Indeed, Dana's company recently established a smart drip irrigation system (an innovative method for climate-smart watering) for a pomegranate garden in Halabja.

Dana graduated from Salahaddin University with a degree in irrigation engineering, and he has a passion for developing sustainable landscape solutions that can contribute to Iraq's urban development and agriculture sector, while conserving natural resources.

"Our deeper aim is to redesign cities with more nature, to further penetrate the agricultural sector with improved irrigation and to save water. For this purpose, eco-friendly systems are essential to realizing our sustainability plans," he explained.

Though Dana wants to implement sustainable urban projects, he recognizes that in practice, his vision demands a stronger sustainability culture in Iraqi society. In line with this, GreenScape is committed to enriching its systems through the use of sustainable products, improving its design skills and expanding its

engineering experience.

Unfortunately, Iraq's private sector faces many challenges, including a lack of supportive industrial policies and limited access to financial and other necessary support services.

"Because clean and renewable energy materials are expensive, there should be efforts to minimize taxes on them. Simultaneously, financing should be made available to enterprises that provide clean and renewable services in order for them to thrive," Dana said.

He believes that the key to creating sustainable landscapes lies in the efficient use of resources, especially water. He emphasizes that "the most important aspect of any garden, whether public, residential or agricultural, is the irrigation system, which ensures survival while minimizing water usage. Our country does not employ advanced irrigation systems in agricultural fields, which has resulted in a loss in greenery in cities and agricultural regions due to rising temperatures and decreasing groundwater and surface water."

He Dana continues: "We must not be indifferent to the identified difficulties that have contributed to water shortage. Plan B, which is water management through the use of advanced irrigation systems in

agricultural projects, must be implemented."

With a grant from IOM Iraq's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF), GreenScape has been able to add solar panels to their production field; purchase new sterilizing equipment and water distribution systems; and acquire greenhouses to produce their own trees and flowers for their projects. "Before, we had to import the trees and flowers we used, but after the EDF grant we were able to establish multiple greenhouses. We now use our own trees and flowers for our projects, and we were able to hire [15] more employees to maintain our greenhouse and add solar panels to supply electricity instead of a generator," Dana told us.

As of March 2022, IOM has documented approximately 20,148 people in ongoing displacement across 10 Iraqi governorates due to water scarcity and climatic factors. In response to this and to the challenges posed to Iraq's private sector by climate change, drought-related displacement and limited access to financial and non-financial services, IOM plans to launch EDF-Green, which will be dedicated to supporting environmentally-friendly practices across the country.

EDF-Green will target innovators in the agricultural sector and those contributing to climate resilience, including those working in waste sorting and recycling, renewable energy, food processing, agriculture and other green areas. The initiative is planned for launch in Sulaymaniyah, Diyala and Baghdad governorates in March and April of 2023, with qualifying green enterprises able to apply for a grant to increase their green activities.

These activities were made possible thanks to support from the Government of Germany, through KfW.

By Aram Hakim, Senior Communications Assistant, IOM



WFP is growing thousands of mangroves that desalinate the ground and water

Basra, 14 March 2023 - Salinity affects large swathes of southern Iraq, making it impossible to grow food. WFP is growing thousands of mangroves that desalinate the ground and water, making the environment a welcoming habitat for life. This work cannot happen without generous donors like Germany.

It is thanks to flexible funding from such champions like Germany that WFP is capable of doing important work on #ClimateChange and ensure that this barren ground will be lush and green in the next few years.



How WFP empowers farmers in Iraq in the face of climate extremes



Basra, 20 March 2023 - It's almost noon on a scorching day last August – 53°C. We follow Jermal, a farmer in Basra, Iraq, on a narrow trail to his greenhouse. Our footsteps kick up dust from the cracked, sepia-toned earth. When we step inside, we're greeted by a gust of muggy wind and the unexpected sight of row upon row of dead, dry plants.

"With this heat, our crops just can't survive," says Jermal, plucking dead leaves from the wilted crops and crushing them between his fingers. "I've been farming this land for over 30 years and I've never seen anything like this."

Yellowed leaves and shriveled crops are just two signs of the heatwave that has struck Iraq – which now ranks among the top countries most seriously affected by the global climate crisis.

The south of the country has been hit the hardest. "Temperatures used to go as high as 47°C. Now they routinely exceed 50°C," Jermal says.

In Basra, water scarcity has displaced half the population. Those who stayed

behind now struggle to put food on the table.

Despite being Iraq's largest oil-producing governorate, was also home to millions of palm trees that produced dates of the highest quality in the region. These were burned away during the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s.

The scorched earth, water scarcity, and salinity in the area made it nearly impossible to restore palm trees to their former glory. While Basra's economy depends on oil production, the more vulnerable communities rely primarily on agriculture to sustain themselves and earn a livelihood.

In recent years, Iraq has also seen more frequent and severe droughts. These have reduced the availability of water from rivers and aquifers, further exacerbating the problem of water scarcity and soil salinity – meaning less water for families and soil in which little can grow.

Basra's economy hinges to no small degree on agriculture, which is being severely challenged by climate extremes. In some areas, yields have

fallen by as much as 50 percent, leading to a surge in food prices and making it more difficult for families to afford the staples they need.

"We no longer have crops. Not just in this greenhouse. The rest of the land has dried out," Jermal adds, gesturing to the surrounding fields. "All the other farmers in the village are struggling, too. It's a tough time for us."

To help farmers like Jermal adapt to the climate crisis, WFP has implemented a number of projects in Iraq, focusing on increasing the availability of water, improving irrigation systems, and strengthening the ability of local communities to adapt.

Jermal is among thousands of farmers who have benefited from WFP-supported climate-resilience training, as well as solar-powered water pumps, irrigation canals, and hydroponics.

"For farmers like Jermal, their families, and their communities the climate crisis is a harsh daily reality – their crops wither, their incomes dry up," says Ally-Raza Qureshi, WFP Iraq Country Director. "We can – and must – address this challenge. That's why WFP's climate-resilience programmes are critical, here in Iraq: we equip small farmers with the tools and knowledge they need to meet the climate challenge and protect their communities. Working with them, we are saving livelihoods – and lives."

In spite of it all, some plants cling to life in Jermal's greenhouse. As we head out, he gives us a handful of okra that has survived, points at the barren land outside, and says, "The next time you are back, I hope you see nothing but green."

By Rana Deraz, WFP

Iraq's accession to UN Water Convention opens new opportunities to strengthen transboundary water cooperation in the Middle East

Vienna/Baghdad, 24 March 2023 - Iraq today made history as the first country in the Middle East to join the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (known as the UN Water Convention). It becomes the 49th Party to this unique international legal and intergovernmental framework, which aims to ensure the sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation across borders. 19 of the 22 Arab countries are considered water scarce. Nearly all Arab States draw upon transboundary water resources that cross one or more international boundaries.

The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers Basins are the most important sources of surface water for some 237 million people across Iraq (43.5 million), Iran (88 million), Syria (21 million) and Türkiye (85 million). The rivers system, including their many tributaries, is essential to Iraq, and its riparian States. But competing needs of water for irrigation, drinking water supply (only some 60% of the population has access to safely managed drinking water services), industry, hydropower production and the environment, combined with diminishing water quantity and deteriorating water quality, pose difficult management challenges. These challenges are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

Facing high water stress, Iraq is experiencing mounting social, economic and political pressures due to water scarcity. Low rainfall, increasing temperatures and reductions in the country's surface water have all led to critically low levels of water in Iraq in recent years. Transboundary cooperation is therefore increasingly important to promote sound management of the country's transboundary water resources, to contribute to its sustainable development and to enhance regional stability and peace.

"Iraq faces a real water crisis", warned the President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Abdul Latif Rashid at the UN Water Conference, who stated that over the last 40 years water flows from the Euphrates and Tigris, which provide up to 98% of Iraq's surface water, have decreased by 30 to 40%. He cited challenges including impacts on agriculture and the health of the citizens from drinking saline and polluted water, and the drying out of

UNESCO World Heritage-listed marshlands. "At present no basin-wide arrangement consensus exists among riparian countries regarding the management of Euphrates and Tigris... I strongly encourage all the countries to follow Iraq in acceding to both the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes".

Ms. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary, welcomed this important step. "I congratulate Iraq, the first country in the Middle East to accede to the Water Convention. This opens new opportunities to enhance transboundary water cooperation. With 153 countries sharing water resources worldwide, water cooperation is a critical issue for the entire sustainable development agenda. I encourage governments in all regions to join the UN Water Convention."

Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, United Nations Deputy Special Representative for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, emphasized that "Water must be shared at all levels: globally; regionally; between countries; and between men and women at the community level. It must be a source of cooperation rather than conflict. The Water Convention is an additional asset for Iraq to improve the management of its shared water resources for future prosperity, sustainable development and peace."

Ms. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of

the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), stated, "Iraq's decision to accede to the Water Convention sends positive signals to the international community and to investors. Iraq is now Party to both UN water conventions and I am confident that this will foster cooperation in the region."

UN Secretary-General António Guterres this week urged all Member States to join the Convention and ensure its full implementation, and has stressed that "the 1992 Water Convention is a powerful tool to advance cooperation, prevent conflicts and build resilience".

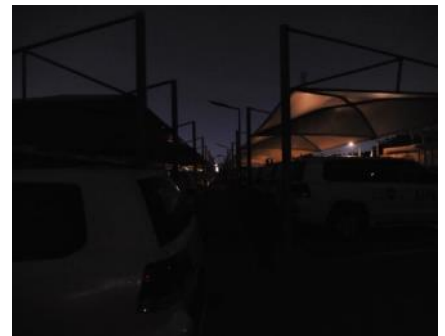
Iraq's accession follows that of Nigeria on 22 March 2023. Some 10 states have committed to join the UN Water Convention at the milestone UN Water Conference, where water cooperation is a major theme. More than 20 countries worldwide are in the process of joining the Water Convention.

The Water Convention, whose secretariat is serviced by UNECE, is a unique and widely accepted intergovernmental legal framework. It requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce negative impacts on water quality and quantity across borders, to use shared waters in a reasonable and equitable way, and to ensure their sustainable management through cooperation. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters are obliged to cooperate by concluding specific agreements and establishing joint bodies.



UN in Iraq marks Earth Hour 2023

Baghdad, 25 March 2023 – Tonight, the United Nations family in Iraq joined the world for #EarthHour by turning off its lights for 1 hour to stand united #ForPeopleForPlanet.



IOM held awareness-raising sessions on combating desertification and supported a planting campaign in a Kirkuk school

Kirkuk, 17 April 2023 - Every year, Iraq loses 100 dunams of agricultural land to desertification – a growing disaster already leading to food insecurity, loss of livelihoods and displacement.

In Kirkuk Governorate, IOM held awareness-raising sessions about combating desertification and supported a planting campaign in a local school.

Everyone has their part to play in preparing for and responding to disasters. For this project, made possible by the EU Civil Protection &

Humanitarian Aid, IOM Iraq joined forces with: community members, local

leaders, the Directorate of Agriculture and the Directorate of Education.



150 volunteers to plant more than 150 trees in Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah

Baghdad, 30 March 2023 - “The climate emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win” said United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres.

Because every stone counts in the effort

to curb global warming, UNDP launched the Greening Iraq campaign which led 150 volunteers to plant more than 150 trees in Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah.

This campaign is implemented by the

‘Supporting Recovery and Stability through Local Development in Iraq’ Programme in partnership with the Rwanda Foundation, and with generous funding from the European Union.

DSRSGs Cordone and Isaczai attend the second meeting of the Informal Expert Group of the members of the United Nations Security Council on Climate, Peace and Security

Baghdad/New York, 26 April 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, and the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, attended the second meeting of the Informal Expert Group of the members of the United

Nations Security Council on Climate, Peace and Security, co-chaired by the United Arab Emirates, Mozambique and Switzerland. Discussion focused on the climate-driven challenges facing Iraq, including water shortages and the peace and security implications of these challenges, as well as the UN role in supporting Iraq facing such challenges domestically and regionally. Photos courtesy of the UAE Permanent Mission to the UN.



WFP and Ministry of Environment host national consultations on climate action in Iraq

Baghdad, 18 April 2023 – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Iraq's Ministry of Environment held a three-day national consultation event aimed at enhancing the country's climate adaptation efforts.

The workshop focused on bolstering Iraq's climate information system with the aim of having unified and consolidated data across the entire country and strengthening early warning mechanisms. The participants unanimously agreed that establishing an inter-ministerial technical committee and creating a roadmap to achieve this goal is of utmost importance.

The Ministry of Environment will disseminate the workshop's recommendations to all stakeholders. This initiative marks a significant step in Iraq's national efforts to address the repercussions of the climate crisis and pave the way for a more comprehensive and effective approach to climate information management in the country.

The workshop was attended by technical experts from ministries in the federal and Kurdistan region of Iraq,

who are involved in collecting, analyzing, using, or are custodians of climate data, to facilitate efficient decision-making and promote the country's ability to anticipate and respond to climate impacts.

Deputy Technical Minister of Environment Dr. Jassem Abdel Aziz stressed the pressing need for collaboration among ministries to address the effects of climate change in Iraq. He highlighted that working in isolation is no longer viable as climate change brings security, political, and economic challenges that lead to water scarcity, desertification, and salinization, all of which threaten food security. To address these challenges, Dr. Aziz emphasized the necessity of establishing a centralized climatic data center that collects, analyzes, and disseminates all climate data to communities and stakeholders, facilitating informed decision-making.

“WFP is committed towards supporting the development of a comprehensive climate information system. This is of utmost importance to Iraq, and we believe it will provide integrated, accurate, and relevant data on climate

change accessible to decision-makers including local governments, policymakers, and relevant ministries,” said WFP Representative and Country Director in Iraq Ally-Raza Qureshi. “WFP will also work hand in hand with the government to unlock the various regional and international forecast-based financing mechanisms for achieving early warning and anticipatory actions in the country.”

Iraq's Climate Envoy, Dr. Fareed Yasseen, reiterated the need to break down the barriers that limit climate data and information sharing between various ministries to strengthen the country's position within the region and internationally in having a reliable and robust climate information system.



Canada commits to protect Iraq's Mesopotamian Marshlands

Baghdad, 20 April 2023- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq and Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) signed an agreement for a project to protect Iraq's southern Marshlands earlier this month, with a CAD 5 million (approximately US\$ 3.7 million) contribution to increase biodiversity protection and people resilience in face of climate change. The project will be implemented under the leadership of the Center for Restoration of Iraqi Marshes & Wetlands (CRIMW) at the Ministry of Water Resources of Iraq.

The Iraqi Mesopotamian Marshlands, one of West Asia's most important biodiversity hotspots, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and home to the country's famed Marsh Arab culture are now under threat from climate change and unsustainable human activities. The unique marshes' ecosystems are influenced by severe droughts, rising temperature, reduced precipitation and higher evaporation rates. On top of climate change impacts, the resilience of the ecosystems and biodiversity of the Marshes are being weakened by human impact on the rivers flow, chemical and wastewater pollutants, and habitat destruction.

Indigenous inhabitants of the

Mesopotamian Marshlands, particularly women and girls, are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change and ecological destruction, due to their close relationship with the nature.

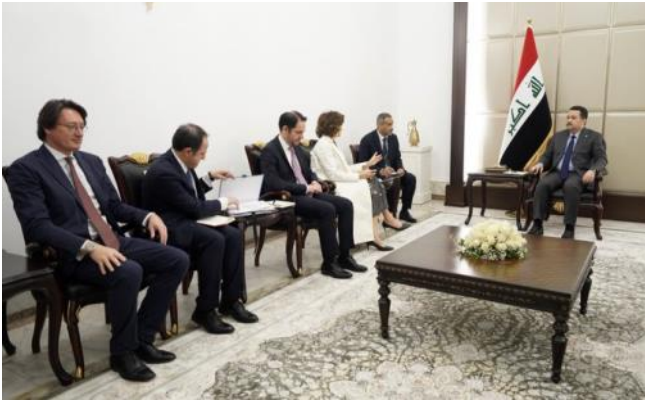
A set of activities proposed under the project aims to build resilience of local communities to climate change impacts, particularly indigenous Marsh women, tackle root causes of biodiversity degradation, and protect the wildlife population, in such way that it brings co-benefits across poverty reduction, social cohesion, and climate mitigation.

In the context of southern Iraq where gender inequality is significant, the project will give a special focus on investing into the empowerment of Marshland women, increasing their involvement in decision-making processes and encouraging to become change agents in the Marshlands. Given the severe water scarcity, the project will increase local water security by rehabilitating water recycling systems, equipping them with solar energy units, and carrying out a comprehensive analysis of possible solutions for securing drinking water for the Marshes population, which are sustainable and scalable in the long run. With climate change acting as a stress factor, accelerating the depletion of Marshlands resources, the project will

undertake an important Ecosystems Assessment to provide a first ever scientific analysis of the state of ecosystems in the Marshes, its economic, social and cultural composition, and offer scenarios of future human and ecological well-being, to adapt conservation policy and management strategies accordingly. To support ecosystems restoration and conservation on the ground, the project will establish locally managed hatcheries to re-populate the native fish stock, improve regulations on sustainable hunting and fishing, and enforce such regulations in gender and culturally sensitive manner, along with awareness campaigns to increase local people ownership over biodiversity conservation. The project focuses on a particular area of the Central part of the Marshlands, located in Al-Chibayish district, ThiQar Province, as the Central Marshes was listed as one of the Mesopotamian wetlands of international importance, and characterized as a socio – ecological site due to the high levels of interaction between local people and nature for thousand years. This project is a critical step towards protecting the Mesopotamian Marshlands, addressing the growing effects of climate change, and preserving Iraq's natural heritage for generations to come.

Director-General of UNESCO visits Iraq

Baghdad, 9 March 2023 – Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO visited Iraq from 6 to 8 March 2023. Here are some highlights of her visit.



Baghdad, 6 March 2023 - "Honoured to undertake my first official visit to Iraq for a three-day mission to Baghdad, Mosul and Erbil. I thank the Prime Minister Mr. Mohammed S. Al-Sudani for this very positive discussion. He told me of his satisfaction with UNESCO's projects and the need to strengthen our partnership".



Baghdad, 6 March 2023 - "With President Rashid, we talked about the long historic relationship between UNESCO and Iraq, in all the dimensions of our Organisation's mandate. UNESCO and Iraq also have a very special link as "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" is the biggest initiative in UNESCO's history," - Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO
Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Iraqi Presidency.



Baghdad, 6 March 2023 - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: "Glad to visit the National Museum of Iraq, victim of a major looting in 2003, whose reopening has been supported by UNESCO. This museum has collections of great quality and diversity. It is a powerful signal that they are again accessible to Iraqis and visitors.

UNESCO helped by mobilizing its experts, providing IT equipment and supported the museum team make an exhaustive inventory of works of art. In 2023, our Organization will organize a new training course, dedicated to the fight against illicit trafficking.

UNESCO is also proud to have supported in 2021 and 2022 the return of more than 17,000 artefacts to Iraq by the United States, including the famous Gilgamesh tablet.

I give a special thanks to the museum team and the Iraqi authorities for their commitment to saving and protecting Iraqi heritage, finding the stolen works of art and restoring them. In recognition of this exceptional work, I have decided to award them the UNESCO medal".



Baghdad, 6 March 2023 - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: "What an exciting first day in Iraq. It was a great pleasure for me to walk the streets of Old Baghdad, to see its monuments which testify to the rich history of Iraq and to have direct talks with the Baghdadis. I especially wanted to go to Al-Mutanabbi Street, famous in the Arab world to have long drawn bibliophiles. Its bookstores and its very dynamic life highlight the return of peace and prosperity to Iraq through culture. I spoke with the booksellers and we have the same conviction: culture has a central role for the future of Iraq. It is an important factor of social cohesion, as well as it is a source of job creation and economic activity".



Baghdad, 6 March 2023 - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: "Moving discussion with the owner of the Shabandar café, iconic place of Baghdad's intellectual heritage, 16 years after the attack. Thanks to him and his family for their hospitality and their inspiring message of hope."

Director-General of UNESCO visits Iraq (continued)

Mosul, 07 March 2023 - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: "In Mosul, I was honoured to lay the first stone at the reconstruction site of Al-Hadba minaret with the Minister of Culture of Iraq and the Sunni Waqf. I thank the United Arab Emirates, main partner of UNESCO to #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul.

This was a deeply moving experience, one that I will long remember. This twelfth-century minaret was a landmark on the Mosul skyline. #ReviveTheSpiritofMosul, what UNESCO wants to do, also means giving this minaret its historic place in the city's landscape. We are building it back exactly the same, as requested by Moslawis. This is an immense technical challenge: due to its lean and due to its original materials – tens of thousands of hand-laid bricks and mortar – all on the original foundations.

I visited the site to see, with my own eyes, the progress made on the projects led by UNESCO, and to thank the Iraqi engineers and labourers who are doing such fantastic work every day. We have achieved so much in recent years:

demining, clearing rubble, collecting and restoring heritage elements found among the debris, consolidating building foundations. In 2023, we have entered the final phase of reconstruction.



Mosul, 07 March 2023 - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: " In addition to the Al-Hadba minaret, UNESCO is reviving three other symbolic monuments in the Old City of Mosul with the support of the United Arab Emirates: Al-Nouri Mosque, the

Our Lady of the Hour Convent and Al-Tahera Church.

To carry out this project, we have worked hand in hand with national and local authorities, with local NGO and with Moslawi residents, who they themselves decided how monuments

would be rebuilt.

Like Al-Hadba Minaret, the bell tower of Our Lady of the Hour Church is a landmark on the Mosul skyline. After visiting the foundry to see the new bells removed from their mold, it was an honour for me to be in Mosul to ring them for the first time after 20 years of silence.

Our Lady of the Hour Convent has an incredible history. It was home to the first girls' school, the first school for women teachers and the first printing press in Mesopotamia. Within its walls the first Arab version of the Bible was published.

Here again, we wanted to rebuild in line with the best international practices. For this reason, UNESCO called on a family-owned foundry in Normandy, France, to cast the new bells – they also made the bells for Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris.



Mosul, 07 March 2023 - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: "At the University of Mosul, inspiring meeting with the students of the cinema section created with the support of UNESCO. #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul also means supporting the new generation.

Thanks to the Government of Italy for supporting UNESCO's actions in Mosul. We signed a new agreement to provide the University central library with computer and book scanning equipment, and to train librarians".

I also wanted to go to the museum and the cafe of Baytna Foundation for Culture, Arts and Heritage. What a great mobilization for the revival of cultural life. I also met representatives of Mosul Heritage, MosulEye and the Book Forum. UNESCO is honored to work with all these NGO to #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul".

Director-General of UNESCO visits Iraq (continued)



Mosul, 07 March 2023 - UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay: "UNESCO is also rebuilding 124 heritage houses in the historic center of #Mosul with the strong support of the European Union. 43 of them are already completed and returned to their owners. By September, we will have finished rebuilding all the other" - Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO - "What a pleasure to have handed over the key of a heritage house that UNESCO has just rehabilitated to its owner, and to see the Mosul families returning to live in the historic center of Mosul".



Erbil, 08 March 2023 - "In Erbil, to visit the Citadel listed in 2014 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our Organization is proud to support Kurdistan in the protection of this emblematic monument. UNESCO is leading a program that combines the restoration of historic buildings of the citadel and the creation of local jobs, including for minorities. Exciting discussion with women who have found employment through the local UNESCO program. Thanks for your commitment to protect and promote this World Heritage Site!" - Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO.

Italian Ambassador visits historic churches in Mosul

Erbil, 8 March 2023 – UNESCO architect Maria Rita Acetoso and her team hosted today the Italian Ambassador to Iraq, Maurizio Greganti, on the visit to the historic churches in the Qleat neighborhood in Mosul, where Italian restoration experts are engaged in the reconstruction of Iraqi heritage after the victory over Daesh.



DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai visits UNESCO project sites in Basra

Basra, 11 March 2023 - On Saturday, UN Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq visited a site of UNESCO project in Basra. Mr. Ghulam Isaczai expressed appreciation for the work of UNESCO team in advancing social cohesion through the creation of much-needed decent jobs for the most vulnerable and in the rehabilitation of the historical old city of Basra.

Mr. Isaczai witnessed firsthand the remarkable achievements taking place within the framework of the project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" in the rehabilitation of heritage houses and Al-Ashar Canal, with the generous funding from the European Union. UNESCO is rehabilitating historic Shanasheel houses and Al-Ashar Canal, with Basrawi trained youth and workers, to preserve the cultural heritage in Basra Old City for future

generations, while providing hundreds of jobs at local level.

Basrawi youth are directly participating in this project to ensure an easy transition between education and the labor market, and to integrate the skills needed to start entrepreneurship effectively.

Scores of trained young men and women are directly involved in the

reconstruction of heritage houses in historic Basra.

UNESCO Iraq Office Education team recently celebrated the graduation of 50 Basrawi youth that took part in TVET activities and have successfully completed the apprenticeship on-job-training programmes which were carried out at the heritage sites in the old city of Basra.



UNESCO, ILO, and the Directorate of Dohuk Antiquities and Heritage restore the heritage site of Qeshlah of Akre city

Baghdad, 16 March 2023 - UNESCO, ILO, and the Directorate of Dohuk Antiquities and Heritage, are working to implement restoration works on the heritage site of Qeshlah of Akre city.

The aim of this project is to preserve and restore one of the most important Qeshlah buildings of the Ottoman period and an interesting tourist destination. It is rich with original distinctive architectural elements, such as arched roofs, iron rails, colored tiles,

and many other architectural details in addition to its heritage value. The project creates decent job opportunities for Iraqis and Syrian refugee workers and will promote cultural heritage development in the city.

This project is implemented through UNESCO's project "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development" funded by the EU regional trust fund in response to the Syrian crisis.



Members of the European Parliament visit the UNESCO projects sites in the Old City of Mosul

Mosul, 03 April 2023 - Members of the European Parliament visited the UNESCO projects sites in the Old City of Mosul to witness the remarkable progress that is taking place in preservation of heritage, job creation, and rehabilitation of the monuments, within the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul initiative in partnership with the Government of Iraq, and with generous financial support from the European Union and United Arab Emirates.



Swedish Ambassador visits the UNESCO projects sites in the Old City of Mosul

Mosul, 04 April 2023 - UNESCO welcomed the Swedish Ambassador to Iraq, Ms. Jessica Svärdröm, to visit a range of UNESCO's projects currently ongoing in the Old City of Mosul, within the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul Initiative. With thanks to the United Arab Emirates and the European Union for their generous support.



Rebuilding Mosul's heritage: the role of UNESCO and the UAE

Mosul, 08 April 2023 - In 2014, Mosul, a city in northern Iraq, fell to due to conflict. Ancient landmarks and priceless cultural artifacts were destroyed.

Mosul is an ancient city that has played a significant role in the history of Iraq and the Middle East. Located on the Tigris River, it was an important center of trade, culture, and learning for thousands of years.

The city has seen numerous empires and civilizations come and go, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Ottomans. It was also a center of Islamic scholarship, with several prominent mosques and religious schools.

Once a thriving cultural and religious hub, the city of Mosul in Iraq has faced years of destruction and devastation due to the conflict. Many of its historic landmarks, including religious sites, have been damaged or destroyed.

However, hope is on the horizon as

UNESCO's Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative is making significant progress in rebuilding some of the city's most important religious landmarks. Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Saa'a Convent, and Al-Tahera Church are all undergoing rehabilitation works thanks to the efforts of UNESCO, in partnership with the UAE.

For the locals of Mosul, the rebuilding of these religious sites is more than just rehabilitating historic landmarks - it's about restoring their faith, culture, and sense of identity. These sites were not just places of worship, but also symbols of their heritage and traditions.

Many locals are now making a living off working on the construction sites, contributing to the project, and bringing hope to the city. The initiative has provided employment opportunities for Mosulis, creating a positive impact on the local economy.

As the rehabilitation project continues, UNESCO is also providing training and capacity-building programmes to ensure the local workforce gains the necessary skills to carry out the rehabilitation work to the highest standards. This will not only benefit the immediate rehabilitation efforts but also leave a lasting legacy of expertise in rehabilitation and conservation in the region. The intervention by UNESCO to rebuild Mosul's historical landmarks is a crucial step towards reviving the city's rich cultural heritage and identity. It's also a testament to the potential of international cooperation: with the support of the UAE and the tireless efforts of local and international experts, the city of Mosul is on the path to recover, and its rich cultural heritage is being restored for generations to come.



UNESCO hosts a delegation of engineering students and professors from the South Technical University (STU)



Basra, 9 April 2023 - UNESCO was delighted to host a delegation of engineering students and professors from the South Technical University (STU) at its project sites in the Old City of Basra. Through this visit, they were able to witness firsthand the accomplishments achieved under the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project which is generously funded by the EU.

The delegation expressed their sincere appreciation for the work carried out by UNESCO in rehabilitating historic

Shenasheel houses and the Al-Ashar Canal which constitute key elements of the city's cultural heritage and identity. The purpose of the visit was for these students, future engineers and architects, to learn from UNESCO's experience and technical expertise in the restoration and rehabilitation of historical sites and to raise their awareness about the importance of their preservation for future generations, while enhancing and preserving traditional know-hows, creating jobs and revitalizing the

historic urban fabric. The students will be able to use this first experience to develop their knowledge of heritage conservation through academic projects in the field of restoration and the use of appropriate conservation methods and materials that respect the authenticity and integrity of Basra's historic buildings.

In addition, UNESCO and the South Technical University (STU) of Basra are aiming to enhance their cooperation in view of developing a post-graduate curriculum on the conservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings, particularly of Basra's characteristic Shanasheel houses.

As part of its commitment to preserve Iraqi cultural heritage, UNESCO is currently leading the rehabilitation of eleven historic Shanasheel houses, of which three have been already completed, as well as of the Al-Ashar Canal in the Old City of Basra.

These projects not only contribute to safeguard these precious sites for future generations, but also creates jobs and training opportunities for hundreds of Basrawi youth and workers.

UNESCO hosts the EU delegation to its work sites in Dohuk governorate

Dohuk, 12 April 2023 - UNESCO was honored to host Mrs. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation, as part of the EU delegation to our work sites in Dohuk governorate. During her visit, we showcased our ongoing efforts to preserve and safeguard significant cultural heritage sites including the Qeshlah of Akre, the Assyrian Aqueduct, the Princes graveyard, Synagogue of David Hazan, and the Sirichi Pit. Our goal is to create decent job opportunities for both Iraqis and Syrian refugees through these

activities.

During her visit, Mrs. Egger had the opportunity to engage with male and female workers benefiting from the project's ongoing activities. These efforts are being implemented under the framework of UNESCO's "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development" project, which is funded by the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis. We are grateful for the technical support provided by the International Labor Organization (ILO).



Mohamed Abdulaleh: A talented sculptor helping to rebuild Mosul's cultural identity

Mosul, 12 April 2023 - UNESCO in partnership with the #UAE is restoring Mosul's landmarks, one carving at a time.

Mohamed is working tirelessly on carving the exquisite Mosuli Faresh stone and geometric decorations by hand as part of the reconstruction project of the Al-Tahera Syriac Catholic Church. This incredible initiative is

being carried out by UNESCO in collaboration with the state board of antiquities and heritage in Nineveh, and in partnership with the United Arab Emirates.

Not only is Mohamed contributing to this vital project, but he's also playing a significant role in reviving the dying art of hand carving in Mosul. He's passionate about passing on his

knowledge and skills to future generations and reviving the cultural and historical heritage of the city through this unique artistic craft.

Mohamed's work is part of the Revive The Spirit Of Mosul initiative, which is a UNESCO-led project aimed at rebuilding and revitalizing Mosul's cultural heritage after years of conflict and destruction. The initiative includes

Mohamed Abdulaleh: a talented sculptor ... (continued)



a wide range of activities, such as the restoration of historic landmarks, the revival of traditional crafts and skills, and the promotion of cultural events.

One of the significant benefits of the initiative is that it has created job opportunities for locals of Mosul, like

Mohamed. By providing training and employment opportunities for artisans and craftspeople, the project is not only helping to preserve the city's cultural heritage but also supporting the economic development of the community.

Through this initiative, UNESCO is working with local communities to ensure that the restoration and revival of Mosul's cultural heritage reflect their values and aspirations. This participatory approach is crucial for building a sense of ownership and pride in the city's cultural heritage and ensuring its sustainability in the future.

The Revive The Spirit Of Mosul initiative is a shining example of how cultural heritage preservation can be a catalyst for community development and economic growth. We applaud the efforts of Mohamed and other talented artisans who are working tirelessly to restore the beauty and richness of Mosul's cultural heritage.

What an inspiration! We need more individuals like Mohamed to preserve the rich cultural heritage of our world.

UNESCO and EU's joint effort to revive Mosul and Basra's cultural heritage

Baghdad, 16 April 2023 - In the aftermath of years of war, conflict and destruction in Iraq, UNESCO launched a project aimed at reviving the cities of Mosul and Basra in partnership with the European Union.

“The Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities project, is yet another testimony to the longstanding partnership between UNESCO and the European Union in the field of cultural heritage preservation, our shared commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage as a tool for building resilient and sustainable communities is the driving force behind our action,” said Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Chief of Culture, UNESCO Iraq Office.

In the framework of the project, UNESCO is working alongside the Ministry of Culture and local authorities and communities to promote economic growth by focusing on rebuilding heritage houses, schools, and reviving local cultural life. One of the components of the project in Mosul is the reconstruction of the Al-Ekhlash School which was destroyed during the conflict. With the support of the local community, UNESCO is rebuilding a unique child-friendly school that will provide students with a safe and stable learning environment and which, beyond that, lights up a path of hope and renewal for upcoming generations in a city once famed for education and scholarship.

The project has seen significant progress in upgrading public

infrastructure and restoring more than 124 historic houses in the Old City of Mosul, out of which 80 have been completed and already handed over to their owners. In the Old City of Basra, 11 characteristic “Shanasheel” heritage houses are being rehabilitated and the historical Al-Ashar Canal along which they are located is being repaired.

Rebuilding community through cultural heritage, local workers learn traditional restoration techniques as part of the project.

The rehabilitation and construction activities associated with these interventions constitute the support for apprenticeship and training programs in which young people from the local communities are schooled in traditional crafts and restoration techniques. The benefits are twofold: there is a growing pool of local skills and talents able to support ongoing and future

conservation work in both cities, on one hand, and there are better employment opportunities for young workers that have acquired improved qualifications and marketable job-skills, on the other. The project focuses on empowering women and youth in both cities, provides training and support for young female workers and technicians interested in pursuing careers in construction and conservation, creates job opportunities for them, and boosts local economic growth.

As the project unfolds, UNESCO and the European Union remain committed to the task of revitalizing Mosul and Basra through interventions that preserve and promote cultural heritage, reinforce people's and communities' sense of continuity and connection with their past, and bolster a peaceful sense of their identity with which to step into the future with confidence.



UNESCO, ILO and the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization are making great strides in their efforts to conserve one of the most significant historical houses at Erbil Citadel

Erbil, 17 April 2023 - UNESCO and the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization are making great strides in their efforts to conserve one of the most significant historical houses at Erbil Citadel. A team of experts, technicians, and skilled workers are working collaboratively to restore this magnificent structure. This project is being supported by UNESCO and the International Labor Organization (ILO) under the "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development" initiative, which is funded by the EU Regional Trust Fund



in response to the Syrian crisis. We're thrilled to be a part of this important

endeavor to preserve Iraq's cultural heritage!

Knowledge sharing session on the restoration of Al-Tahera Church in Mosul

Mosul, 20 April 2023 - The restoration of Al-Tahera Church in Mosul is truly remarkable, thanks to the talented team of national and international conservators! Their expertise has been critical to remove modern added dyes, reintegrate missing parts, and consolidate the fragile original alabaster surfaces on the church's walls and columns. And now, these experts are generously sharing their knowledge with a lecture at the Al-Nouri Mosque. During the lecture, the team discussed the restoration process applied for the delicate alabaster surfaces and the valuable lessons they've learned along the way. This is a fantastic opportunity

for all employees working in UNESCO sites in Mosul to learn and apply these techniques to their own work. UNESCO is so grateful for the hard

work and dedication of these integrated team of conservators, and can't wait to see the amazing results of their restoration work.



Education

Three-days capacity building workshop on “Research in Education for Peace” held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 26 February 2023 - UNESCO together with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and UNESCO Chair in Education for Peacebuilding and Human Rights at Ulster University organized three-days capacity building workshop on Research in Education for Peace. Following six virtual training sessions, the workshop provided the Higher Education researchers from different Iraqi governorates with the necessary knowledge and skills, and familiarized them with the methodologies, ethics, and possible limitations in research development for peacebuilding. The workshop was organized within the framework of the GA-PVE-E project supported by the

Government of Canada which was represented by Mr. Sherif Najji,

Counsellor, Stabilization, Embassy of Canada to Iraq.



Roj School blossoms thanks to School Based Management approach

Duhok, 28 February 2023 - For Salah Mahmoud Omar, Principal in Roj School in Al Amedi District, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, implementing the school-based management programme, supported by UNICEF, changed his life.

"After taking part in the school-based management programme, the whole school learning environment changed," said Mr. Omar. "Now, I can make decisions that have an impact on our school, which is not only faster, but also more productive."

More than 220 students in Grade 1-9 attend Roj School, almost half are girls. The school uses the Kurdish curriculum, and most of its students come from vulnerable backgrounds, including Syrian refugees.

UNICEF, funded through the PROSPECTS partnerships set up by the Netherlands, supported the implementation of a school-based management programme in various schools in Iraq – 886 schools so far. The aim of this programme is to improve learning, promote creativity, and give the entire school a voice in decision making while holding the school accountable.

In June 2022, Mr. Omar and four of his colleagues participated in a 3-day training programme on school-based management jointly with other 23 participants from other schools. They acquired skills on how to manage the school, manage the financial resources, and improve relations to serve a larger number of students. At the end of the

training, they developed a school improvement plan, in accordance with the child-friendly school initiative.

Small actions with huge impact
Following the training, UNICEF provided the school principal with seed money - \$1,000 - to implement the school improvement plan.

"I was so happy to receive the funds," said the School Principal. "I improved the learning environment for our students, and I did it with only \$1,000." With the little funds received, he installed surveillance cameras; mounted a liquid soap system for improved hygiene; supplied the school with educational aids for science and math classes as well as languages; painted the walls of some classrooms; and rehabilitated the roof of one of the classes.

"I no longer need to bring bottled water to school," said Sidad, 17, a Grade 9 student at Al Roj school. "Now, we have clean and safe drinking water available in our school!"

"Out of our belief in the importance of education, my teachers carried out outreach activities visiting homes of students who fell behind, to support

them with their homework," said the School Principal with pride. "This advanced our reputation, and now many parents are demanding to enroll their children, but we unfortunately don't have enough space."

According to Omar, the school-based management programme was the best thing that happened to the school. Its learning environment has drastically improved, placing the school among top ranks in the region.

The impact of the school-based management did not stop there, as the school enhanced its engagement with the community and gained further support. For instance, during this school year, the community supported the school with a printer and paper; painted the external walls of the school; supplied some furniture and helped in building an additional classroom for students.

"Now, my dream is coming true," added Omar. "All I want is to ensure that every student has access to a quality learning environment to enable them to reach their full potential."

By Shahad Bulbul, UNICEF



UNESCO conducts two training workshops to strengthen the capacities of teachers about "Teaching in Crises Context"

Baghdad, 5 March 2023 – Within the framework of "Improving Access to Quality and Inclusive Education with Gender Equality for Out of School Children in Babil and Baghdad, Iraq" project supported by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, UNESCO, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sorouh Organization for Sustainable Development, conducted two training workshops to strengthen the capacities of teachers about Teaching in Crises Context (TICC) in Baghdad and Babil from 26 February to 2 March 2023. Capacities of 40 Teachers (22 Female, 20 from each governorate) were further enhanced in several areas, including child welfare and protection, classroom



management and teacher well-being, social emotional learning, pedagogy,

questioning, assessment, and lesson planning.

Erbil Citadel workers certified with cultural heritage-related skills following completion of training programme

Erbil, 9 March 2023 - (ILO News) A graduation ceremony was held for forty workers in Erbil who have completed trainings in cultural heritage-related skills under a programme implemented by the ILO and UNESCO, with the support of the European Union.

The ceremony took place on Wednesday (March 8) at the World Heritage Site of the Erbil Citadel, where the ILO and UNESCO are working together to restore, preserve and promote cultural heritage, while mainstreaming decent work through employment-intensive approaches.

Employment-intensive approaches link infrastructure development with employment creation, poverty reduction and local economic and social development. It mainstreams decent work principles, through the promotion of gender equality, social inclusion, skills development, improved working conditions, Occupational Safety and Health and social dialogue.

Through this approach, the ILO, in partnership with Erbil Polytechnic

University and Peace and Freedom Organization (PFO), and in coordination with UNESCO and the High Commission of Erbil Citadel Revitalization, has facilitated the recognition of skills for the 40 workers in occupations related to the conservation of historical sites, including stone paving, brick laying using eco-friendly construction material, and tour guide skills relevant to historical sites.

The workers, who include women and men from internally displaced, host and refugee communities, were assessed

through the training and received accredited certificates from the Erbil Polytechnic University, which will enhance their employability and boost their opportunities for decent jobs.

Similar skills training activities will be held in Duhok and Sulaymaniyah in the coming months.

The collaboration between UNESCO and the ILO falls under UNESCO's "Supporting Livelihoods Through Cultural Heritage Development" project, which is supported by the European Union (EU) Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis.



The national rollout of the unified UNICEF – World Bank Life Skills and Citizenship Education framework is under way

Baghdad, 11 March 2023 - UNICEF congratulates the Ministry of Youth and Sports for their commitment to the national rollout of the unified UNICEF – World Bank Life Skills and Citizenship Education framework. Thanks to PROSPECTS partnerships set up by the Netherlands, this will equip every young person with the needed skills to transition to adulthood and employment, and become responsible active citizens.



The EU delegation paid a visit to Northern Technical University in Mosul in order to follow up on developments in Bologna and Quality control

Mosul, 14 March 2023 - UNESCO in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), and funded by the EU, is working with 7 Technical Universities across Iraq to increase the employment of Graduates. This has been done by creating new bachelors' degree programmes through the implementation of the Bologna process to develop new course which are aligned with the labour market, competence based and students centred. The MoHE in Baghdad has formally adopted Bologna as a way of

upgrading HE provision for all Universities.

The EU delegation paid a visit to Northern Technical University in Mosul in order to follow up on developments in Bologna and Quality control. The Head of Cooperation, Ms. Barbara Eggers, and her delegation met with Faculty and students at NTU involved with the new Construction Bachelor's degree, which has been under implementation since November 2022. She expressed her satisfaction with the progress that has been made

and encouraged faculty and students to make the pilot a success and for it to be a model for upgrading all the degree programmes offered by NTU.



The “Study in Iraq” initiative launched in Baghdad

Baghdad, 16 March 2023 - UNESCO Iraq Office congratulates the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for the launch of the “Study in Iraq” initiative!

Higher education exchange programmes advance education opportunities, and foster knowledge development and cultural relations.



UNESCO join forces with Italy to assist University of Mosul

Mosul, 21 March 2023 - UNESCO and Italy signed a cooperation agreement to support and strengthen the capacities of the University of Mosul through trainings and provision of state-of-the-art library system including digitization and archiving technologies to digitize historical manuscripts and documents.

A new step towards reviving the cultural life in Mosul!



New ILO paper: “Education attainment gap in Iraq and the potential of social protection to reverse it”

Baghdad, 22 March 2023 - (ILO News) A new working paper, developed by the ILO, looks at how the low rate of secondary school completion in Iraq leads to loss of earnings to Iraqis and the economy, and ways in which social protection can play a role in closing the education gap.

The paper examines and estimates the national economic loss in terms of potential cash flow from the labour market that could have been generated if young Iraqis received education at the same level as their peers in other countries.

According to the paper, Iraq is in the early stage of an “demographic window of opportunity”, with a young

population and a growing labour force. However, the young generation entering the labour market in Iraq is facing an education gap, compared with peers in countries at the same income level.

The paper draws on international practices from other countries’ experiences that have demonstrated positive impact on school enrolment. It outlines how effective social protection programmes can strengthen access to education, by addressing some of the financial barriers faced by school-aged children.

The working paper was presented during a session, organised by the Ministry of Planning and the ILO in

Baghdad on Wednesday (March 22), which brought together thought leaders, academics, decision-makers and development partners. Inclusive roundtable discussions have been held in recent months by the ILO and the Ministry to discuss key issues and priorities relating to social and labour policy in Iraq.

The latest paper forms part of series of working papers produced by the ILO, often in collaboration with UN partners, to support the Government of Iraq in reforming its social protection system, with the support of the European Union.



Fostering peace through education and culture



Ninewa, 25 March 2023 - UNESCO, the General Directorate of Education in Ninewa, Mosul Heritage and Volunteer With Us collaborated to organize two top-up training workshops in Ninewa on fostering peace through education

and culture. Held at the Mosul Heritage Center, these workshops were attended by 76 primary and secondary school administrators.

The workshops were organized under the GA-PVE-E project supported by

Canada in Iraq and implemented within the larger UNESCO initiative #RevivetheSpiritofMosul. The sessions refreshed the knowledge and skills of the previously trained school administrators and further equipped them with key techniques to integrate cultural heritage education into their daily interactions with students, creating a positive and peaceful learning environment.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the 76 primary and secondary school administrators who attended these workshops. Their commitment to promoting peace through education and culture is truly inspiring. Together, let's continue to promote positive learning environments that foster a culture of peace and understanding in Ninewa, and let's work towards reviving the spirit of Mosul.

A final Validation workshop was held to carry out final checks on the new learning and teaching materials

Baghdad, 28 March 2023 - UNESCO, in cooperation with the EU, is working with the Ministries of Education to enhance the employment of graduates from the Vocational schools. The key to enhancing employability is to ensure the schools develop the skills needed by the Labour Market. To help the schools achieve this UNESCO has been working with a team from the Ministry of Education to develop a new Competence Based ICT curricula and supporting learning and teaching materials.

A final Validation workshop was held from the 26 to 28 March to carry out final checks on the new Learning and

Teaching materials. The Meeting finished with all 17 modules being validated by representatives from the MoE and the Private Sector. This brand new ICT curriculum has been developed by Iraqi experts with

UNESCO guidance and is ready to be implemented from next academic year. Another step in making Vocational Education more relevant to the needs of Iraqi society and enhancing graduate employment.



Empowering women through technical skills: a UNESCO TVET success story

Mosul, 30 March 2023 - In the war-torn city of Mosul, Iraq, the devastation of the long-lasting conflict had left the citizens in a state of despair. Homes and schools were destroyed, and thousands of people had lost their jobs. The future seemed bleak for the people living in the city.

Hope came in the form of UNESCO's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme funded by the European Union as part of the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project. UNESCO recognized the need for job creation and skills training in post-conflict areas and implemented the TVET programme to

provide education and training to the most vulnerable groups of youth and to equip them with the skills needed for the future.

The TVET programme in Mosul provided a range of courses that

focused on the construction sector. This was in recognition of the fact that the demand for skilled workers in this sector is high and provided training courses in partnership with MoLSA and the Vocational Training center in Mosul in brickwork, concrete, carpentry, plumbing installation and electrical installation. The courses were designed to be practical and hands-on, ensuring that trainees could put their newly acquired skills to work immediately.

The impact of the TVET programme was remarkable. Graduates were able to find jobs in the local community, and some even started their own businesses, contributing to the



Empowering women through technical skills... *(continued)*

economic growth of the area. Moreover, the programme offered hope to the citizens of Mosul, giving them the chance to rebuild their lives and communities.

One graduate of the TVET programme, a young woman named Ghufuran Wa'ad

Abdul Wahab, had lost her home in the conflict. She enrolled in the programme to learn brickwork work, and she was quickly able to find work in a local project. She used her earnings to rebuild her home and support her younger siblings, who were still in

school.

Ghufuran's success story was just one of many that came out of the TVET programme in Mosul. The programme not only provided essential skills training but also restored hope and confidence in the people of the city.

Equipping young people with market-related technical and professional skills to improve their ability to work and access decent jobs

Mosul, 01 April 2023 - 50 young men and women participated in a 44-day vocational training program on installation and maintenance of solar panels, installed solar power and solar heating systems at the Mosul Vocational Training Center.

The training is aimed at forcibly displaced, returnees and the host community to equip them with market-related technical and professional skills to improve their ability to work and access decent jobs.

This project is being implemented by AVSI Iraq with technical support from the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Iraq, and in partnership with the Directorate of Labor and Social Affairs at the Vocational Training Center in Mosul, as part of the International Labor Organization Horizons Program. Funded by the

Dutch government, the Dutch embassy in Iraq.

This week, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq celebrated the graduation of 300 participants in a training programme organized by the Vocational Training Centre in Sulaymaniyah governorate. WFP is proud to have been part of this

partnership and to support the youth in Iraq. Through this project, young women and men have learned practical skills like barbering, computer skills, automotive technician, hairdressing, steelworks, fashion design, electrical power extension, telecom, nursery baby care, mobile phone maintenance, and marketing.



Improving access to schools for children and developing a safer and more attractive learning environment for them

Baghdad, 27 April 2023 - The UNESCO team and Monica Pisu, Development Programme Coordinator at the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in Iraq, visited three schools in the Al-Shula area of Baghdad governorate as part of the "Improving Access to Quality and Inclusive Education with Gender Equality for Out of School Children in Babil and Baghdad Governorates" project. The project aims to re-enroll 10,000 out-of-school children in Babil and Baghdad governorates, and to provide capacity building and training to 100 teachers across different fields and subjects, as well as to rehabilitate and furnish 10 schools in the targeted governorates.

Mr. Saad Saber Al-Rubaie, Director General of Education of Karkh 3, and Mr. Haider Mohsen Mahmoud, Head of the Educational Planning Department, at Al-Hur Al-Riyahi Primary School welcomed the visit. They discussed

possible partnerships and cooperation to improve access to schools for children and develop a safer and more attractive

learning environment for them. This project is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.



The United Nations is committed to partnering with the youth of Iraq in accordance with Vision 2030, and in the thematic areas of peace and security, and sustainable development



Najaf, 25 February 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, today participated in the opening session of the al-Rafidain Centre for Dialogue Conference in Najaf. Under the slogan "Youth and the Challenges of State-Building in Iraq Present Dialectics and Future Aspirations", DSRSG Cordone noted in his remarks that "the United Nations is committed to partnering with the youth of Iraq in accordance with Vision 2030, and in the thematic areas of peace and security, and sustainable development". The DSRSG added that "participation of women and youth in political events must be encouraged and that innovation and ambition are qualities of youth in general - they have great potential for change".

Here is the text of his remarks:

"Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning,

Allow me at the outset to express my gratitude for the opportunity to address you at this conference today on behalf of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert who sends her greetings and best wishes.

I am very pleased to see so many of you from Iraq and other countries coming together to discuss challenges and opportunities facing youth in Iraq and the region.

I wish to thank Al Rafidain Center for Dialogue for taking the initiative to organize this important event. I am particularly pleased to speak to you in this hall recently dedicated to the memory of Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Let me share with you some thoughts on the important role of youth in Iraq.

According to recent figures, young people constitute more than half (55%) of the population across the MENA region (OECD 2019). Iraq has one of

the youngest populations in the world, with nearly 60 percent below 25 years of age. However, young people are important not only because of their numbers, but also because of their qualities.

We know that innovation and ambition are generally qualities of young people. And the highest proportion of young people live in unstable places around the globe. They hold an enormous potential for change. Some have used this potential to promote discriminatory ideologies and the use of violence against those who are different from them. But fortunately, the majority of the youth have strong values of tolerance and want to promote dialogue, social progress and peace.

The United Nations Security Council, in resolution 2250, adopted in 2015, recognized that "young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security". A main pillar of this resolution is participation. The resolution urges Member States to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at all levels. It also calls on states to set up mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in conflict resolution and peace processes. Young people in Iraq, as it is the case in other countries, are often excluded

from decisions making processes and political discussions. Like in the case of women, young people are not adequately represented within the decision-making levels of political parties and state institutions. They are also largely excluded from conflict-resolution processes and mechanisms. This should be remedied, by ensuring that youth, and women, can participate meaningfully in, and contribute to, the many political processes which are ongoing in Iraq.

At the same time, many youths in Iraq are rightly concerned about their job prospects. It is incumbent upon the government to adopt employment policies that provide sustainable economic opportunities, not just depending on oil revenues and expanding the public sector.

I believe that the government is committed to support the youth of this country. In May 2021, the Ministry of Youth with the UN's support adopted the Youth Vision 2030. This is a multi-sectoral roadmap for empowering young people in Iraq and creating opportunities for them to promote their political, economic, social and health status.

Let me assure you that the United Nations remains committed to working with you to deliver on your ambitions, as set out in the UN Secretary-General's "Youth 2030" strategy. Launched in 2018, Youth 2030 is a strategy that guides the UN's efforts to strengthen its work with young people across three pillars - peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. It seeks to address the needs and advance the rights of young people, and ensure their participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We want young people to take the lead and come up with innovative and sustainable solutions to address the major challenges that Iraq is facing such as climate change. It is often said that you are the leaders of tomorrow,



The United Nations is committed to partnering with the youth of Iraq in accordance with Vision 2030 ... (continued)

but in reality, you are leaders of today! So keep on meeting, organizing and speaking up, believe in yourself and never quit. And, most importantly, unite, you have more in common than separates you. In Iraq, we have seen

firsthand in 2019 the strength of the youth taking to the streets demanding basic rights and better opportunities. We look forward to the outcomes of this Conference, specifically on the ways in which the UN could better support

youth in Iraq and the region, in order to affirm your right to play a larger and more meaningful role in shaping the future of this country. I wish you a constructive and fruitful discussion.”

UNICEF Regional Director Khodr visits Iraq



Baghdad, 05 March 2023 - Today, as part of her official visit to Iraq, UNICEF Regional Director, Ms. Adele Khodr, accompanied by Ms. Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, held meetings with the Minister of Planning, Mr. Muhammad Ali Tamim, the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Gabro, and the Minister of Education, Mr. Ibrahim Al-Jubouri. They discussed issues related to children and young people in Iraq and reassured UNICEF’s cooperation with the three ministries to work for children in the country.



Erbil, 07 March 2023 - The UNICEF Regional Director for the MENA Region, Ms. Adele Khodr, continues her official visit to Iraq by visiting the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Accompanied by Ms. Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, she conducted meetings with the KRI Minister of Planning, Mr. Dara Rashid, the KRI Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Ms. Kwestan Mohamad, and KRI Minister of Interior, Mr. Rebar Ahmed.

UNFPA participates in Rudaw Research Center’s Erbil Forum 2023

Erbil, 6 March 2023 - “For Gen Z, having unlimited access to information is not only a convenience, but also a source of freedom that allows them to explore and discover the world on their own terms,” said Mr. Garik Hayrapetyan, UNFPA Deputy Representative to Iraq. UNFPA participated in Rudaw Research Center’s Erbil Forum 2023 roundtable discussion on “Gen Z in the Middle East, Role and Responsibilities”. The event provided a platform to young people to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing young people in the region and emphasized the need for their active participation in shaping the future. “We need to ensure that they can

navigate this sea of information safely and confidently and let them free, they

will figure out what and how to lead”, Mr. Garik Continued.



The Ministry of Youth and Sports and UNICEF, in partnership with the Kurdistan Organization for Human Rights Watch, call on young changemakers in Iraq for the imaGen Ventures Youth Challenge

Erbil, 18 April 2023 – The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in partnership with UNICEF, launched today the Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge “imaGen Ventures”, calling on young changemakers to design solutions to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Successful applicants will be invited to take part in design workshops to make their ideas reality. Following these workshops, the most promising ideas will be selected and provided with seed funding as well as mentorship to support the projects' implementation.

In August 2023, solutions from all countries participating in this year's challenge will be submitted to a global judging process. These projects will receive further funding, and will be included in a tailored global incubation programme from Generation Unlimited partners to support them to scale.

Co-hosted globally by five Generation

Unlimited partners – UNICEF, UNDP, Plan International, USAID, and the World Organization of the Scout Movement – and, in Iraq, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and KOHRW, the challenge calls on young innovators across Iraq to design solutions to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, in line with UNICEF Iraq's priority areas such as Climate Change and Gender Equality.

The Youth Challenge is a global initiative meeting young people where they are and working with them in supporting the realization of their full potential. It aims to inspire young people with brilliant ideas, providing the resources needed to bring them to life. This includes young people that are forcibly displaced, those who face daily discrimination due to their ethnicity, their gender, their disability or disadvantaged by poverty.

In line with the SDG-focused solutions, GenU's imaGen Ventures 2022 awarded

twelve teams of young entrepreneurs as global winners at the youth pavilion during COP27. These innovative teams showcased their talents by presenting projects that included eco-friendly plastic, sustainable sanitation technologies, solar-powered lighting systems for schools, and bio-briquettes. With the seed-funding provided, these winning ventures have the necessary resources to advance their ideas and make a greater impact on their communities.

The most promising ideas will contribute to the success of Generation Unlimited, an ambitious global public-private-youth partnership meant to meet the urgent needs for expanded education, training and employment opportunities for young people on an unprecedented scale.

For more details on how to apply, please follow this link: <https://bit.ly/41tT8hD>

Timeline

Erbil International Book Fair opens in Erbil

Erbil, 8 March 2023 - UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert joined Iraqi and Kurdistan Region officials and dignitaries at the opening of the Erbil International Book Fair today. On display are the works of scores of national and international publishers in Arabic, Kurdish and English as well as other languages.



The Secretary-General's remarks at the ceremony on the occasion of the International Day of Nowruz

New York, 20 March 2023 – United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, attended at the UN Headquarters in New York, a ceremony on the occasion of the International Day of Nowruz. Here are his remarks:

“Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to start by wishing everyone a Happy and healthy Nowruz.

I am grateful, grateful to you, dear Ambassador, for bringing us together and for enabling the United Nations to be part of this auspicious ceremony.

Dear friends,

Nowruz is a celebration of new beginnings.

For more than 300 million people, it marks a new day, a new year.

The arrival of spring. The renewal of nature.

A chance to be with family and friends.

Nowruz is also a celebration of rich cultural heritage and diversity.

It unites communities, between generations and beyond borders.

It reminds us of everything we have in common – as one human family – and inspires us to

learn more about one another.

It echoes the values of peace, human rights, and solidarity that the United Nations promotes every day.

Today, these common values are challenged as never before.

Our world is facing an unprecedented storm of crises.

Conflict.

Climate change.

A global cost-of-living crisis.

Halfway through the 2030 Agenda, we are backtracking on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Developing countries are facing unsustainable levels of debt.

Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech are also spreading like wildfire.

We can only move forward together, as one.

To overcome the scourge of war and build sustaining peace.

To promote mutual respect and understanding.

To reaffirm human rights and dignity.

To rescue the Sustainable Development Goals,

reduce inequalities and ensure that global financial structures work for all.

To safeguard our planet, halt global warming and protect communities.

Dear friends,

That spirit of renewal and cooperation also guides our work on Our Common Agenda and the efforts to revitalize multilateralism for today and tomorrow.

The SDG Summit in September and the Summit of the Future in 2024 will be key moments to come together around solutions.

The SDG summit will be the centerpiece of high-level week and of all our work this year.

Let us look forward with hope and determination.

Let us mark this new beginning by renewing our pledge for a peaceful and sustainable world and our promise to leave no one behind.

May this celebration bring you joy, good health and prosperity.

The United Nations family celebrates with you.

Nowruz Mubarak.

Baghdad International Flower Show opened

Baghdad, 16 March 2023 – The Baghdad International Flower Festival was opened by the Mayor of Baghdad, Ammar Musa, on Thursday evening in its twelfth edition, on the grounds of Al-Zawraa Park in Baghdad.

UNAMI PIO was there and here are few photos.



Nowruz celebrated at the UN compound in Erbil

Erbil, 20 March 2023 – At the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq Regional Office compound in Erbil, staff celebrated the arrival of Nowruz with traditional dances and bonfires. Nowruz Pirooz.



International Day of Sport for Development and Peace



Baghdad, 6 April 2023 - The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP), which takes place annually on 6 April, presents an opportunity to recognize

the positive role sport and physical activity play in communities and in people’s lives across the globe. Sport has the power to change the world; it is a fundamental right and a

powerful tool to strengthen social ties and promote sustainable development and peace, as well as solidarity and respect for all.

Iraqi boxer Karar Salah, 28, shares his experience and hopes.

Karar Salah: “I started boxing four years ago, my goal was to lose weight and improve physical fitness. Thank God, I lost weight, my fitness has been improved, and my ambition increased. I started participating in local and international boxing tournaments, and I aspire to reach world championships. I believe in sport and the power it has to change the world. Sport can bring people together and make them forget any difference or disagreement.”

Video produced by UNAMI PIO.

During Ramadan, Kirkukis play the traditional game Sinya (Sini Zerf)

Kirkuk, 7 April 2023 - Iraqis mark the holy month of Ramadan with a diverse array of unique traditions and social practices. They gather in courtyards and cafes after prayers and iftar, with families and friends sometimes until the early hours of morning.

A popular activity in Kirkuk is Sinya, an age-old game where rival teams must find a hidden ring.

Players strive to uncover a hidden ring, a dice or a coin under one of 11

miniature copper cups placed on a circular tray. The tray signifies the year, while each of the 11 cups represents a month - with the 12th cup missing as that would represent the month of Ramadan.

A UNAMI Public Information Office production

Photos and Video: Harith Al-Obaidi

Video editing: Sarmad Al-Safy

See it at https://youtu.be/CZV_dAp7m50

