

UNAMI Herald

Volume 10, Issue 3

May — June 2023



Security Council authorizes one-year mandate extension of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, unanimously adopting Resolution 2682 (2023)

New York, 30 May 2023—The Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) today for another year until 31 May 2024, retaining its core tasks.

Unanimously adopting resolution 2682 (2023) (to be issued as document S/RES/2682(2023)) the Council requested that the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq and UNAMI prioritize the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation, considering civil society input, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.

The 15-nation organ also requested the Special Representative and UNAMI to further advise and assist the Government of Iraq in strengthening electoral preparation and processes to ensure free and fair elections; the implementation of constitutional provisions, as well as on the development of processes acceptable to the Government of Iraq to resolve disputed internal boundaries; and progress on security sector reform.



The Council also requested the Special Representative and UNAMI to promote, support, and facilitate, in coordination with the Government of Iraq, the timely, voluntary and dignified return or local integration of internally displaced persons and displaced Iraqis in Syria; the coordination of programmes to improve Iraq's capacity to provide effective essential civil and social services; and efforts on economic reform and capacity-building.

The Mission was also asked to promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform; approach gender mainstreaming as a cross-

cutting issue throughout its mandate, including by consulting with diverse women's civil society groups; and note the importance of treating children affected by armed conflict primarily as victims.

Further terms of the text requested the Secretary-General to conduct and provide the Security Council, no later than 31 March 2024, with an independent strategic review of UNAMI, in consultation with the Government of Iraq, assessing current threats to Iraq's peace and security, as well as the continued relevance of UNAMI's tasks and priorities.

By UN News.



In this edition ...

UN Security Council unanimously authorizes one-year mandate extension of UNAMI

New York, 30 May 2023 - The United Nations Security Council, at its 9331st meeting on 30th May 2023, authorised a one-year mandate extension of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2024, unanimously adopting Resolution 2682 (2023). The text of the Resolution is available on *page 5*.

UNAMI's electoral assistance

Baghdad, May-June 2023 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is tasked by the Security Council resolution to advise, support, and assist the Government of Iraq, the Independent High Electoral Commission and other Iraqi institutions with efforts to strengthen electoral preparation and processes to ensure free and fair elections, including provincial elections and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq parliamentary elections, carried out with transparent processes, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes.

An overview of the UNAMI activities in this field in the last two months starts at *page 6*.

UNAMI Human Rights Office dialogue on the role of media/social media in countering hate speech

Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - To commemorate the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, and as part of the Human Rights 75 Initiative celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a dialogue on the role of the media, including creators of social media content, in countering hate speech in Iraq.

More on page 29.

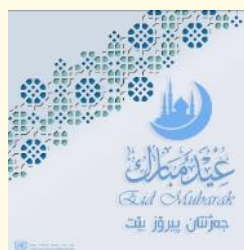
The United Nations in Iraq is committed to offering advice and technical support to enhance water management and ensure equitable access to water for all Iraqis

Baghdad, 06 May 2023 - Speaking at the Baghdad 3rd International Water Conference today, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, emphasized the importance of transparent and collaborative efforts to tackle Iraq's water challenges. The United Nations in Iraq is committed to offering advice and technical support to enhance water management and ensure equitable access to water for all Iraqis.

More on page 100.

Eid Mubarak

Baghdad, 28 June 2023 – SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: Eid Al Adha is an opportunity for people to come together and celebrate. In this spirit, I am hopeful that all Iraqis will join hands to further strengthen the country's stability and to achieve prosperity for all. Eid Mubarak.



IOM report: "The Role of Religious Institutions in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Iraq" presented in Najaf

Najaf, 25 May 2023 - Religion can be a very sensitive topic, especially in Iraq after the ISIL invasion, in which religious rhetoric was used to justify heinous crimes.

Yet, it makes no sense to ignore religion for the sake of avoiding discomfort.

Presented today at a ceremony in Najaf attended by a diversity of Iraq's religious leaders, a new IOM report by Dr. Marsin Alshamary doesn't shy away from these conversations and acknowledges the centrality of religion in everyday life and political outcomes.

And the implications are real for international organizations, government partners and religious leaders alike.

More on page 11.

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

PIO Director: Samir Ghattas

Editor-in-Chief: Ivan Djordjevic

Editorial Board: Samir Ghattas, Jean El-Alam, Ivan Djordjevic, Laila Shamji, Celia Thompson, Sarmad Al-Safy.

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

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

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “The harsh reality is that there is no time to lose. Much-needed reforms will not take root if choked by the weeds of patronage and graft.”

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “The harsh reality is that there is no time to lose. Much-needed reforms will not take root if choked by the weeds of patronage and graft.”

New York, 18 May 2023 – On its 9324th meeting United Nations Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq.

Here is the text of the briefing by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, at the meeting:

“Madam President,

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

Thank you very much.

With UNAMI’s next mandate renewal around the corner, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect, just a bit, and more importantly: to look ahead.

In the past months, numerous people and entities have analysed the events that shook Iraq 20 years ago, as well as the developments since.

Few would deny that it has been a very rough road. A road that has seen not only the compounding of existing fragilities, inherited from the previous decades, but also the exposure of new weaknesses.

And while many acknowledged that Iraq, throughout its history, has overcome some very dark times - they also argued that the drivers of instability in the country’s more recent past remained, for the most part, the same.

Drivers such as corruption, weak governance, the presence of armed non-state actors, impunity, factional politics, poor service delivery, inequality, unemployment, and an overreliance on oil.

Having said this, Iraq’s enormous potential was also widely highlighted, as was the view that the moment to act is now - thereby reaffirming that the confirmation of Iraq’s Government, last October, opened a crucial window of opportunity. So, the question is: where do things stand now?

As I mentioned in my most recent briefing to the Council, last February, the Government has shown its resolve to tackle a number of the pressing issues I just mentioned. And that still holds true. It is focusing on its core priorities and trying to avoid distractions that could threaten to



depend prevailing political stability.

That said, of course, it is early days. And we do not have a crystal ball to predict the unknowns, which could include the rise of potential disrupters.

As I keep on emphasizing what we do know is that any government in this position needs time. And that, in itself, is already a challenge. Amid low or no tolerance for a return to the status quo, which existed before October 2022, the harsh reality is that there is no time to lose.

Hence, I can only emphasize the necessity for relentless commitment from a wide range of actors; the significance of placing the national interest over that of any individual or party; the critical role of independent state institutions, and the need for an active, empowered and protected civic space.

Madam President, the Government Programme is leading the way - signed off on by all coalition parties united in the State Administration Alliance. Now, that does not mean that there are no disagreements or quarrels, as is the case in other countries governed by a coalition.

To bridge differences and to follow up on implementation in priority areas, regular meetings between government and coalition members take place. It is quite simple: the balancing of multiple differing opinions and interests requires constant compromise.

Now - does this mean that dynamics, trends, opinions and perceptions from outside the coalition are not relevant? Of course, they are very relevant, I would say.

In other words, the healthy interplay of opposition and coalition must be allowed to function, including through public exchanges between

decision-makers, political leaders, authority figures and broader civil society.

Also, and given the delicate balance needed to succeed in tackling core priorities, it is important to take into account the potential wider impact of a new law, action, or proposal - whether initiated in Parliament, the Government or elsewhere.

Will it consolidate or potentially conflict with key objectives? Will it bridge or widen divisions between groups and communities? Will it unite or rather estrange people? In other words, to break with the cycles of recurring crises, what must the priorities be? The fact is that Iraq has a full “to do” list. And, narrow or partisan actions will not help in checking it off.

Madam President, the resources needed to turn certain Government goals into realities, such as adequate public service delivery, should be unlocked with the passage of a federal budget. This is yet to happen and, these days, all eyes are on Iraq’s Council of Representatives.

Needless to say: agreement on a functioning budget, sooner rather than later, is critical. Including for the timely organization of the long-awaited Provincial Council Elections, now announced for no later than 20 December this year.

Meanwhile, Iraq continues to rely on oil. And the public sector remains the biggest employer. Now, these phenomena are, of course, nothing new. But, as I have said so many times, neither can last indefinitely. Economic diversification and major structural reforms remain urgent.

And yes, there is no denying it: this will prove to be challenging. For various reasons, including public expectations. After all, rather than

SRSg Hennis-Plasschaert: “The harsh reality is that there is no time to lose. Much-needed reforms will not take root ... (continued)



developing an employment-generating private sector, successive governments opted for the easy way out. That is, the creation of public sector jobs to “hush” civil unrest. This has led to a wage bill no country could afford.

In saying that, let me also (and once again) emphasize, that much-needed reforms will not take root if choked by the weeds of patronage and graft. Also, as I already mentioned, independent state institutions are critical. No training, capacity building or technical assistance programme can combat the ill effects of political interference.

The good news is that the Government has taken an express stance against the adverse effects of corruption, which stem from the system as constructed over the past two decades. And yes, vested interests will make the required systemic reform undoubtedly an uphill struggle. But it must be done.

In speaking of reforms, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Government in pushing Iraq closer to a state of energy independence. Again, this will not happen overnight. But, from the issuing of new licensing rounds to efforts to reduce energy waste, including a clampdown on gas flaring, this ambitious goal is increasingly closer to being reached.

Turning to the Kurdistan Region, Madam President. Disagreements between the two ruling parties in recent months drove the Region close to the brink. It was for good reasons that the political situation was described (by many) as increasingly reckless and irresponsible.

While it is our firm belief that outstanding fiscal, administrative, security and electoral disagreements could have been addressed months

ago, the will to compromise was - for far too long - glaringly absent.

That said, repeated efforts by the Region’s President, as well as others, to have the parties return to the negotiation table, and a recent meeting between the Region’s Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, led, at last, to some good news. After more than six months, the Kurdistan Region’s Cabinet met in full on Sunday.

At this stage, I can only express hope that parties will now step up, bridge differences, and work in the interest of all peoples. One glance at the history or geography of the Kurdistan Region reinforces just how urgent the need for sustainable solutions is.

Also, the Region’s parliamentary elections are long overdue. Initially scheduled for October 2022, an Election Day has now been set by the Region’s President, after consultations with all parties, for 18 November of this year. And, let me use this opportunity to remind parties that time is of the essence. Agreement on outstanding electoral issues must urgently be found. Another postponement would be detrimental to public trust.

With regards to Baghdad-Erbil relations, Madam President, I note that dynamics are still being described as good but complicated. Clearly, the political infighting in the Kurdistan Region did not help, as it also affected the relationship with partners in Baghdad.

On 4 April, following a ruling by the Paris-based International Court of Arbitration, and in the absence of the long-awaited hydrocarbon law, Baghdad and Erbil announced that they had reached a temporary agreement to allow for the resumption of oil exports through the

Turkish port of Ceyhan.

On 10 May, Iraq’s government requested Türkiye to restart the exports. To date, however, they have not resumed. Since taps were turned off on 25 March, it is likely that hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues have been lost.

Allow me here to underline once more the importance of anticipatory governance and thus the structural institutionalization of relations between Baghdad and Erbil. Be it the budget, questions surrounding hydrocarbon resources, disputed territories, the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement, or any other outstanding issue for that matter, it remains essential to move beyond ad hoc engagements.

Zooming in on Sinjar, we can only express disappointment that little to no progress has been made in the implementation of the 2020 Sinjar Agreement. This is despite the repeated declarations of commitment. To state the obvious: such stagnation creates further space for spoilers (of different backgrounds and affiliations) to exploit the situation to their own ends. And, it blocks thousands of displaced Sinjaris from returning to their areas of origin.

Sadly, a recent rise in tensions between communities in Sinjar was in large part further fuelled by online disinformation targeting the Yazidi community. Local leaders from all sides have collectively worked to dispel this spike in tensions. But challenges to reconciliation will persist until meaningful steps are taken, including those towards a unified administration, stable security structures and reconstruction.

Now, with the inclusion of the 2020 Sinjar Agreement as an explicit priority in the Government Programme, it is high time to get things done.

Madam President, Iraq’s commendable commitment to the return of its citizens from Northeast Syria continues to serve as an example. While new rounds of returns are expected, work is ongoing to reintegrate previous returnees into their areas of origin or, where relevant, to pursue accountability aligned with applicable laws.

As we all know, the Iraqi caseload is overwhelming, and I can only emphasize the criticality of continued support to Iraq and the need for any country with nationals in Northeast

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “The harsh reality is that there is no time to lose. Much-needed reforms will not take root ... (continued)

Syria to follow suit by repatriating its citizens.

More generally, durable solutions for returnees from Northeast Syria and all other IDPs remain essential. This is particularly relevant following the sudden closure of a camp in Ninewa Governorate last April. Secondary displacement is difficult to control and creates new risks.

Something else, Madam President: water. Water represents the most critical climate emergency for Iraq. By 2035, it is estimated that Iraq will have the capacity to meet only 15% of its water demands. 90% of Iraq's rivers are polluted, and 7 million people are currently suffering from reduced access to water. This is a significant multiplier of threats to Iraq's stability.

The priority placed on the issue of water security by Iraq's Government is, therefore, most welcome. And, plans for the extensive updating of Iraq's water management systems are said to be underway. This will be vital in meeting demands driven by population growth and urbanization.

The fair sharing of resources among Iraq's neighbours is equally important. If water is a competition, everyone loses. Bold domestic actions and close regional cooperation offer the only winning solution.

On that note, I also wish to draw attention to a simple fact, which is that regional security, economic and

political developments do - and will continue to - impact Iraq. I therefore cannot overstate the importance of the Government's efforts to scale up diplomacy with and among its neighbours in a number of areas - from border security and trade to water-sharing and climate issues.

Of course, regional stability will also hinge on respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and good neighbourliness.

Madam President, allow me to turn now to the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property - including the national archives.

The Iraqi authorities, assisted by the ICRC and the Tripartite Commission, continue efforts to locate witnesses and possible burial sites for Kuwaiti and third country nationals.

It goes without saying that we welcome the Prime Minister's decision to establish a committee, comprising members of security agencies, which is chaired by the Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Defence and mandated to support activities in this regard.

We continue to await progress on the retrieval of missing Kuwaiti property - including the national archives.

Madam President, as my last point, let me go back to something I mentioned at the start of my briefing: the need for an active, empowered and protected civic space.

Facilitating and allowing a plethora of different voices to be heard, including those which disagree or critique prevailing decisions, is both healthy and essential.

Hence, I would like to express our sincere hope that Iraq's leaders and authorities publicly embrace civic engagement, and the freedom of expression at that, to avoid fomenting a renewed sense of isolation and disillusion among Iraqi people, particularly the younger generation and women.

To be clear: accountability, rule of law and respect for human rights are equally essential to preventing recurring cycles of crises.

Now, in closing, and as spelled out so often, Iraq has tremendous potential. And through ambitious Government plans, provided, of course, that they are fully implemented, many drivers of instability can be addressed.

Of course, all of this could be easily spoiled - whether through unchecked corruption, interference from within, intrusion from the outside, a groundswell of disillusion or political horse-trading against the common good.

So, what I am essentially saying is: now is not the time to be complacent, or to take for granted that Iraq has turned a corner. So, I sincerely hope that all remain committed.

Thank you.”

UN Security Council unanimously authorises one-year mandate extension of UNAMI

New York, 30 May 2023 - The United Nations Security Council, at its 9331st meeting on 30th May 2023, authorised a one-year mandate extension of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2024, unanimously adopting Resolution 2682 (2023). Here is the text of the resolution:

“Resolution 2682 (2023)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 9331st meeting, on 30 May 2023

The Security Council,

Recalling all its previous relevant resolutions on Iraq, in particular 1500 (2003), 1546 (2004), 1557 (2004), 1619 (2005), 1700 (2006), 1770 (2007), 1830 (2008), 1883 (2009), 1936 (2010), 2001 (2011), 2061 (2012), 2110 (2013), 2169 (2014), 2233 (2015), 2299 (2016), 2379 (2017), 2421 (2018), 2470 (2019), 2522

(2020), 2576 (2021), 2631 (2022), and reiterating resolutions 2107 (2013) and 2621 (2022) on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and the values set forth in 2367 (2017),

Reaffirming the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Iraq, and emphasizing the importance of the stability, prosperity, and security of Iraq for the people of Iraq, the region, and the international community, particularly in light of Iraq's territorial victory over ISIL (Da'esh), and encouraging the international community to continue supporting Iraq in this regard,

Supporting Iraq in addressing the challenges it faces as it continues its stabilization efforts, including the ongoing fight against terrorism and ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and their

affiliates, consistent with its obligations under international law including international human rights law and international humanitarian law and continues the task of recovery, reconstruction, stabilization and reconciliation, including the requirement to meet the needs of all Iraqis, including women, youth, children, displaced persons, and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, recognizing the threat of explosive ordnance and its impact on civilians, including children, and welcoming efforts to clear areas of such devices,

Welcoming the confirmation of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani's government by the Council of Representatives,

Encouraging the recently formed

UN Security Council unanimously authorises one-year mandate extension of UNAMI *(continued)*

government to deliver on reforms, aimed at meeting the Iraqi people's legitimate aspirations, to address corruption, respect and protect the human rights of all individuals in Iraq, promote accountability for human rights violations and abuses, deliver essential services, diversify the economy, create jobs, improve governance, combat climate change and environmental and water-related challenges, and strengthen viable and responsive state institutions, including the security sector,

Recognizing the Government of Iraq's efforts to that effect, and calling for State institutions to redouble efforts to pursue accountability for those responsible for human rights violations and abuses including the killing, serious injury, abduction or disappearance of demonstrators and journalists, including women and to safeguard and respect the rule of law and the right to freedom of expression,

Welcoming the Government of Iraq's efforts to assist internally displaced persons and displaced Iraqis in Syria to return and reintegrate to their areas of origin or resettle elsewhere in Iraq, encouraging again international support for those efforts, and stressing the importance of achieving dignified, safe and durable solutions undertaken on a voluntary and informed basis,

Recognizing the progress the Government of Iraq has made in implementing the Yazidi Survivors Law, establishing the General Directorate for Survivors Affairs and disbursing the first payments to survivors and victims, noting that the lack of inclusion of children born of conflict-related sexual violence needs to be addressed, including all administrative obstacles to obtain registration and documentation for these children, acknowledging the

need to ensure a survivor-centered approach in which reparations and redress measures are continued, and evidentiary standards and requirements are not overly burdensome, discriminatory, or risk re-traumatizing and calling on the Government of Iraq to hold perpetrators of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence accountable and provide mental health and psychosocial support to all survivors and victims,

Recognizing that the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, and natural disasters, among other factors, can contribute to desertification and drought, sand and dust storms, adversely impact food security, water scarcity, livelihoods, and the humanitarian situation, and aggravate any existing instability, emphasizing the need for comprehensive risk assessments by the Government of Iraq with the support of the United Nations, upon the request of the Government of Iraq, to take meaningful actions to adapt to or mitigate challenges posed by climate change and ecological change, acknowledging the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and welcoming the Government of Iraq's efforts to that effect, in particular noting the Government of Iraq's accession to the UN Water Convention and the Iraq Climate Conference as well as the third Baghdad International Water Conference in 2023,

Calling on the international community to support durable solutions and development efforts while the Government of Iraq assumes responsibility for the provision of humanitarian services,

Noting the Government of Iraq's support for an Independent Strategic Review shared in the letter dated 18 May 2023 from the Deputy Prime

Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq H.E. Fuad Hussein addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations,

1. Decides to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2024;

2. Requests that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI, at the request of the Government of Iraq, shall:

(a) prioritize the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation, with the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women, taking into account civil society and youth input;

(b) further advise, support, and assist:

(i) the Government of Iraq, the Independent High Electoral Commission and other Iraqi institutions with efforts to strengthen electoral preparation and processes to ensure free and fair elections, including provincial elections and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq parliamentary elections, carried out with transparent processes, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes, as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle;

(ii) the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives on constitutional review, the implementation of constitutional provisions, as well as on the development of processes acceptable to the Government of Iraq to resolve disputed internal boundaries;

(iii) the Government of Iraq with progress on security sector reform, including by prioritizing the planning, funding, and implementation of efforts to strengthen state control and age appropriate and gender-responsive reintegration programmes for former members of armed groups, where and as appropriate, in coordination with other multinational entities;

(iv) the Government of Iraq on facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of border security, clearance of landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war, energy, trade, environment,



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

UN Security Council unanimously authorises one-year mandate extension of UNAMI *(continued)*

water, adverse impacts of climate change in particular those contributing to desertification and drought, resilience building, infrastructure, public health, and refugees;

(c) promote, support, and facilitate, in coordination with the Government of Iraq:

(i) the safe, timely, orderly, voluntary and dignified return or local integration, as appropriate, of internally displaced persons, and displaced Iraqis in Syria, including through the efforts of the UN Country Team, and timely access to legal assistance and civil documentation for internally displaced persons and displaced Iraqis in Syria, including persons at risk of statelessness, particularly children without birth registration or other documentation of legal identity;

(ii) the coordination and implementation of programmes to improve Iraq's capacity to provide effective essential civil and social services, including health care, inclusive of psychosocial support services, and education, for its people and continue to support Iraq's regional and international donor coordination towards strengthening national ownership;

(iii) Iraqi, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other efforts on economic reform, capacity-building and setting conditions for sustainable development and recovery and reconstruction including in areas affected by terrorism, including through coordination with national and regional organizations and, as appropriate, civil society, donors, and other international institutions;

(iv) the contributions of UN agencies, funds, and programmes to the objectives outlined in this resolution under the unified leadership of the Secretary-General through the Special

Representative for Iraq, supported by their designated Deputy;

(d) promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, in order to strengthen the rule of law and improve governance in Iraq, in addition to supporting the work of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) established in resolution 2379 (2017);

(e) approach gender mainstreaming as a crosscutting issue throughout its mandate, including by consulting with diverse women's civil society groups, and to advise and assist the Government of Iraq in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels of decision making, including in the context of elections and government formation, and the promotion of women's economic empowerment, by supporting the implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security consistent with resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions, and the Joint Communique on Prevention and Response to Conflict Related Sexual Violence;

(f) note the importance of treating children affected by armed conflict primarily as victims, and urge the Government of Iraq and UN Country Team to strengthen child protection, including the reintegration of children in accordance with Iraq's national laws and Iraq's obligations under international law, and to support the implementation of the conclusions of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict; and

(g) actively support the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to work together and engage in regular and structured

dialogue in order to resolve outstanding issues, in a manner consistent with the unity of Iraq and its constitution, including security provisions, budgetary arrangements and the management of Iraq's oil and gas resources, and to implement existing agreements, including the 2020 Sinjar Agreement;

3. Requests that the Secretary-General, in line with best practices, conduct and provide the Security Council, no later than 31 March 2024, with an independent strategic review of UNAMI, in consultation with the Government of Iraq, in addition to UN agencies, member States, regional organisations, independent experts and civil society, and the Government of Kuwait, consistent with paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013), including:

(a) assessing current threats to Iraq's peace and security, assessing the continued relevance of UNAMI's tasks and priorities, and providing recommendations to optimize UNAMI's mandate, mission structure and staffing to support the Government of Iraq in addressing the challenges of peace and security;

(b) further assessing the options to support the Government of Iraq in strengthening effective regional cooperation on issues outlined in paragraph 2(b)(iv);

4. Recognizes that the security of UN personnel is essential for UNAMI to carry out its work for the benefit of the people of Iraq and calls upon the Government of Iraq to continue to provide security and logistical support to the UN presence in Iraq;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council every four months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of all UNAMI's responsibilities;

6. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

Electoral

UNAMI continues to advise, support, and assist the Government of Iraq, the Independent High Electoral Commission and other Iraqi institutions with efforts to strengthen electoral preparation

Baghdad, May-June 2023 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is tasked by the Security Council resolution to advise, support, and assist the Government of Iraq, the Independent High Electoral Commission and other

Iraqi institutions with efforts to strengthen electoral preparation and processes to ensure free and fair elections, including provincial elections and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq parliamentary elections, carried out with transparent

processes, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes. Here is an overview of the UNAMI activities in this field in the last two months.

Baghdad, 9 May 2023 - UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA), with operational support from UNOPS, organized a workshop with the Independent High Electoral Commission on the Fundamentals of Monitoring and Evaluations as a tool for measuring progress in the implementation of the strategic plan.

Twenty-two staff members (9 females, 13 males) from various Independent High Electoral Commission departments participated in the workshop, where they were provided practical knowledge and exercises in designing a monitoring and evaluation system for the Commission.



Sulaymaniyah, 16 May 2023 - UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA), in conjunction with the IHEC Security Clearance Section and with operational support from UNOPS, conducted a training workshop on information and cyber security in Sulaymaniyah.

challenges related to breaching security protocols. The workshop served as an instrumental platform for imparting

essential knowledge and skills to safeguard individuals and information within our institution.

Dr. Aamir Arain, Director of UN Integrated Electoral Assistance, underscored the significance of OEA-IHEC collaboration in fulfilling our shared objective of providing technical support and enhancing capacities.



Dr. Arain highlighted the criticality of information and personal security, particularly in light of increasing

Dohuk, 17 May 2023 - UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA), with operational support from UNOPS, organized a new workshop with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) aimed at promoting greater electoral participation in the Kurdistan region. The two-day event featured 39 CSO partners from the Shams network coming from various parts of Kurdistan region. The workshop focused on the importance of voter registration in the

electoral process, emphasizing the need for a credible voter register to ensure transparent and inclusive elections. The participants were taken through the process of biometric registration used by IHEC. They also discussed the challenges faced in compiling and maintaining accurate voters registers, and the role of CSOs in supporting the electoral commission in the registration process.



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 24 May 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: "Ongoing political infighting in KRI is very disturbing. Once again, we call on all parties to work in the interest of all peoples and find common ground on outstanding electoral issues soonest. Timely, credible elections are a democratic essential."

Baghdad, 29 May 2023 - UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA), with operational support from UNOPS, held a workshop for the representatives of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) on the fundamentals of the monitoring and evaluation as a tool for measuring the progress. Participants attended a two-day workshop to understand the main concepts of the results-based management system, monitoring and evaluation tool, and exchange practical knowledge on improving the M&E system in the context of electoral support activities. During the workshop, the participants

practiced designing the monitoring and evaluation plan components. They reflected on the challenges and

opportunities for civil society in Iraq by using this tool in their management practice.



Erbil, 30 May 2023 - To foster sustainable synergies among electoral partners, the UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance, with operational support from UNOPS, organized a workshop in collaboration with the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and various Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The workshop brought together 20 diverse participants representing CSOs and 20 participants from IHEC HQ and governorate offices of Ninewa, Kirkuk

and Salahadin to enhance coordination between IHEC and CSOs, to further promote effective voter education, civic awareness, increase voter turnout, and combat electoral misinformation. Participants exchanged experiences and discussed challenges and future collaboration strategies. Both sides agreed to continue mutual collaboration and cooperation, proposing recommendations for future improvements.



Sulaymania, 31 May 2023 - UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA), with operational support from UNOPS, organized a new workshop with Civil Society Organizations (CSO) to

continue reviewing measures to further enhance electoral participation in the Kurdistan Region. The two-day event gathered 35 CSO partners from the Shams network representing various

areas of the Kurdistan region. The workshop focused on the importance of election integrity and the collective responsibility of all the stakeholders in ensuring that elections are fair, credible and transparent. Throughout the workshop, the participants engaged in discussions on the principles and challenges of election integrity, they explored the roles and responsibilities of CSOs, IHEC and other stakeholders in promoting fair and credible elections, they learnt about best practices and strategies for monitoring and safeguarding the election process and use this opportunity to network with fellow participants.



Baghdad, 5 June 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Claudio Cordone, accompanied by Dr. Aamir Arain, Chief of the Office of Electoral Assistance, visited today the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) office in Baghdad. The UNAMI delegation met the new IHEC Chair, Judge Omar Ahmad Muhammad, the Board of Commissioners and staff. The discussion focused on the preparation for the forthcoming provincial elections.



Sulaymania, 13 June 2023 - UNAMI's Office of Electoral Assistance, supported by UNOPS, organized a capacity building workshop for 60 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) partners from Shams network in the Kurdistan Region to further enhance electoral participation and foster a comprehensive understanding of the importance of election integrity. During the workshop, attendees actively engaged in discussions on the principles and obstacles surrounding election integrity. They also explored the specific roles and responsibilities of CSOs, Independent High Electoral

Commission (IHEC), and other stakeholders in promoting fairness during elections. Participants had the

opportunity to learn about best practices and strategies for monitoring and safeguarding the election process.



Baghdad, 14 June 2023 - Over a three-month period, the UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance, in collaboration with UNOPS, organized a series of trainings for 43 IHEC staff (females and males). The trainings focused on enhancing the skills of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) staff in SQL Database Management for Voter Registration, QGIS for election mapping, and web development and

management. The goal of the trainings was to improve IHEC staff's abilities in managing and enhancing the quality of the voter registry, utilizing GIS for electoral maps, and further developing the IHEC's website. The workshops helped strengthen IHEC's capacity to handle electoral data and prepare them for future elections.



Erbil, 15 June 2023 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and her accompanying UNAMI Elections Team, attended a meeting today in Erbil hosted by the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, His Excellency Nechirvan Barzani, with the Chairman and Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. The SRSG expressed UNAMI's support to provide technical assistance in facilitating the elections. UNAMI electoral team, IHEC Board of Commissioners and the Kurdistan Regional Government presidency team continued discussions afterward.

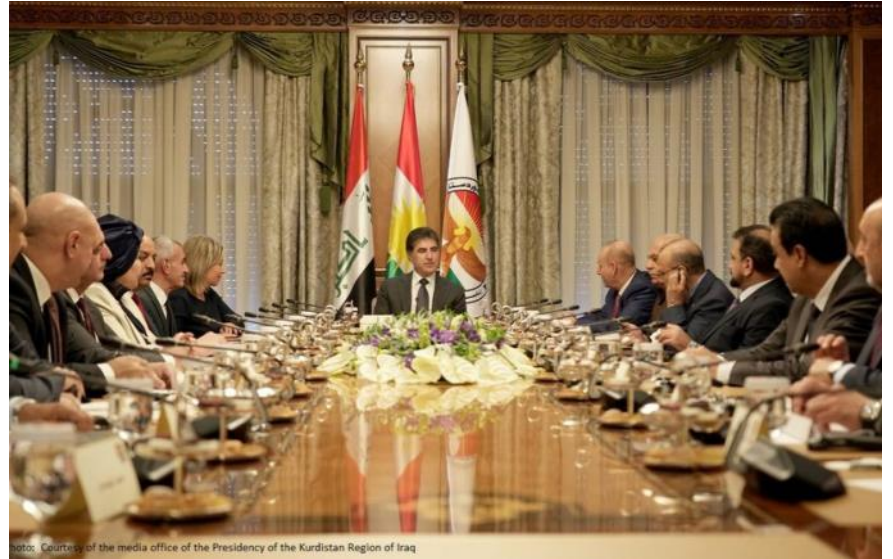


Photo: Courtesy of the media office of the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Basra, 15 June 2023 - As part of ongoing efforts to foster sustainable synergy among electoral partners in Iraq, the UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance, with operational support from UNOPS, held a two-day Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and civil society organizations (CSOs) workshop from 12-13 June in Basra. Forty-five (45) participants brainstormed on ideas for further collaboration, drafted recommendations for the IHEC Board of Commissioners, and discussed digital means for maintaining regular communication.



Erbil, 17 June 2023 - The UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance, in collaboration with the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) Election Security Coordination Section and with UNOPS operational support, held a workshop from 12-14 June in Erbil on "Election Security Challenges in Iraq." Aimed at enhancing the skills of 35 election security professionals, the training highlighted key aspects of election security, such as personal and cybersecurity, and the use of GPS in election logistics. The attendees were

trained to assess vulnerabilities, identify threats, and strategize effectively to ensure free, fair, and credible elections.



Erbil, 22 June 2023 - UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance conducted a 5-day workshop on Result Management Systems (RMS) development attended by 15 IHEC staff. The workshop reviewed the previous RMS systems and provided recommendations for further improvements.



Erbil, 23 June 2023 - In support of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission's preparation for the 2023 Provincial Elections, the UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance held a 4-day workshop in Erbil, from 19-22 June, on Development of User-Friendly Procedural Documents for 19 IHEC participants. The workshop reviewed the current polling and audit centre procedures.



Social Cohesion

Religious leaders and UNICEF held discussions in Al Najaf

Al Najaf, 25 May 2023 - Religious leaders and UNICEF held discussions in Al Najaf earlier this week. Key issues discussed included social cohesion, meaningful community participation and their relationships with the government to support children and young people's participation to forge development and peace.



IOM report: "The Role of Religious Institutions in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Iraq" presented in Najaf

Najaf, 25 May 2023 - Religion can be a very sensitive topic, especially in Iraq after the ISIL invasion, in which religious rhetoric was used to justify heinous crimes.

Yet, it makes no sense to ignore religion for the sake of avoiding discomfort.

Presented today at a ceremony in Najaf attended by a diversity of Iraq's religious leaders, a new IOM report by Dr. Marsin Alshamary doesn't shy away from these conversations and acknowledges the centrality of religion in everyday life and political outcomes. And the implications are real for international organizations, government partners and religious leaders alike.

Summary

Religious institutions and clerics are an untapped resource in the work on preventing and countering violent

extremism in Iraq (P/CVE).

This report examines Iraq's diverse religious landscape and utilizes a multi-method toolkit, including interviews and an original survey, to examine the potential for clerics to engage in P/CVE.

The report outlines areas for cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), other United Nations (UN) actors, and the broader international community, on one hand, and the Government of Iraq (GoI) on the other.

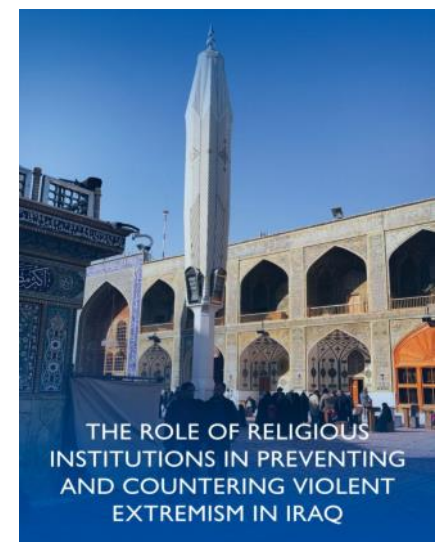
It raises several key questions: what role can religious institutions play in P/CVE? What role have they already played? And what are the limitations they face, particularly from their adherents?

Key findings

1. Religious leaders have a versatile definition of extremism that goes

beyond religious and ideological motivations.

2. Religious leaders recognize the economic drivers of extremism and are



IOM report: “The Role of Religious Institutions in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Iraq” presented in Najaf *(continued)*

concerned about poverty and unemployment.

3. Religious leaders are concerned about tribal violence.

4. A class of public-facing clerics has emerged, one that is willing to engage with the international community and civil society more directly.

5. Tensions persist in the religious peacebuilding space, where certain grievances and issues remain unaddressed and unresolved.

6. There is an international dimension to religious peacebuilding in Iraq.

7. Clerics perceive a decreasing religiosity and decreasing public trust in religious figures and institutions, backed by public opinion data, including IOM's recent survey.

8. Clerics want to focus on youth and

PVE, rather than on CVE which they view as outside their purview.

9. Clerics are unaware of the central government's efforts in the PVE space.

KEY

Recommendations

1. International Organizations (IOs) interested in the P/CVE space should collaborate with the GoI on curricular reforms at the national level and should bring religious leaders into this discussion.

2. IOs should work with clerics and religious institutions on PVE, but not CVE, given clerical interests.

3. IOs should identify and work with social media clerics who have stronger youth outreach.

4. IOs should avoid working with politicized clerics.

5. IOs and the GoI should take advantage of historic moments to galvanize momentum for P/CVE work.

6. IOs should be more intentional about workshops to avoid event fatigue among clerical and civil society participants.

7. IOs and civil society should focus and tailor approaches to the audience.

8. IOs and the GoI need to distinguish between religious monitoring and censorship, and be careful in navigating this space.

9. IOs and the GoI should consider the need for a truth and reconciliation commission.

Read “The Role of Religious Institutions in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Iraq” at: bit.ly/45nisbX

Dutch diplomats visit UNDP projects in Ninewa

Ninewa, 11 June 2023 - During today's visit to Ninewa, Mrs. Laetitia Van Asch and Mr. Lars Faber also met with local authorities and community and religious leaders from across Ninewa Governorate. Conversation focused on the ten peace agreements that have been signed across Ninewa and Kirkuk, supported by the Government of the Netherlands.

UNDP project to promote social cohesion and trust-building among local authorities and community mechanisms also included various capacity building, mediation sessions, and focus group discussions for over 2,000 community police, police, local officials, and community leaders.



In Iraq, youth are change-makers committed to a brighter future

Anbar, 15 June 2023 - The Anbar Youth Group for Peace organized a 2-day peace conference as a safe space for peacebuilders, local government and security actors, academics, civil society, community leaders, and volunteers to come together.

In Kirkuk, the Kirkuk Youth for Peace Group leads a peace and dialogue forum and camp to visit cultural areas of Kirkuk for youth and women from across Iraq.

In May 2023, 10 Youth and Women for Peace Groups received small grants from UNDP and have started to implement peacebuilding initiatives in their communities.

Across Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa

and Salah al-Din, 200 members are making a difference through initiatives including community dialogues, tree planting, women's empowerment events, and online safety campaigns.

Previously, members received training on project planning and implementation.

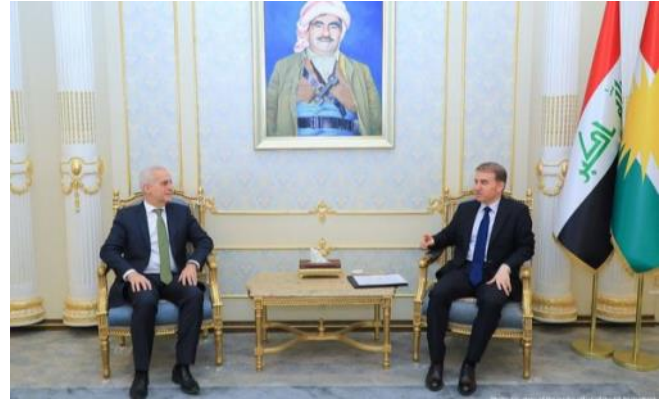
These groups are supported by UNDP and the Government of Denmark.





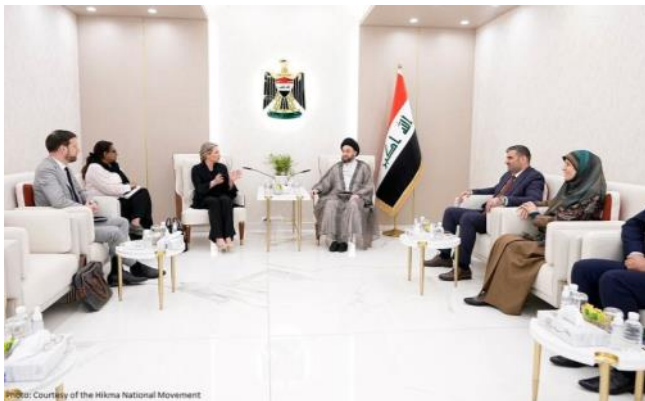
Baghdad, 7 May 2023 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Prime Minister of Iraq, **Mr. Mohammed Shia Al Sudani**. They discussed the political and security situation in Iraq as well as cooperation between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations.

Photo courtesy of the Prime Minister’s Media Office.



Erbil, 07 May 2023 - The Head of UNAMI's Regional Office in Erbil, **Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez**, met in Erbil with the Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, **Dr. Hemn Hawrami**. They discussed the current political situation in the Region, including the preparations for the forthcoming regional elections.

Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the KR Parliament.

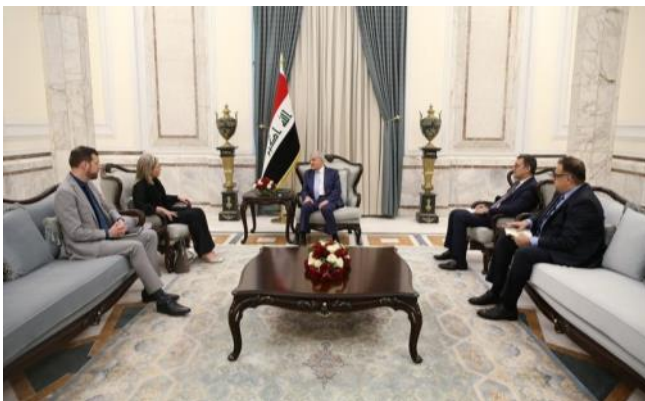


Baghdad, 8 May 2023 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Head of the Hikma National Movement, **Mr. Ammar Al-Hakim**. They discussed the political situation in the country and the region.

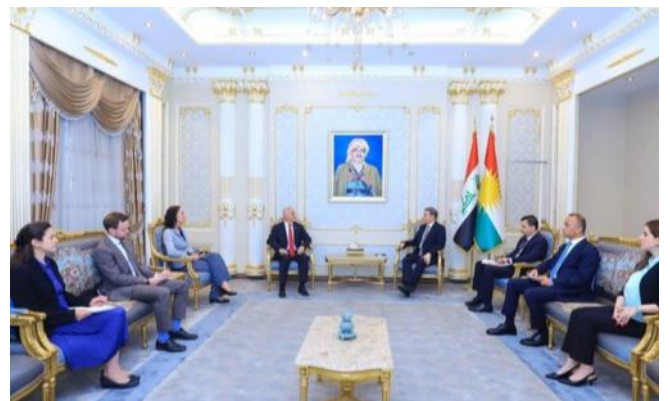
Photo courtesy of the HNM.



Erbil, 9 May 2023 – The Head of UNAMI Regional Office in Erbil, **Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez**, met today with the Head of Department of Foreign Relations - Kurdistan Regional Government, **Minister Safeen Dizayee**. They discussed the general situation in the Region and explored areas for future cooperation.



Baghdad, 21 May 2023 - The President of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency **Abdullatif Rashid**, received today in Baghdad the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**. Among others, they discussed the need to jointly confront regional challenges, in particular climate change and water scarcity.



Erbil, 21 May 2023 - Today, the Head of UNAMI's Regional Office in Erbil, **Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez**, met with the Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, **Dr. Hemn Hawrami**. They discussed the current political situation in the Region, including the preparations for the forthcoming regional elections.



Baghdad, 13 June 2023 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Chairman of the Central Committee of the Iraqi National Project, **Sheikh Jamal Al-Dhari**. They discussed the situation in the country.



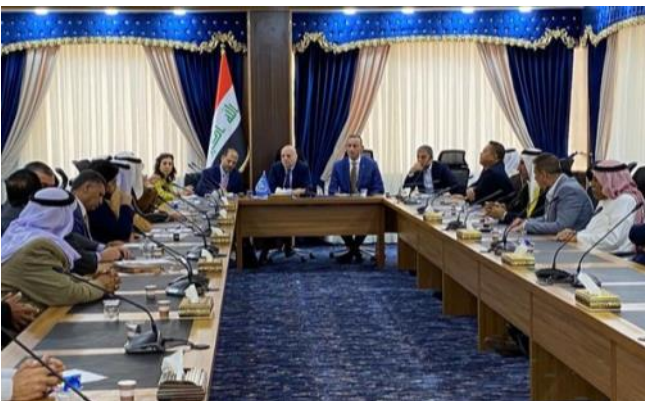
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 16 June 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**: "Good overview of regional developments with **Ambassador Hussein Qattan** at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia".



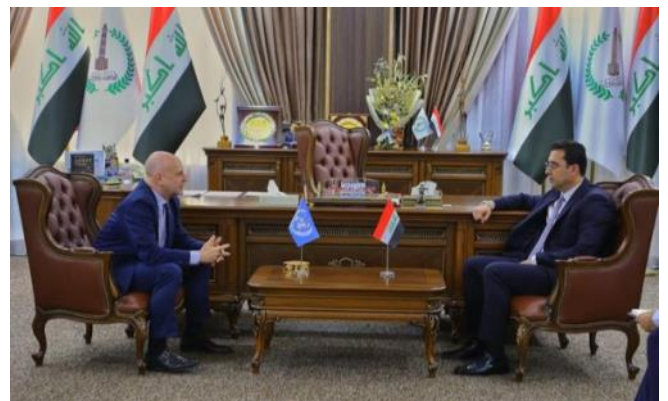
Baghdad, 19 June 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Prime Minister of Iraq, **Mr. Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani**. They discussed the political situation in the country, including preparations for the upcoming provincial elections. The SRSG expressed her appreciation for the Government's determination to prioritize the needs of the Iraqi people.



Erbil, 21 June 2023 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, was received today in Erbil by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, **Mr. Masrour Barzani**. They discussed the situation in the Region, stressing the importance of holding timely Kurdistan Region elections without any further delay. The SRSG expressed UNAMI's readiness to provide technical assistance towards this aim.



Mosul, 14 May 2023 - On a visit today to Mosul, Ninewa Governorate, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, held consultations with a **group of representatives of Sinjar**. The meeting is part of UNAMI's efforts to enrich its understanding of the aspirations and concerns of all communities in Sinjar and support the implementation of the Sinjar agreement. Further such meetings are planned in the coming days. DSRSG Cordone also met with the **Deputy Governor, Sirwan Khidhir**, and exchanged views on the situation in Sinjar.





Muthanna, 17 May 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, held separate meetings with the Governor of Muthanna, **Ahmed Manfi Jodah**, and Deputy Governor, **Adel Naziq**. During his meeting in Baghdad and his visit today to Muthanna Governorate, DSRSG discussed the overall situation in the governorate, including the forthcoming Provincial Council elections, the impact of climate change, cooperation with the UN and the progress in the search for remains of missing Kuwaiti and other nationals.



Baghdad, 17 May 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Claudio Cordone, visited Dhi Qar governorate today, meeting with **Deputy Governor Muhammad Al-Sharifi**. The deputy governor briefed the DSRSG on the situation in the governorate. They discussed cooperation with the UN and visited together the Ur archeological site.



Mosul, 18 May 2023 - The Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, held consultations with a **group of Yazidi representatives of Sinjar** in Mosul. They expressed their concerns and asked for human rights protection, accountability for Da'esh crimes and involvement of Yazidis in the implementation of the Sinjar agreement away from the political disagreements. The DSRSG-P/E reiterated the readiness of the UN to assist, emphasized the importance of accountability and the urgent implementation of the Sinjar Agreement.

Erbil, 23 May 2023 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczi, accompanied by UNHCR Representative to Iraq, Jean-Nicolas Beuze, met today in Erbil with Kurdistan Regional Government Minister of Interior, Rêber Ahmed. They discussed UN support for finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and strengthening coordination between the UN and different sectors of the governments at national and regional levels to achieve this goal.

SRSB for Iraq Hennis-Plasschaert attends Iraq's Vision on Al-Hol Camp in Syria panel held in Baghdad



Baghdad, 12 June 2023 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, took part today at the event on Iraq's Vision on Al-Hol Camp in Syria held in Baghdad.

Here is the text of her remarks:

"Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning,
Sabah el kher

Ever since taking up my position in December 2018, the camps and prisons in North-eastern Syria have been front and centre in my engagements. Why? Because leaving the situation unaddressed was (and still is) not an option.

Now - the legacy of yesterday's fight against Da'esh is undoubtedly a complex one. But one that we must tackle, together. We have a collective duty to prevent it from turning into tomorrow's war.

Over the past four years, you have heard me repeat that we should not wait for young children to come of age in a camp like Al-Hol.

These children never asked to be part of this mess. But the harsh reality is that they find themselves deprived of their rights. Also, they find themselves at risk of forced recruitment; of violent extremism becoming their 'normal'.

Ladies and gentlemen,
It is a humanitarian issue. It is a security issue.

And Iraq's National Security Advisor, Mr. Qasim al-Araji, understands – as no other could – that keeping people indefinitely in these restricted and extremely poor conditions ultimately

creates greater protection and security risks than taking them back in a controlled manner.

In April last year, The National Security Adviser just referred to it, I delivered an address at this very same centre. At that time, 449 households had returned from Al-Hol camp. Since then, Iraq has managed to more than triple this number, with the return of 1,382 households to Jeddah Centre. Meanwhile, a further 837 households have departed to their areas of origin or return.

Iraq's efforts in past years have not been easy. Far from it. And, they have entailed much 'learning by doing'. And...as is the case in any country with nationals in Al-Hol, opposition is also part of Iraq's reality.

That said, the process of returning nationals is the right thing to do – for Iraq, for any country which has its nationals in Al-Hol. And I can only repeat that leaving the situation unaddressed is simply not an option. No matter the challenges, it has to be done.

The risks associated with doing nothing or too little are abundantly clear. Also, a camp like Al-Hol continues to fuel resentment and serves as a source of inspiration for terrorists.

Now - as Iraq has shown us: dignified solutions anchored in the principles of both accountability and reintegration are possible. And we have no time to lose. What I am saying is: the best and only durable solution is to control the situation, and thus to manage returns swiftly and decisively - in the spirit of partnership.

Last year, on 5 June to be precise, I

visited Al-Hol myself. A desolate, sprawling complex of tents in the scorching sun.

A conversation with an 11-year-old Iraqi boy will be etched on my memory forever. His father had died some years prior, most likely on the battlefield. His mother had passed away because of illness. He and his six siblings were on their own, trying to survive in a camp like Al-Hol.

The boy had only one dream: to return to Iraq. To return to the places his mother had told him about. To have a life worth living. I was struck by his humble aspiration, his determination. Eleven years old. Better no life, than this life - he said. And he was right.

In early January of this year, UNHCR and UNICEF informed me about the departure of this boy, and his siblings, from Al-Hol – back to Iraq. They had made it out. But, as we all know: thousands of Iraqis, as well as other nationals, are still there.

Now - Iraq's authorities do realize they cannot stop here. They made that crystal clear. Many times. Including during the visit of UN Secretary-General António Guterres in early March.

We also know that there is much work left to do. As I said, thousands of Iraqis are still out there.

And let's face it, a clearance for return to Iraq is only the beginning of a journey. From arrival in Jeddah Centre to onward departure to areas of return...another long road awaits, similarly packed with challenges.

While a speech might not be the best moment to go into the weeds of things, let me mention a few issues to be taken into account:

There is an urgent need for seamless coordination among all Iraqi governmental entities involved, particularly between both civilian and security counterparts, including in camp management and coordination, and the clearance of departures from Jeddah Centre as well as in the promotion of reintegration.

The unique vulnerabilities of many of the returnees, specifically women and children and people with disabilities, must be taken into account. For instance, and as I mentioned earlier, there are unaccompanied or separated children whose specific needs must be met. This requires an informed approach, driven by

SRSB for Iraq Hennis-Plasschaert attends Iraq's Vision on Al-Houl Camp in Syria panel held in Baghdad *(continued)*

relevant needs and rights.

With reintegration as the ultimate objective, adequate transitional services are a prerequisite at Jeddah Centre, and beyond. These include health and mental health care, or education and vocational training – as well as the basics, from cooking equipment to clothing.

Returnees must have accessible pathways to legal identity and other civil documentation. Without official papers, returnees will simply not succeed in setting up their lives and reintegrating.

Also, returnees should be normalized into the Government's social protection system as any other vulnerable Iraqi would be. Otherwise, they will be at risk of falling into extreme poverty and finding themselves exposed to other social ills.

Maintaining the family unit is, of course, equally critical.

And, social cohesion, and thus the need to communicate, clearly and inclusively, with communities in areas of return is a precondition to successful reintegration. Work is required to dispel and prevent dis- and mis-information campaigns.

We must further ensure that unmet demands for justice do not spark a groundswell of anger. So yes, I also want to flag the need for accountability and justice. The victims of Da'esh deserve no less. Moreover, accountability and justice are key mechanisms for prevention.

Ladies and gentlemen, Iraq has an ambitious vision. One that involves completing dignified returns, pursuing accountability, and healing the deep wounds inflicted on communities.

This vision can be achieved if all involved are talking to each other; if all are working together to plug gaps; and

if all resources and expertise are being pooled. In other words, it requires all-of-Iraq efforts.

And that is exactly why we, the United Nations in Iraq, are in the process of developing an all-of-UN approach to support the Government's leadership and efforts in this endeavour.

As we all know: Iraq's caseload is enormous. And while we expect Iraqi authorities to lead on these efforts and do what is right, we have (as I said) a collective duty to prevent the legacy of yesterday's fight from turning into tomorrow's war.

Hence, I express hope that the international community remains committed to supporting Iraq, by taking back its own nationals, but also, first and foremost, in its immense task ahead. It is actually quite simple: if Iraq succeeds, we will all benefit.

Thank you."

Gender

French Ambassador visits women's safe space in Diwaniyah

Diwaniyah, 04 May 2023 - UNFPA with UN-Habitat Iraq is currently expanding the women's safe space in Diwaniyah for survivors of gender-based violence to receive the necessary care and life-saving services to live their normal lives.

The French Ambassador Eric Chevallier visited the site of the safe space to observe the progress. Thank you to Ambassade de France en Irak for supporting this safe space and prioritizing the safety of the survivors of GBV.



Despite legislative reforms geared towards the protection of women, more needs to be done towards holding perpetrators of GBV accountable

Mosul, 08 May 2023 - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI in cooperation with the Iraqi High Commission on Human Rights held a roundtable in Mosul, with NGOs, academic professionals, representatives of the judiciary and the administration of Mosul to discuss accountability for gender-based violence (GBV). It was noted that despite legislative reforms geared towards the protection of women, more needs to be done towards holding perpetrators accountable.

Participants proposed strategies on how to engage with government authorities, courts and other relevant

actors, not only to ensure that perpetrators of GBV are held accountable for their acts, but also on

how to systematically monitor cases and effectively raise awareness on the issue at the community level.



Promotion of women's right through art: a celebration of artistic expression in Iraq

Baghdad, 09 May 2023 – UNAMI Human Rights Office held a roundtable discussion with a diverse group of 15 women artists and writers, to examine how art can be used to foster women's rights and gender equality.

During the roundtable discussion, participants explored ways in which art can be used as a tool in promoting and protecting women's rights including in advocacy to combat violence against women and girls.

The Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office, Danielle Bell, encouraged the artists to use the power of their work to promote women's rights, challenge stereotypes and prejudices and create a more inclusive world for women. The event was concluded with an art exhibition of 12 pieces that support women's rights.

Here is the text of the opening remarks by Ms. Bell:

"Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we gather to celebrate the power of creativity and artistic expression in advancing women's rights.

Throughout history, art has been a powerful tool for social change.

When it comes to promoting women's

rights, arts have been instrumental in raising awareness, building solidarity, challenging societal norms, and promoting positive change towards gender equality.

Today, the Human Rights Office of UNAMI is honored to engage with a diverse group of artists who are using their talents to advocate for women's rights through their work.

Artists have a unique ability to express complex ideas and emotions in a way that resonates with people on a deeper level.

Art has the power to challenge stereotypes and prejudices against women and girls, and help people understand different perspectives.

Together let us explore how art can be used as a tool for social change in the promotion and protection of women's rights, including in the advocacy to combat violence against women and girls.

As we continue to work towards a more just and equal society, let us use the power of art to create a more inclusive society, to create space for dialogue and engagement, and challenge stereotypes and biases that contribute to gender inequality.

I hope that today's event will inspire us all to use our voices and our creativity to advocate for a more just and equitable society.

Thank you."



Members of the Women Advisory Group – Kurdistan Region met in Erbil



Erbil, 23 May 2023 - Members of the Women Advisory Group – Kurdistan Region (WAG - KR) met in Erbil on 23 May to discuss current and emerging political, economic and security issues that affect Kurdish women. The group complements the women advisory group in Baghdad established in 2019 to engage with UNAMI on issues impacting the women, peace, and security agenda.

The idea to form the group in the KR followed a discussion between SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and a group of Kurdish women activists last October, where issues impacting communities in the Region, including

protection of women, were raised. WAG- KR is expected to function as a forum to promote coalition-building and strong cooperation among Kurdish women from different political, religious, and ethnic affiliations and interests.

Facilitating the discussion, Idah Muema, UNAMI Senior Gender Advisor, stated that "it is expected that WAG members will bring forward their knowledge, experience, and insights to support UNAMI's mandate on Gender, Women, Peace, and Security including promoting women's involvement, representation and participation in political and electoral processes."

Former minister of women affairs and writer on women issues, Nermin Uthman Hassan, explained that the advisory group will be instrumental in discussing the "elections, appointment of women in decision-making positions, and the situation of IDPs and returnees".

In his interaction with the group, Ricardo Rodriguez, head of the UN Regional office in the Kurdistan Region, encouraged members to use the

platform to promote the women, peace, and security agenda.

At the end of the meeting, political and civil activist, Pakhshan Zangana, stressed the importance of working in this group with UNAMI to address political and economic issues. "We did a very good thing today. The issues we discussed touched on the political issues and it's important to hear the perspectives of Kurdish women. I hope that our group will not be neglected after a while", she commented.

Qumrya Muhammad of the Kurdistan Justice Group expressed her satisfaction to be working with other women from different ethnicity and political parties, stating that "the platform provides an opportunity for women to consult and contribute to the crucial issues for a better Kurdistan Region".

In the same vein, Suaad Razak from the Gorran Movement said "We have the will to work and we are happy to be receiving support from UNAMI to achieve our goals".

By Celia E. B. T. Dadson, UNAMI PIO.

From helplessness to empowerment

A women's center, supported by UNICEF with U.S. Department of State funding, is creating new opportunities for vulnerable women

Al-Najaf, 03 June 2023 – For 58-year-old Laila*, life brought her many blessings. Married for over 33 years, Laila and her husband Sobhi have seven children, including four girls.

"I got married to my cousin and we were blessed with seven children," said Laila. However, "At the beginning of our marriage, life was not easy."

During those years, Laila, who can barely read and write, had no choice but to work as a tailor to support her family.

"My husband was jobless and I had to do something to bring money home to feed my children," said Laila.

That was not the only setback in Laila's life. On the contrary, from the beginning of her marriage, she was repeatedly abused by her husband.

"My husband used to beat me and abuse me verbally," recalled Laila. "He also used to beat our children."

Due to poverty and social norms, Laila felt helpless and did not take any action to salvage her situation.

"I used to consult my late mom at the time," recalled Laila. "But my mom always told me you have to be obedient to your husband and accept all that he says or acts."

Life passed by and Laila, in addition to economic hardship, endured domestic violence at home. Finally, Sobhi was able to find a job as a taxi driver, but his abusive actions against his wife and

children continued.

"When Sobhi started working, I stopped working," recalled Laila. "I had seven children to take care of and it was a full-time job that is very demanding."

A life-changing opportunity

Laila's misery continued. Yet, things changed when her neighbour Zuhra informed her about a women's center that provides support to vulnerable women.

"Zuhra told me about a women's center in Al-Najaf that provided support to women who suffer from gender-based violence," said Laila. In June 2022, Laila joined the center.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the center provides women like Laila with psychosocial support and legal counselling.

"I even brought my three eldest daughters, who are already married, to the center to gain the knowledge and skills on how to better manage their lives," added Laila.

At the center, Laila also received life skills and entrepreneurship skills. This included strategic planning and creative thinking in addition to

communication, time management and leadership skills.

"I attended these workshops and I gained lots of skills," said Laila. "Following these workshops, and out of my passion for plants, I came up with the idea of developing a plant nursery."

Laila's idea of opening a small business was accepted by the center. She was very happy to receive seed money to start her new small business.

"Now, when I look back, I realize the importance of women's empowerment and financial independence," said Laila. "After successfully establishing and running my nursery, my husband shows me more respect and does not dare to abuse me."

Laila is much happier and is constantly empowering her daughters to take better hold of their lives.

"I was able to realize my dreams," said Laila with pride. "If I can do it, every woman in Al-Najaf can build her self-esteem and reach out to success."

*All names were changed to respect confidentiality.

By Monique Awad, UNICEF



With support of Canada and Korea, UNFPA is empowering individuals with knowledge and resources



Baghdad, 03 June 2023 -Dignity kits are specifically designed to ensuring that everyone receives the essential support they deserve.

But that's not all! Women and girls are also offered valuable awareness

sessions on gender-based violence, personal hygiene, prevention of child marriage, and safeguarding against extortion.

With support of Canada, UNFPA is empowering individuals with knowledge and resources, creating a brighter future for all. Together, we can make a difference

Towards a journey of a balanced life, Al-Qudus one-stop assistance center in Mosul, offers sessions to embrace the profound significance of mental well-being.

These transformative sessions empower individuals through self-care, healing, and personal growth, while also addressing critical subjects like gender equality, gender-based violence, legal

awareness, and household violence.

With the support of KOICA in Iraq, Baghdad Office, UNFPA aims to create a safer, more inclusive society where empowered women strive to break the barriers that hinder their progress.



The Women's Alliance for Peace, Development, and Climate Justice has successfully launched its action plan for the year 2023-2024

Baghdad, 08 June 2023 - The Women's Alliance for Peace, Development, and Climate Justice has successfully launched its action plan for the year 2023-2024!

With the support of UNDP and 36 passionate women-led NGO representatives from across the country, this plan aligns with Iraq's second national plan for the

implementation of Security Council Resolution No. 1325 and the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Iraqi Women (2023-2030).

The alliance will devote its efforts to promoting women's climate awareness, achieving climate justice, and strengthening the role of Iraqi women in security and climate response policies.



Capacity building workshop on UNSCR 1325 held in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 14 June 2023 - Civil Development Organization (CDO) in partnership with Pasewan Organization strengthened the capacities of 24 youth volunteers

through advanced training for two days on UNSCR 1325, women's empowerment, and women's role in society through volunteer work in Kirkuk. The event was conducted in

partnership with UN Women and funded by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.



Highlighting the legacies of sexual violence in conflict on diverse groups of women

Erbil, 19 June 2023 - The Human Rights Office of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) jointly with the British Consulate General Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, held an event to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. The event was attended by 34 representatives of civil society organizations (including 25 women), together with representatives from the KRG High Council of Women and Development, KRG Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs, the Directorate for Survivors Affairs, members of the diplomatic community in Erbil and IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR UNITAD, UNDP and UN Women.

It is now over eight years since Da'esh/Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) launched its brutal campaign of sexual violence, forced conversions, and abduction in Iraq, and these crimes continue to negatively impact survivors and affected communities. Speaking at the event, Turkmen, Shabak, Yazidi, Christian and Arab activists highlighted the wider impact of the use of sexual violence, providing insights on the different ways in which women from their communities were targeted with sexual violence by Da'esh/ISIS and the long-term consequences of such violence.

Although the plight of the Yazidi community has been widely recognized, this has not translated into sufficient support and many survivors of sexual violence by Da'esh/ISIS still remain in camps for internally displaced persons

(IDPs), with severe negative impact on their ability to rebuild their lives and negative impact on their mental health. Civil society representatives working in support of Yazidi survivors in IDP camps highlighted the importance of a localized and context sensitive approach, building on the expertise of local and women-led NGOs, and enabling long-term and sustainable programming, including in the areas of mental health, legal and livelihood support, that empowers survivors and mobilizes different groups of women to come together to jointly stand up for their rights and support each other.

The event also contributed to broadening awareness of the challenges faced by victims of conflict-related sexual violence by Da'esh/ISIS, by giving space to activists from the Turkmen, Shabak and Christian communities in Iraq to speak about the situation of survivors from their

respective communities. Hidden by their families and silenced by their communities and religious leaders, many survivors face threats and stigmatization.

Participants also discussed the experiences of women perceived to be affiliated with Da'esh/ISIS – for example because they were forcibly married to Da'esh/ISIS fighters. Despite being coerced into this situation, many of these women are now paying the price of their male family member's actions with a heavy stigma that affects their and their children's lives on many levels, including their access to documentation and other services.

The event highlighted the complex legacy of sexual violence used by Da'esh/ISIS on a wide group of diverse women and the need for holistic and context-sensitive solutions.

UNAMI stands with survivors.



Breaking stereotypes and empowering widows in Iraq

Mosul, 23 June 2023 - For many women and girls in Iraq, decades of war have led to generational poverty, disrupted education and child marriage. Along with its massive death toll, the war has also left countless women widowed—including Mahmoud.

Despite the fact that there are more than 258 million widows around the world, they have historically been left unseen, unsupported and unaccounted for in our societies. Widowhood often forces women out of familial and social structures, leaving them particularly vulnerable to isolation, violence and poverty. Between 2009 and 2013, data indicated that nearly 1 in 10 widows lived in extreme poverty.

In Iraq, women like Mahmoud are further made vulnerable by ongoing conflict. When tribal conflict broke out in her region in 2017, Mahmoud was left without security or resources, possessing no income, job or qualifications. She fled to Khazer Camp for safety, where she still lives with her mother, sister and her five children. Without a husband, Mahmoud felt alone and adrift in the community.

“I was facing difficulties dealing with people around me and knew nothing of how to solve our problems,” she says. “There was shame in living in a camp and that brought about psychological pressure, which made me feel nervous, frustrated and irritable.”

To address the urgent social needs of women and girls in Khazer Camp, UN Women teamed up with Jinda Organization to provide empowerment courses targeting vulnerable women. With funding support through UN Women, Jinda Organization facilitates the Women’s Empowerment for Dispute Prevention and Response Strategies programme, which aims to grow women and girls’ self-confidence and inspire them to challenge patriarchal norms that have left them feeling limited in life.

Mahmoud came across the course through word of mouth, and soon she began to feel its impact in her daily life.

“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.”

Mahmoud credits the course with



helping her overcome her shyness and better integrate into the camp community, ending the isolation she had been enduring. It also gave her tools to better face systemic challenges. “I feel that my friends and I have really developed since we began learning,” Mahmoud says. “Most of us have very low levels of education and it puts up barriers in society.”

Others who have taken the course, like 24-year-old Rojan Khalid Ibrahim, saw it as a path toward personal growth and development. As the daughter of a widow, Khalid has been supporting her mother and siblings since her father passed away. She enrolled in the course hoping to learn further independence and set an example for her community.

“When I saw the title of the project, I just wanted to be part of it,” Khalid says. “I saw this as an opportunity to improve myself and for people to see my true value. People would tell me I was weak because I grew up without a father and I wanted to prove them wrong.”

“Being raised without a father is really difficult in our society,” she explains. “I wanted to show the world that women are strong and resilient.” Mahmoud hopes the learning opportunities for widows like herself continue.

“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, and I look forward to taking part in similar courses in the future.”

Take action

To safeguard and advance widows’ rights, here are some actions that governments, policymakers and each of us can take:

Empower Widows

Adopt social and economic reforms to improve widows’ access to inheritance, land, pensions, and other social protections. Ensure that fiscal policies, economic relief measures for COVID-19 includes widows.

End discriminatory laws and patriarchal systems that have long disadvantaged women. Women cannot inherit equally as men in 36 countries, cannot be heads of households or families in 31 countries, and cannot have a job or pursue a profession in 17 states. Such discriminatory laws, which rob widows of property, shelter, income, social benefits, and opportunity, must be struck down to advance women’s rights worldwide.

Empower widows to support themselves and their families and live with dignity by ensuring access to education and training opportunities, decent work and equal pay, and by reversing social stigmas that exclude, discriminate, or lead to harmful and violent practices against widows.

Collect gender data—better quality demographic information, broken down by age and gender, to ensure that widows are counted and supported, now and in the future. The United Nations suggests a minimum of five marital status categories when collecting census data, “widowed and not remarried” included.

Support international efforts and advocacy to uphold and expand the rights of widows as enshrined in international laws and conventions.

On International Widows’ Day, learn and share stories, voices and experiences of widows and support their rights. Follow #WidowsDay on social media.

A roundtable discussions on women's participation in political processes held in Basra and Dhi-Qar



Basra, 25 June 2023 - Recently, UNAMI Regional Office in Basra and the Gender Unit in collaboration with the Women Empowerment Directorate

held a roundtable discussion on women's participation in political processes. The event was attended by 39 civil society activists, members of political parties and women groups.

Today, the UNAMI Gender Unit in collaboration with the Women Empowerment Directorate held a roundtable discussion in Dhi-Qar on women's participation in political processes, with the participation of local governorate officials and civil society activists.

These discussions are in support of the



implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the National Strategy for Iraqi Women (2023 – 2030).

Human Rights

Chief of UNAMI's Human Rights Office meets with the Head of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee

Baghdad, 07 May 2023 - Chief of UNAMI's Human Rights Office, Danielle Bell, met today in Baghdad with the Head of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, Representative Arshad Rashad Al-Salihi and members of the Committee. Issues discussed included the ongoing process concerning the appointment of IHCHR's Board of Commissioners. Photo courtesy of the Iraq Parliament.



Iraq's 9th Annual Arts Festival aims at promoting human rights in Baghdad

Baghdad, 07 May 2023 – On 4 May, in collaboration with UNAMI HRO, the TARKIB Arts Organization launched the 9th Annual Arts Festival at Muntada Al Masrah heritage house in Al Rasheed Street, Baghdad city.

This year's festival showcases the work of young Iraq artists who, through the medium of their art, are finding innovative and imaginative ways to engage their audience with human rights issues of concern. The festival includes paintings, sculptures, conceptual artworks, multifaceted installations, 3D artworks, performances, musical events, theatre performances, short films, and multimedia presentations. The artworks on display explore a range of

social, environmental, and human rights issues affecting all Iraqis, including women's rights, as well as migration, climate change, and freedom of expression.

The festival provided a welcoming and inclusive space for artists and visitors to come together, exchange their views and opinions, and find new ways to think about promoting and protecting human rights in Iraq.

On the fourth and final day of the 9th Annual TARKIB Art Festival, Ms. Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office reflected on the powerful message conveyed through the artworks on display.

“Through their thought-provoking paintings installations, and works of performance art, each artist shed new light on important social issues that demand our attention and action. The quality of the exhibits and the resounding success of the festival demonstrates the potential of art to inspire and mobilise all Iraqis to engage constructively with issues of concern.”

Speaking to artists at the event, Ms. Bell, emphasized the crucial role of the Art Festival in provoking discussion around important human rights issues, as well as showcasing the work of emerging artists who utilize their talent to promote social change.

This year's Arts Festival, organized with the support of UNAMI Human Rights Office, forms part of ongoing collaboration during a year which marks the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

At the end of the festival, as a gesture of appreciation, Ms. Bell presented the artists and organizers with clay tablets inscribed, in the Arabic and Sumerian languages, with the first article of the UDHR.



UNAMI Human Rights Office promotes accountability and the protection of human rights

Baghdad, May-June 2023 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is tasked by the Security Council resolution to promote accountability and the

protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, in order to strengthen the rule of law and improve governance in

Iraq. Here is an overview of the recent UNAMI Human Rights Office’s activities in this field.

Kirkuk, 08 May 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office in Kirkuk organized a roundtable discussion to raise awareness on the role and functioning of the Publication Court. After a brief introduction by the Human Rights Office on the right to freedom of expression and opinion, the Kirkuk Publication Court Judge, lawyers and journalists discussed the court’s mandate and its role in safeguarding freedom of expression and opinion for journalists and the media.



Baghdad, 09 May 2023 - UNAMI Human Rights Office held a roundtable discussion today with Iraqi Ministry of Interior personnel in Dhi Qar on the due process rights of defendants under Iraqi and international law. Seventeen participants from Ministry of Interior police officers (13 men and 4 women) attended the event. Participants discussed the Iraqi and international human rights law framework protecting the right to legal counsel, the right to remain silent and the right to an adequate defence. The roundtable also covered the legal framework covering arrests, the prohibition of torture, and the right of arrested persons to be brought before an investigative judge within 24 hours. UNAMI briefed participants on relevant provisions of the Iraqi

Criminal Procedure Code, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture, and the

International Convention for the Protection from Enforced Disappearance. Similar round table was held in Muthanna on 10 May 2023.



Baghdad, 10 May 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office held a workshop aimed at strengthening civil society engagement with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. [25] participants (17 men and 8 women) attended the event, including members and representatives of Iraq’s diverse religious and ethnic component groups, faith leaders, representatives of civil society and the IHCHR, and representatives of religious endowments.

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination as part of the Committee’s upcoming review of Iraq.

UNAMI Human Rights Office will hold a similar workshop in Erbil later this month.

During the workshop, participants gave presentations on a range of human rights concerns affecting component groups in Iraq, followed by group discussions. Participants identified key issues for inclusion in ‘shadow reports’ which Iraqi NGOs will have the opportunity to provide to the



UNAMI Human Rights Office promotes accountability and the protection of human rights *(continued)*

Erbil, 15 May 2023 - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI on 15 May conducted a one-day roundtable discussion with law enforcement officers from across Erbil Governorate. Participants included Asayish investigative officers, police, prosecutors as well as investigative judges.

The purpose of the roundtable was to increase awareness of due process and human rights of detainees under Iraqi and international human rights law. Discussions focused on how to ensure that these rights are respected and protected at all procedural stages.

During the month of May, the Human Rights office of UNAMI will implement

two more roundtables on this subject matter in Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah.



Mosul, 17 May 2023 - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI, in cooperation with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, organized a roundtable discussion on the elimination of various forms of discrimination. Participants from various religious and ethnic communities suggested strategies on how to ensure that perpetrators of discriminatory practices are held accountable, and how to effectively raise awareness about this issue at the community level.



Dohuk, 17 May 2023 - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI on 17 May conducted a one-day roundtable discussion with law enforcement officers from across Dohuk Governorate. Participants included officers from various law enforcement agencies as well as representatives of the judiciary. The purpose of the roundtable was to increase awareness of due process and human rights of detainees under Iraqi and international human rights law. Discussions focused on how to ensure that these rights are

respected and protected at all procedural stages.

Another session on the same topics was held in Sulaymaniyah on 22 May 2023.



Kirkuk, 21 May 2023 - UNAMI Human Rights Office participated in an event marking World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. The event enabled a discussion on how to strengthen intercultural dialogue while ensuring participation of Iraqi components, and was organized by the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities Network and Methra Organization for Yarsani Culture and Development, with the support of Norwegian People's Aid. "UNAMI Human Rights Office remains committed to continue partnering with all our stakeholders to enhance the

promotion and protection of the rights of all Iraqis, and in particular Iraqi

components", said Florian Razesberger, Senior Human Rights Officer, UNAMI.



UNAMI Human Rights Office promotes accountability and the protection of human rights *(continued)*

Erbil, 23 May 2023 – The Human Rights Office of UNAMI organized a workshop that brought together representatives from the High Council for Women and Development, the Directorate for Combating Violence against Women as well as key stakeholders from the judiciary and the police. Participants identified gaps that hinder the successful prosecution of criminal violence against women and deliberated on strategies to enhance coordination efforts among all relevant entities with the aim of ensuring accountability for perpetrators of criminal violence against women.



Erbil, 24 May 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office held a workshop aimed at strengthening civil society engagement with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

23 participants (11 women and 12 men) attended the event, including members and representatives of Iraq's diverse religious and ethnic component groups, faith leaders, representatives of civil society and representatives of religious endowments.

During the workshop, participants gave presentations on a range of human rights concerns affecting component groups in Iraq, followed by group discussions. Participants identified key issues for inclusion in 'shadow reports' which Iraqi NGOs will have the opportunity to provide to the

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination as part of the Committee's upcoming review of Iraq.

The UNAMI Human Rights Office held a similar workshop in Baghdad earlier this month.



Baghdad, 27 May 2023 - Today in Baghdad, 17 representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) came together with UNAMI-Human Rights Office and UNDP to explore the crucial role of CSOs in fighting corruption,

ensuring accountability, and promoting justice. In a roundtable discussion, we shared our progress, discussed challenges, and charted the way forward.

By exchanging experiences and efforts,

particularly focusing on CSOs' initiatives aimed at enhancing investigations, prosecutions, and trials related to corruption cases, we explored how to utilize the tools proposed in the UN Project, which will strengthen CSOs role in monitoring judicial proceeding in relation to corruption cases.

We emphasized the importance of adhering to international standards and rules in the adjudication of corruption cases, including monitoring and reporting on human rights, fair trial standards, and the protection of whistle-blowers, witnesses, victims, and actors in civil society and the media.

We are determined to unlock the potential of cooperation between CSOs and the United Nations, as we work hand in hand to monitor and follow up on corruption-related cases in Iraq.

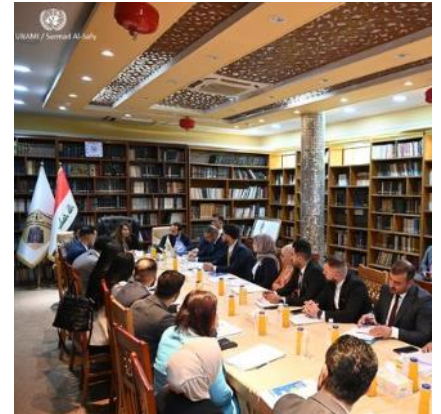


UNAMI Human Rights Office promotes accountability and the protection of human rights *(continued)*

Baghdad, 01 June 2023 - UNAMI's Human Rights Office held a roundtable discussion with the Iraqi Bar Association on the role of, and challenges faced by, defence lawyers in the Iraqi justice system. 25 lawyers from the Bar Association and civil society representatives attended the roundtable, which focused on the key challenges faced by lawyers as well as court-appointed defence lawyers, and discussed solutions and possible best practices, including how to enhance international human rights standards and norms from the moment of arrest

and throughout the investigation and trial hearings.

The roundtable also provided an overview on the UN report: "Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications for justice, accountability and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL". UNAMI Human Rights Officers also discussed the Iraqi Criminal Procedure Code, the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture.



Kirkuk, 07 June 2023 - UNAMI Human Rights Office in Kirkuk organized a training for young lawyers on basic human rights principles. This training was scheduled as part of the Human Rights 75 initiative, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with activities planned throughout the year. A group of young lawyers were introduced to the fundamental rights inscribed in the Universal Declaration via interactive exercises.



Sulaymaniyah, 13 June 2023 - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI organized a workshop that brought together key government officials from KRI, including from the Directorate of Combating Violence against Women, as well as representatives from the police and the judiciary. Participants identified gaps that hinder the successful prosecution of criminal violence against women and deliberated on strategies on how to enhance coordination efforts among all relevant entities with the aim of ensuring accountability for perpetrators of such crimes.



International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict commemorated in Erbil

Erbil, 19 June 2023 - At an event in Erbil today, organized by UNAMI Human Rights Office and the UK Consulate-General Erbil, on International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, participants highlighted the impact of sexual violence on women from different communities in Iraq. Activists emphasized the importance of localized and empowering approaches to supporting survivors of sexual violence in conflict.



UNAMI HRO attends a consultative workshop aimed to promote the adoption of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law



Baghdad, 16 May 2023 – Today in Baghdad a consultative workshop to promote the adoption of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law was held. The workshop organized by the Directorate of Women Empowerment in collaboration with UNAMI Human Rights office, aimed at generating discussions and encouraging concrete steps towards enacting a law on domestic violence that meets international human rights standards. Here is the text of the HRO remarks at this event:

“Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my honor to be here with you today at this workshop organized by the Directorate of Women Empowerment in collaboration with UNAMI Human Rights office.

The workshop is aimed at generating discussions and encouraging concrete

steps towards enacting a law on domestic violence that meets international human rights standards. The absence of a legislative framework criminalizing domestic violence as well as the existence of laws that perpetuate discrimination against women are key factors accounting for the high prevalence of domestic violence in Iraq. However, enacting a law should not be just a procedural requirement. It is imperative that the law explicitly safeguards family members from acts of violence, including homicides and severe physical harm.

Merely addressing minor offenses undermines the severity of the violence and enables perpetrators to evade punishment for acts that clearly warrant criminal charges.

We must ensure that the law contains unambiguous and precise provisions, drawing upon the language used in the

Constitution and the Iraqi Penal Code, to effectively address domestic violence. Specifically, Article 29 (4) of the Constitution, which prohibits violence in the family should be replicated, alongside relevant articles from the Penal Code that pertain to murder, manslaughter, and severe physical harm.

In the interim, I encourage the High Judicial Council to designate and offer appropriate training to judges in High Courts to handle domestic violence cases, mirroring the existing practice in Misdemeanor Courts.

Additionally, I also encourage the Ministry of Interior to assign and equip investigative judges with specialized training to effectively handle investigations related to domestic violence cases.

This comprehensive approach will ensure that criminal acts of violence within the family are appropriately addressed.

UNAMI recognizes the efforts by authorities to counter violence against women, encourages further concerted steps towards prevention, protection and accountability and urges the Council of Representatives to repeal Articles 41 and Article 409 of the Penal Code.

I am confident that the discussions and interactions that will take place today will contribute significantly to the ongoing efforts to address the problem of domestic violence.

I look forward to a productive and meaningful discussion.

Thank you.”

UNODC “Victims’ voices, silencing terrorism” campaign ceremony marks project’s achievements



Baghdad, 13 June 2023 - Representatives from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Iraqi Government, the international community, Civil Society Organizations

(CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the media gathered today in Baghdad, Iraq to mark the achievements of the project “Supporting victims of terrorism within the criminal justice

framework, including psychological support” in Iraq and its latest awareness raising campaign “Victims’ Voices, Silencing Terrorism.” The project is implemented by UNODC, in partnership with the Lebanese Association for Victims of Terrorism (AVT-L), and is generously funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The ceremony held was in the presence of Dr Essam Al-Saadi, Deputy National Security Adviser, Ms. Laetitia van Asch, Chargée d’Affaires, Embassy of Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr. Ali Elbereir, Head of UNODC Office in Iraq, Ms. Fernanda Lombardi, UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) Section Chief for MENA and Gulf countries, Ms. Hagar Farag, Terrorism Prevention Programme Officer

UNODC “Victims’ voices, silencing terrorism” campaign ceremony marks project’s achievements *(continued)*



in MENA, Mr. Mostafa Eldoush, Terrorism Prevention Branch Programme Associate, and Ms. Roula Al-Helou, President of the Association of Victims of Terrorism in Lebanon.

“It is important to help the victims voice out what they have been through and facilitate their rehabilitation, especially women and children. We understand the trauma they were subjected to. Hence, we must restore their confidence, re-integrate them into society, and consider them owners of a cause,” Dr Essam Al-Saadi, Deputy National Security Adviser stated at the ceremony.

The project started in 2020 and achieved a notable impact by working to address the different challenges faced by victims of terrorism in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Iraq. The achievements of the project include providing psychological and psychosocial support to victims; supporting the coordination of all law enforcement and criminal justice agencies involved at all stages of victims’ interaction with the criminal justice system; holding victim-sensitive approaches for dealing with victims; enhancing the effectiveness of the procedures regulating victims’ status,

participation and protection in court proceedings as well as the timely and fair restitution, reparation and compensation of victims; and finally enhancing the role of the media in raising awareness on the resilience of the victims.

Ms. Laetitia van Asch, Chargée d’Affaires, Embassy of Kingdom of the Netherlands to Iraq noted that “The Netherlands pays its respect to all survivors of terrorism. Their experiences and stories have been touching, and their strength and resilience is admirable. We are happy to support the survivors in their journey towards a better future.”

The “Victims’ Voices, Silencing Terrorism” campaign was held on social media, with reach to thousands across Iraq and the region, and focused on providing an alternative narrative to that of terrorist groups by raising awareness of the resilience of victims of terrorism and the importance of having their voices heard. The messages and stories they tell have the power to silence the negative and harmful fear-oriented messages spread by terrorist groups. The campaign featured several victims of terrorism, who have been supported by the project, as they used their voices to tell their own stories

of resilience and overcoming and spoke of how more victims should be encouraged to do the same. The campaign also focused on highlighting the importance of understanding who is a victim of terrorism, what are the victims’ needs, the role of the community, and the achievements of the project.

“The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is aware of the important role that Iraq plays in providing the means and efforts to support victims of terrorism - by making their voices and testimonies heard - to achieve desired justice and combat terrorism for its crimes against the rights of all humanity.... We are hoping that this campaign succeeds in achieving its desired goals in conveying a message to the Iraqi community and the international community on the importance of strengthening solidarity with victims of terrorism and supporting their role - as our partners - in combating violent extremism that leads to terrorism at the national and international levels,” Mr. Ali Elbereir, Head of UNODC Office in Iraq, affirmed at the ceremony.

The project is considered a step in the path to effectively supporting victims of terrorism in Iraq and is a foundation for further collaboration and partnership between UNODC and the Government of Iraq on this subject.



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 24 May 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: "Ongoing political infighting in KRI is very disturbing. Once again, we call on all parties to work in the interest of all peoples and find common ground on outstanding electoral issues soonest. Timely, credible elections are a democratic essential."

UNDP has trained a network of 200+ citizen journalists on ethical journalism and combating hate speech

Baghdad, 18 June 2023 - Today is International Day for Countering Hate Speech.

Together we can say #NoToHate and yes to compassion.

In Iraq, UNDP has trained a network of 200+ citizen journalists on ethical journalism + combating hate speech.



UNAMI Human Rights Office dialogue on the role of media/social media in countering hate speech

Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - To commemorate the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, and as part of the Human Rights 75 Initiative celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a dialogue on the role of the media, including creators of social media content, in countering hate speech in Iraq.

The event was attended by 33 participants, including representatives from government ministries and departments, the Communication and Media Commission, the High Judicial Council, traditional media experts and social media influencers, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, religious and ethnic groups, journalists, activists and representatives of civil society.

In her opening remarks, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, highlighted the negative effects of hate speech in Iraq, particularly for those who are already marginalised and disempowered. She therefore encouraged the Government, the media and civil society to work together to counter hate speech while ensuring that freedom of expression is protected.

During the lively discussion sessions, participants addressed these issues along with a range of related topics, including gender and minority perspectives on hate speech and social cohesion, as well as strengthening partnerships with media outlets and social media companies to address hate speech.

Here are the opening remarks of SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert on this event:

“Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning, everybody; Sabah al Khair.

I am very happy to be here, Ana sa'eeda biliqa'ekum.

I will speak in English, if you will allow me, but we have translation.

So, hate speech, of course, is on top of our minds - not only today, but also yesterday and tomorrow. And, I would like to start this discussion by asking: what is hate speech, really?

Because I think that soon enough we come to the conclusion that there is no universally agreed definition. But, we can understand that this term to



refer to offensive discourse targeting a group or an individual based on inherent characteristics (such as race, religion or gender), in a way that may threaten social peace, including by sparking violence.

And, as I said, it was on our mind yesterday, today, and tomorrow. So, I have to make it clear that hate speech has been around since time immemorial. Yet, the question of hate speech – and what we can do to protect against it – it seems to be more prominent now than ever before.

So, why is that? Well, let us face it: although this of course an era of more affordable and always-accessible digital content, and that it has many benefits, but it also contributes to the proliferation of hate speech, as well as mis- and dis-information.

And, this is the case everywhere - throughout the world – and Iraq is no exception.

Now, hate speech in this country tends to reinforce long-standing discrimination, particularly against ethnic and religious minorities, or any other marginalized groups. This is seen of course most clearly, and becomes most acute, when political competition or tensions are running high.

Sometimes hate speech can be overt and explicit, for example when it directly calls for targeted violence or discrimination against a named group. Other times, it is more subtle and can include the unchecked circulation of unsubstantiated rumours, or the repeated use of insulting or demeaning language to reinforce false stereotypes.

Of course, social media ends up being the main platform. But,

inflammatory and hateful messages also appear – as we all know – on television, in print media, in graffiti or in private conversations.

And while, I have to say it as a woman, while anyone can be targeted, women find themselves particularly affected - especially women in public positions, whether journalists, activists, politicians or social media influencers. We do not have to search for long before we come across unnecessarily nasty comments, intended to degrade, demoralize or shame women. It happened to me, so I am in a safe place to make a statement like this.

Things get even worse when there is an intersection of gender, and ethnicity or religion - for example, women who are also part of minority communities.

And, given today's topic, I cannot ignore statements made against people based purely on who they are and whom they love. I think that I would like to emphasize that today as well.

The point I want to make more in general is that: there are more than words at stake. No matter the group being subjected to inflammatory and hateful messaging. The harsh reality is that we have seen countless examples of high-level public statements encouraging people to conduct serious violence against individuals. And in such a case, one has a lot to answer for. What happened to serving by example? What happened to the adage, “let people be”? What happened to tolerance and respect for all? Hence, I cannot but overstate the responsibility of leadership, also within this context.

UNAMI Human Rights Office dialogue on the role of media/social media in countering hate speech *(continued)*

Now, as dangerous as hate speech is, efforts to combat it should, of course, not be used to justify unlawful limitations on freedom of expression. I mean, we all know that silencing, obstructing, dismissing or undermining public discourse will do little but erode public trust.

So yes, the balance between protection against hate speech, and ensuring freedom of expression, including access to information, is, unfortunately, a delicate one.

Now for good reasons, these two priorities, and how to simultaneously advance them, is a topic of countless legal publications and parliamentary debates across the world.

But, the search for this balance must be pursued, in good faith, of course, and informed by a cross-section of grassroots and civil society voices. And again, with the understanding of what responsible leadership entails.

I know that this event will unpack – or at least I hope that it will unpack – various solutions and ideas as it goes on today, but I would like to mention a few simple steps for consideration:

First of all, the need for clear hate

speech legislation. The negotiation of such a law must take into account all voices in parliament and not only in parliament but also beyond, including those representing minority communities, women and a wider civil society. Also, we must remember that – and I am pretty sure that I do not have to convince all of you – but we must remember that, when laws are used, not to protect, but to silence, freedom of speech comes under grave threat. As does, therefore, one of the most fundamental building blocks of a democratic society. Hence, preventing such a trend must underpin any future legislative process.

Secondly, the role for the rule of law. I mean, legislation is one thing, but legislation alone, is not enough; there must be trust among citizens that any hate speech case will be judged on its legal merit, and not influenced by, for instance, political prerogatives.

Better and more transparent regulation of political and commercial interests in media will also help make it clearer when there are subjective factors at play.

Thirdly, I would like to flag the value

that would come from codes of conduct or good faith agreements among leaders and politicians on public discourse. Political campaigns should of course preferably be based on past achievements and future policies, rather than on whipping up rage or fear about others.

Fourthly, I wish to emphasize the need to protect the civic space. This is not just critical for freedom of expression. Civil society, as you know perfectly well, also plays a key role in fighting back against hate speech – whether through monitoring online abuse, countering disinformation, or protecting organizations, groups or individuals from offline and online threats.

And, while on this topic, I would like to stress the need to engage specifically with young civil society actors. Yes, on the question of tackling hate speech, but also on the many other issues central to the future of this country. Whether my generation-fellows like it or not: young people will, very soon, be leading the way. So, we need to listen to them.

Needless to say, in conclusion: that we – UNAMI – we will remain committed to supporting efforts to counter hate speech. Be they by the Government, the media or civil society.

And, I am pretty sure that today's discussion, organized by our Human Rights Office, will identify even more opportunities for engagement – particularly when it comes to social media and the media more broadly.

Let me again emphasize how happy I am to have you all in this room and to listen to you. It is a great pleasure to seeing you all here in our compound. Thank you, again, for joining us."



UNAMI's Human Rights Office facilitates a two-day training to Iraqi female journalists

Basra, 24 June 2024 - On 23 and 24 June, the Human Rights Office of UNAMI, in collaboration with Iraqi Female Journalist Forum, conducted a two-day capacity-building training in Basra for 23 Iraqi female journalists from Basra governorate. This training aimed at equipping Iraqi female journalists with necessary strategies and tools to integrate human rights and gender perspectives into their journalistic reporting. This training was conducted as part of a series of five similar trainings set to take place in

five governorates under the Global Drive for Media Freedom, Access to

Information and the Safety of Journalists.



Strengthening coordination between key government institutions, in order to address accountability for domestic violence

Dohuk, 26 June 2023 - UNAMI Human Rights Office convened the third roundtable discussion in Dohuk, aimed at strengthening coordination between key government institutions, in order to address accountability for domestic violence. Twenty (20) participants (including 7 women) from the Directorate of Combating Violence against Women, the police, the general prosecutor's office, and the judiciary attended the roundtable discussion. During the discussions participants identified factors that hinder the successful prosecution of criminal violence against women and deliberated on strategies on how to



enhance coordination efforts among all relevant government and judicial

bodies to improve accountability for perpetrators of these crimes.

Press statement attributable to the Spokesperson of the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) on burning of the Quran in Stockholm, Sweden

New York, 29 June 2023 - The High-Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Mr. Miguel Moratinos expresses his unequivocal condemnation of the burning of pages of the holy Quran on Wednesday in front of a mosque in the center of Stockholm, Sweden. He notes that such vile act is disrespectful to Muslims who are celebrating the holy occasion of Eid Al-Adha.

The High-Representative re-iterates the importance of upholding the freedom of expression as a fundamental human right. At the same time, he stresses that the desecration of sacred books and places of worship as well as religious symbols is unacceptable and can lead to incitement of violence. The High Representative further reiterates that mutual respect is essential for building and promoting just, inclusive and peaceful societies rooted

in human rights and dignity for all. In this context, the High-Representative recalls the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites led by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which provides an overarching framework and a set of recommendations including strengthening religious pluralism and promoting mutual respect and human dignity.

Living with Disabilities

Empowering young girls with disabilities through life skills education

Baghdad, 01 June 2023 - Life skills education empowers adolescent girls with disabilities to learn, grow, and contribute to their communities. A day spent sewing not only impart practical skills but also foster a sense of accomplishment, boosting self-esteem and confidence. Adolescence is a time of change and growth, and it can be particularly challenging for young people with disabilities. That's why psychosocial support is so important. It helps them build the skills they need to navigate the world around them with confidence and resilience. UNFPA with the support of Embassy of Finland in Baghdad - Suomen suurlähetystö Bagdad provides psychosocial support to adolescents

with disabilities because every young person deserves the chance to thrive. Through counseling, education, and

other services, young people can overcome the challenges they face and reach their full potential.



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) statement on the 30th World Press Freedom Day

Baghdad, 3 May 2023 – This year, World Press Freedom Day is marked under the theme "Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of Expression as a driver for all other Human Rights".

Freedom of expression is essential for the functioning of all democratic societies, and a free and independent media serves to promote the healthy exchange of ideas and opinions. It not only increases transparency but is also a critical tool for letting authorities and leaders know when their policies are not having the intended effect, for enabling institutions to adapt and thus to flourish.

That said, across the country, the United Nations continues to document ongoing cases of harassment and intimidation, as well as retribution through both legal means and violence, against those exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, stressed, "Silencing, obstructing, dismissing, or undermining public discourse achieves two things only: it tarnishes the image of the State and erodes public trust. This in turn creates a ripple effect, deterring an open and public dialogue".

It is vital to ensure that anyone can express him or herself freely and without fear of reprisals. This includes guaranteeing that the legal framework protects, rather than unduly restricts, speech. When laws are used to silence, freedom of expression comes under grave threat, thereby undermining one of the most fundamental building blocks of a democratic society.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting Iraqis in defending freedom of expression and other fundamental rights.

World Press Freedom Day celebrated in Baghdad

Baghdad, 03 May 2023 - Today, UNAMI celebrated the 30th annual World Press Freedom Day at an event at the Iraqi Journalist Syndicate in Baghdad, recognizing the critical role of a free and independent media in promoting democracy, accountability, and human rights.

The event was attended by Iraqi government officials, media professionals, and journalists from various media outlets, and featured opening remarks from Mr. Claudio Cordone, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of UNAMI, and Mr. Paolo Fontani, Director and Representative of UNESCO in Iraq.

In his remarks DSRSG Cordone called on all attendees to stand in solidarity with journalists, to support them when they are under attack, and to hold those who seek to silence them accountable for their actions. He emphasized that freedom of expression is a driver for all other human rights and urged us all to protect this freedom.

This World Press Freedom Day, let us recommit to protecting journalists and communicators, fostering debate, and promoting freedom of expression in Iraq and worldwide.

Here is the text of the speech by DSRSG Cordone delivered on this event:

"Your excellencies, journalists and distinguished guests,

It is my pleasure to commemorate the 30th World Press Freedom Day with you here in Baghdad on behalf of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

Freedom of expression, as you all know,



is a fundamental human right. It is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as Article 38 of the Iraqi Constitution. It is a cornerstone of all other rights and a fundamental pillar of any democracy. It allows individuals to voice their opinions, hold people and institutions accountable, and contribute to decision-making processes. World Press Freedom Day reminds us of the critical importance of a free and independent media in promoting democracy, accountability, and human rights here in Iraq.

Journalists play a crucial role in exercising and safeguarding this right. You are the ones who bring us the news and information that is critical to make informed decisions. You are the ones who shine light on corruption, injustice, and human rights abuses. At the same time, you shoulder an important responsibility, that of being objective, look for the truth, avoid the

manipulation of information for political or other purposes, and respect the rights of others.

We know that this profession comes at personal risk. UNAMI's Human Rights Office has documented cases of harassment, intimidation, and violence against journalists. Journalists have reported receiving death threats following reports on sensitive topics, like corruption. Media outlets have been physically attacked or stormed by individuals angered by political statements made on-air. And media shutdowns or criminal lawsuits filed against journalists by powerful public figures and institutions deter reporting on sensitive or controversial topics.

In conversations with more than 250 journalists and bloggers from around the country, we have learned that many of you have resorted to self-censorship out of fear of reprisals for sharing information and opinions on sensitive topics.

World Press Freedom Day celebrated in Baghdad *(continued)*

This is unacceptable. We must together ensure that journalists can work freely and safely, without fear of persecution or harm. We must protect their right to investigate, report and comment on matters of public interest, even if their views are unpopular or controversial. To achieve this, we need to ensure that the legal framework protects rather than unduly restricts this work. We are concerned that regressive former drafts of the Freedom of Expression and

Cyber Crimes laws have resurfaced for discussion, as these do not adequately protect speech, privacy and other fundamental rights. Also, International human rights standards reject criminal penalties for slander and defamation – which gives me the opportunity also to urge public figures to refrain from taking legal action against journalists and critics, even if sometimes the language used is insulting or inappropriate.

To conclude, we need to stand in solidarity with journalists, to support them when they are under attack, and to hold accountable those who seek to silence them. We should all strive to protect this freedom.

As we commemorate World Press Freedom Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to a free, independent and professional media. You are essential to the health of a democracy and the protection of human rights.”

Promoting dialogue: UNESCO Iraq facilitates direct engagement between female journalists and police officers



Baghdad, 25 May 2025 - UNESCO Iraq organized a collaborative training session on Safety of Journalists, bringing together female journalists and officers from the Ministry of Interior's Specialized Investigative Unit for Crimes Against Journalists and other security forces. This initiative was part of the "Breaking the Silence" project, generously funded by the Netherlands Embassy in Iraq. The

primary objective of the training was to focus on the digital reporting platform for female journalists, fostering open discussions and delivering comprehensive training on topics aimed at strengthening trust between both parties. Furthermore, the training sought to encourage female journalists in Iraq to actively report on the challenges and risks they encounter. The Ministry of Interior's Public

Relations and Media Department graciously hosted this training, which was sponsored by UNESCO as part of a series of workshops and training sessions conducted in parallel with the Iraqi judiciary. The overarching aim of these initiatives is to bolster monitoring and reporting mechanisms while enhancing the responsiveness of law enforcement agencies to the protection, safety, and security needs within the industry.

Amidst the calls for empowerment and the pursuit of adherence to international safety standards, female journalists face a new set of challenges resulting from the profound impact of the global digital revolution on local media. UNESCO has diligently documented these emerging obstacles, supplementing the existing list of traditional challenges.

During the training session, the officers from the investigative unit engaged in in-depth discussions with the female journalists, thoroughly exploring the aforementioned challenges. UNESCO facilitated the discussions and urged suggested relevant authorities to fulfill their responsibilities towards this esteemed professional community of Female Journalists of Iraq.

Journalists are demanding the closure of the Baghdad Operations file, while the Ministry of Interior is taking steps and UNESCO is monitoring the situation

Baghdad, 31 May 2023 - As part of the "Breaking the Silence" project, funded by the Dutch Embassy in Iraq and aimed at enhancing journalist safety, UNESCO organized a training event in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior. The event brought together officers from various security branches in Iraq, joint forces, and field journalists. The focus of the meeting

was on addressing key demands that arose from previous project activities and opinion surveys conducted by UNESCO's experts on freedom of expression (FoE). These demands have led to recommendations that are currently being implemented under the supervision of UNESCO in Iraq. The "Baghdad Operations" letter, which has been a burden for journalists

since its cancellation in 2019, remains a contentious issue between the parties involved. During the meeting, an agreement was reached to issue a new letter from the Ministry of Interior, directing all security branches not to request such licenses or harass journalists, and to allow them to carry out their journalistic coverage as guaranteed by the Iraqi Constitution

Journalists are demanding the closure of the Baghdad Operations file, while the Ministry of Interior is taking steps... (continued)

and relevant laws. Improving the quick response to protection and security requests submitted by journalists to security authorities was also a major topic of discussion. Efforts to enhance communication through media officers, relations officers, and operations officers in the Ministry of Interior formations were highlighted, with the ministry's media and relations units taking the lead.

During the event, Ministry of Interior officers were briefed on global developments related to freedom of expression and the efforts made by the Iraqi National Committee for the Safety of Journalists and Combating Impunity. The focus was on rebuilding trust between law enforcement institutions and the journalistic and media community. Other topics included the mechanism for journalists to report risks they face, establishing special investigative units for crimes against journalists, and the role of

publishing and media courts in protecting journalists and combating impunity. Journalists also discussed various other issues related to their work with relevant ministry officials, and an agreement was reached to maintain continuous communication with the public relations and media departments within the ministry's formations. This collaboration aims to facilitate media tasks and resolve any inter-party problems, with the ultimate

goal of removing barriers between the two parties.

These activities, carried out under the banner of "Breaking the Silence," fostered positive dialogue and built bridges of relationships between the security institution and the journalistic and media community. The Ministry of Interior's acceptance of the demands put forth by journalists reflects a step forward in addressing the concerns of the media sector.



UNESCO conducted four training sessions for 120 judges in Iraq on freedom of expression, media and information literacy, journalists' safety, and prosecutions

Baghdad, 05 June 2023 - UNESCO, in collaboration with the High Judiciary Council of Iraq as part of the Breaking the Silence project, successfully organized four intensive training sessions for 120 judges in Iraq. The trainings, held from 19 May to 2 June, focused on enhancing judges' understanding and capacity in the areas of freedom of expression (FoE), media and information literacy (MIL), journalists' safety, and prosecutions.

The Breaking the Silence project, funded by the Netherlands Embassy in Baghdad, aims to build journalism trust in the justice system. It also promotes a free and vibrant media environment in Iraq. These training sessions represent a significant milestone in advancing judicial expertise and fostering a deeper understanding of journalists' challenges.

The training sessions provided a platform for judges from 14 governorates to engage in interactive discussions and learn from renowned experts in the field. Participants gained insights into legal frameworks and international standards related to FoE, MIL, and journalist safety. They also explored best practices for handling

media-related offenses and improving prosecution effectiveness.

Throughout the sessions, participants were equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to protect and promote the fundamental right to freedom of expression, ensuring a conducive environment for journalists to carry out their vital work. The training emphasized the importance of upholding press freedom, supporting media literacy initiatives, and safeguarding journalists' safety.

By enhancing judges' capacity in understanding and addressing issues related to FoE, MIL, and journalists' safety, these training sessions contribute to the overall efforts of building a more inclusive and robust media landscape in Iraq. Through their role as impartial adjudicators, judges play a crucial role in upholding individuals' rights and freedoms, including journalists, and ensuring justice prevails.

UNESCO remains committed to supporting Iraq in its efforts to strengthen the rule of law, promote freedom of expression, and protect journalists. The organization will continue to work closely with its partners and stakeholders to further

advance these goals and create an enabling environment for the media to flourish.

The Breaking the Silence project is a critical initiative aimed at strengthening the safety of journalists and ending impunity for crimes committed against them in Iraq. Implemented by UNESCO with partners of various stakeholders, this project seeks to create an environment where journalists can carry out their work freely, without fear of reprisals or violence.

Recognizing the importance of a free and independent media in promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance, the Breaking the Silence project focuses on two main pillars: enhancing the safety of journalists and combating impunity for crimes committed against them.



Journalists still face ongoing security harassment in the field, which UNESCO seeks to eradicate through upcoming project activities



Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - UNESCO Iraq Office conducted an assessment of the progress made in the "Breaking the Silence to Enhance Government Accountability and Judicial Following up on Safety of Journalists and Ending Impunity, Phase II" project, as the first year concluded and the second year commenced. A comprehensive workshop was organized, bringing together representatives from the Media and Communications Commission, the Ministry of the Interior, the Human Rights Commission, journalists, civil society organizations, and other partners. The participants engaged in extensive discussions on advocacy and mechanisms, while also reviewing the significant goals achieved during the first year of the project, which was generously funded by the Dutch

Embassy in Iraq.

During the workshop, journalists and media professionals took the opportunity to express their concerns regarding the Prime Minister's decision to grant licenses to journalists and media professionals through the Media and Communications Commission. They emphasized that the project aims to alleviate restrictions that impede journalists' freedom of movement and their ability to carry out media coverage.

Although the Iraqi judiciary has demonstrated remarkable flexibility and cooperation in establishing an environment conducive to freedom of expression—an achievement highly regarded by the organization—security measures in the field continue to hinder journalists' freedom to move and report news. The cancellation of the

previously enforced security measure known as the "Baghdad Command Operations letter to authorize journalists" has not fully addressed these challenges. It is important to note that the Ministry of Interior has facilitated discussions between the involved parties during the project activities, demonstrating great cooperation and aiming to raise awareness among security forces to ensure journalists are not targeted or harassed.

However, journalists still face ongoing security harassment in the field, which UNESCO seeks to eradicate through upcoming project activities. The organization aims to strengthen mutual trust between journalists, law enforcement forces, and the judiciary. The Iraqi Human Rights Commission expressed its willingness to support journalists and UNESCO in achieving this goal, offering its full cooperation and directing its staff in Baghdad and the governorates to collaborate, respond to journalists' needs, and defend their rights.

The workshop participants reached a consensus on UNESCO's work plan for the remaining activities and programs of the project, which has been underway for nearly a year.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 15 June 2023 - Iraqi Press Day is an occasion to renew our commitment to freedom of expression and to ensuring that people have access to information. We also remember the sacrifices made in pursuit of the truth, transparency, and accountability.

UNESCO Iraq Office organized a workshop to address the challenges faced by the press in the absence of adequate legislation



Baghdad, 25 June 2023 - UNESCO Iraq Office recently organized a specialized workshop to address the challenges faced by the press in the absence of adequate legislation. The workshop focused on promoting

freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right to access information. Additionally, it explored issues related to information crimes and ongoing projects within the Iraqi Council of Representatives. Notably,

UNESCO Iraq utilized artificial intelligence to present Iraq's international commitments in guaranteeing freedom of expression and the press, marking a significant milestone for such activities in the country.

This workshop is part of the Breaking the Silence initiative, which aims to enhance government accountability and strengthen judicial procedures to protect journalists and combat impunity. The second phase of this initiative is generously funded by the Netherlands Embassy in Iraq. Together with the press and media community, UNESCO is working towards adopting an action plan to promote advocacy and encourage authorities to fulfill their responsibilities in safeguarding press

UNESCO Iraq Office organized a workshop to address the challenges faced by the press ... (continued)

rights and freedom of expression in accordance with international standards.

Key stakeholders, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and a representative from the Board of Commissioners of the Media and Communications Committee, engaged in comprehensive discussions under the supervision of the judiciary. The aim was to reach a consensus on nine draft laws within the parliamentary basket and regulatory decisions. Concerned parties identified provisions that were perceived as conflicting with freedom of expression, including regulations from the ICMC, judicial decisions, orders from the Prime Minister's Office, and certain ministry policies that impose limits on freedom of expression and the press. Resolving these issues requires concerted efforts and initiatives to

effect change, improvement, or elimination.

The international organization involved in the workshop raised significant criticisms and issued a series of recommendations. Some of these recommendations urged the Council of Representatives to delay the vote on the draft law on freedom of expression, originally scheduled to take place after Eid al-Adha. Participants also acknowledged the judiciary's cooperation in responding to certain demands, such as the creation of a national guide for freedom of opinion expression and collaboration with ongoing projects. Furthermore, they called on the judiciary to address recently issued executive procedures that may contain legal and constitutional irregularities.

In response, the Ministry of the Interior expressed its willingness to launch a campaign to train and educate

all security services on journalistic freedoms granted under the Iraqi Constitution and existing laws, including the Law on Journalists' Rights of 2011. This campaign aims to revoke the repeated issuance of the Baghdad Operational Command Leader letter, which has posed challenges for journalists.

During the workshop, the press emphasized the importance of empowering women journalists and media professionals through legislative measures. They called for the implementation of the Journalists Freedom and Rights Act to enable journalists to exercise their rights within the framework of press and media work. Furthermore, they advocated for their inclusion in the decision-making processes of the Iraqi media network and the CMC to ensure a balanced approach in handling their cases and addressing their concerns.

UNITAD

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research hosted a seminar titled “UNITAD’s efforts in promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq”

Baghdad, 04 May 2023 - Today, under the auspices of H.E. Na'eem al Aboudi, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research hosted a seminar titled “UNITAD’s efforts in promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq”, bringing together university professors and scholars from various parts of Iraq.

Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher gave a detailed overview of UNITAD’s work, its pillar investigative activities, and the Team’s pioneering approaches. He emphasized the unique mandate of the Team as it has been established at the request of the Government of Iraq, commending the stellar cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi judiciary towards promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes, and achieving justice to the victims.

He stressed the importance of classifying the atrocities committed by ISIL as international crimes; war crimes, crimes against humanity and in certain cases genocide, to better guide the legal processes and safeguard the

rights of victims.

Special Adviser Ritscher concluded by reflecting on the lengthy, yet steadfast justice process when dealing with international crimes, assuring that the pursuit of accountability is crucial to survivors, to international justice, and to humanity at large.

The seminar included a lively discussion with the participants, where Special Adviser Ritscher answered their questions and listened to their

comments about the work of the Team, and other issues relating to efforts in achieving justice for all victims and survivors of ISIL crimes in Iraq.

This seminar comes as a part of UNITAD’s continuous engagement with national institutions, experts and counterparts to ensure a continuous dialogue and continued cooperation towards the common goal of pursuing accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq.





Karbala, 06 May 2023 – The Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** visited Karbala's holy shrines of Imam Hussain and Imam Abbas, where he was received by **Sayed Ahmed Al-Safi**, the religious custodian of the Imam Abbas Shrine and **Sheikh Abdul Mahdi Al-Karbalai**, the religious custodian of the Imam Hussain Shrine. Discussions involved the work of UNITAD and its efforts to continue close cooperation with Iraqi civil society and religious institutions on the path towards accountability for ISIL international crimes. Sayyed Al-Safi and Sheikh Al-Karbalai underscored the importance of UNITAD's investigations and its work, stressing the message of His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Al-Sistani on the importance of pursuing accountability for ISIL crimes against all Iraqi communities.



Baghdad, 09 May 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** received Mr. **Rebwar Hadi**, Chairman of the Legal Committee of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, and members of the Committee at UNITAD HQ in Baghdad. They discussed ongoing endeavors to develop a national legal framework for prosecuting ISIL perpetrators for international crimes in Iraq. The Special Adviser reiterated UNITAD's commitment to extend technical support to this Iraq-led process, including by leveraging international expertise and providing capacity building opportunities for law makers. UNITAD is working diligently in cooperation with Iraqi counterparts to ensure ISIL crimes are properly classified as international crimes, which is key to victims' rights and participation in the accountability processes.

UNITAD and the Iraqi Ministry of Health sign a Program of Cooperation that facilitates joint work

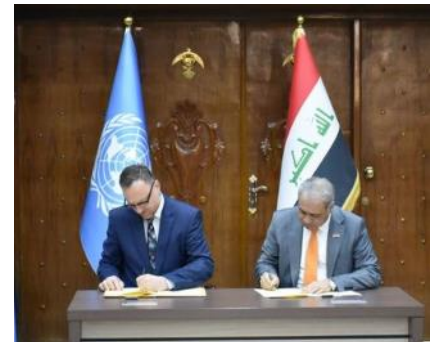
Baghdad, 10 May 2023 - On the path towards further and stronger cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Khamees al-Sa'ad signed a Program of Cooperation facilitating joint work between the two parties.

Building on UNITAD's efforts in support of victims and survivors of ISIL with its pioneering trauma-informed approach, this agreement enables the Team's specialists to refer case in need of psychosocial support to the Ministry's specialists and available resources of service providers. It also will allow UNITAD to provide specialized trainings for the Ministry's specialists and ad-hoc clinical supervision to promote the trauma-informed approach across those service providers in Iraq.

This agreement serves as an example of

the joint work between UNITAD and local institutions, as well as NGOs, to support the affected communities that have suffered ISIL atrocities, and help them heal.

Since its establishment, UNITAD's Witness Protection and Support Unit and its psychologists have provided numerous trainings to Iraqi counterparts in the area of psychosocial support and trauma-informed approach. In December 2022, the Team organized a conference titled "Blueprint for Psychosocial Support of ISIL Crimes Survivors-Trauma Informed and Capacity Building Practices", in which the Team brought together a number of national and international partners, including representatives of the government, to set national strategies for implementing best practices and trauma-informed approaches for survivors of ISIL crimes in Iraq.



This work in the area of psychosocial support aligns with UNITAD's overall victim-centered approach in conducting its investigations into international crimes committed by ISIL against all affected communities in Iraq. Promoting accountability and pursuing justice for those international crimes is essential to the wellbeing of survivors who still suffer from the aftermath of ISIL atrocities, including traumas.

UNITAD welcomes new support from Sweden for investigations and evidence management

Baghdad, 15 May 2023 – The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh / ISIL (UNITAD) welcomes the new contribution of 20, 914,004 SEK (approx. USD 2 million) from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) supporting UNITAD to advance its core mandate

and build capacities of Iraqi civil society.

On 10 May 2023, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and H.E. Jessica Svårdström, Swedish Ambassador to Iraq signed the contribution agreement, which marks the continued cooperation between the Team and Sweden and inaugurates new initiatives that will

support and build the capacities of Iraqi civil society, including vulnerable groups, which helps promote an inclusive society.

"Promoting accountability for international crimes is a process that requires meticulous work and dedication from all relevant stakeholders. Our Team works together

UNITAD welcomes new support from Sweden ... *(continued)*

with national counterparts to document ISIL atrocities, and digitize evidence in accordance with international standards, to make it stand the test of time," said Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher. He added that "thanks to this generous contribution, UNITAD will be able to expand such work and the Team's efforts hand-in-hand with Iraqi counterparts, especially among Iraqi civil society partners."

In addition to its innovative approach to investigations and digitization of data, UNITAD is also working to empower and enhance national capacities towards the common goal of promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes. UNITAD works closely with numerous civil society

organizations, and thanks to this financial contribution from SIDA, the Team will be able to further build and strengthen this cooperation.

The Team remains committed to the pursuit of justice for the many victims and survivors of ISIL crimes, from all Iraqi communities.



UNITAD's delegation attended the return of remains ceremony for victims of ISIL mass grave in Badush

Baghdad, 17 May 2023 - UNITAD's Chief of the Office of Field Investigations and accompanying delegation attended the return of remains ceremony for victims of ISIL mass grave in Badush, which took place on May 16th, coinciding with Iraq's National Mass Graves Day.

The ceremony, held at the Martyr's Monument in Baghdad, was organized by the Martyrs Foundation, Ministry of Health, and Abbasid Shrine, aimed to bring some solace to the bereaved families who have been waiting to learn the fate of their loved ones for years. The remains of 78 victims were returned after excavation and identification by Iraqi Mass Graves Directorate (MGD) and Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD).

UNITAD provided support to Iraqi national counterparts at MGD and MLD for the recovery and exhumation of victims located in sites related to ISIL attack targeting Badoush prison



on June 10, 2014.

UNITAD provided onsite forensic support to excavations, as well as further support including providing equipment, and assisting with

documentation, research, site protection, prospection, excavation, recovery, evidence preservation. The Team also supported the reference sample gathering campaign in Karbala and Diwanya, which helped identify the victims.

The crimes committed against Badush prisoners are one of UNITAD's main lines of investigations into international crimes committed in and around Mosul, as well as in relation to ISIL crimes which targeted the Shia community in several parts of Iraq. UNITAD remains committed to investigate ISIL crimes against all affected communities, and to work towards bringing ISIL perpetrators responsible for such heinous international crimes to justice.





Baghdad, 10 May 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met H.E. **Qassim Al Araj**, Iraq's National Security Adviser, to discuss ongoing cooperation with the Advisory, including its support to UNITAD's work in relation to Iraqi returnees from al-Hol camp, and some of the Team's key lines of investigation on ISIL's use of Chemical Weapons. Special Adviser Ritscher briefed on other areas of the Team's work with various Iraqi counterparts and expressed his gratitude for the excellent cooperation and continued support towards the common goal of holding ISIL members accountable for their international crimes in Iraq.



Baghdad, 17 May 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** welcomed at UNITAD headquarters H.E. **Sofie From-Emmesberg**, Director General, Africa and Middle East at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, H.E. **Matti Lassila**, Ambassador of Finland to Iraq, and the accompanying delegation.

Special Adviser Ritscher provided an overview of UNITAD's investigations, and ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and Finland.

Special Adviser Ritscher thanked Finland for supporting UNITAD, especially the Team's witness protection work.

UNITAD takes part in a meeting of the Joint Working Group on pathways for a domestic legislation to incorporate international

Baghdad, 19 May 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** and UNITAD experts took part in a meeting of the Joint Working Group on pathways for a domestic legislation to incorporate international crimes charges for ISIL perpetrators in Iraq.

The Joint Working Group, which was launched in March, brings together UNITAD experts, with members of the Iraqi Judiciary, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Permanent Committee for International Humanitarian Law, as well as the Iraqi State Council. The Chair of the Legal Committee of the Iraqi Council of Representatives was invited to this meeting, which took place at the Supreme Judicial Council, in addition to other legal experts.

The meeting discussed a proposal to develop a national draft law on international crimes, which will allow for the prosecution of ISIL perpetrators



on charges of international crimes in Iraq. Discussions also included drawing on international expertise, to shed light on relevant issues in the field of International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law.

UNITAD continues to engage with the Iraqi judiciary, legislators, and all relevant counterparts to provide technical support to this Iraq-led

process. Such support to national efforts in this area is an integral part of UNITAD's mandate, towards the goal of promoting accountability and achieving justice. Adopting an appropriate legal framework is a key milestone to ensure that trials for ISIL perpetrators on charges of international crimes can happen in Iraq.

UNITAD and Al Rusafa Central Investigation Court in Baghdad jointly inaugurate the advanced phase of their Digitization Project (funded by EU)

Baghdad, 21 May 2023 - UNITAD and Al Rusafa Central Investigation Court in Baghdad have jointly inaugurated the advanced phase of their Digitization Project, which is funded by the European Union (EU). This milestone represents a significant achievement in the ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the Iraqi judiciary, on the path of promoting accountability for international crimes

committed by ISIL.

During the inauguration ceremony, Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, **Christian Ritscher**, alongside Judge **Jabbar Abid Dali**, First Judge of Al Rusafa Central Investigation Court in Baghdad and H.E. **Ville Varjola**, EU Ambassador to Iraq gave opening remarks. Afterwards, they toured the digitization facility and forensic lab, equipped and operated through this

project at the premises of Al Rusafa Court.

At Al Rusafa Central Investigation Court in Baghdad, and as a part of this European Union Digitization Project (EUDP), UNITAD provided state-of-the-art equipment, training and capacity development that resulted in the digitization of millions of pages of documents. This has helped to create a digital archive that, in conjunction with

UNITAD and Al Rusafa Central Investigation Court in Baghdad jointly inaugurate the advanced phase ... (continued)

a case management system, will assist the court in dealing with criminal cases related to ISIL crimes in a more streamlined and efficient manner, as it enables rapid access to case files.

In his remarks, Special Adviser Ritscher stressed the importance of the EUDP thanking judge Abid Dali for his strives to maintain the integrity of ISIL evidence and files, and ensure the preservation of perishable documents through digitization. Special Adviser Ritscher also relayed the Team's appreciation for the tremendous support of the EU to advancing UNITAD's mandate and promoting cooperation with national counterparts. The EU has been one of UNITAD's continuous supporters since the Team's establishment, contributing, in its



latest cycle of funding, with an additional €3.8 million to the digitization and archiving of evidentiary materials of ISIL crimes held by Iraqi authorities. This has

allowed the Team to support courts across Iraq in digitization of paper documents, as well as the forensic acquisition of battlefield evidence, and electronically stored information.

Statement by Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher on visit to Anbar

Anbar, 25 May 2023 - Today, I came here to Anbar with a delegation of UNITAD, as we work on one of our key structural investigations into ISIL's crimes; those crimes committed against the Sunni community in Iraq.

With violence at the core of its ideology, ISIL did not spare Iraq, its people from all communities, and its cultural and religious heritage from its vicious attacks. Like in other parts of Iraq, and as our findings indicate, ISIL targeted all segments of the Iraqi community in Anbar, including Sunni tribes that refused to pledge allegiance to ISIL's rein of terror, declaring them apostates who deserve to be executed. During ISIL's control of Anbar, a large number of tribesmen, women and children were killed by Da'esh or forcibly disappeared.

Our ongoing investigations are also looking into ISIL's destruction and desecration of religious places like the shrine and mosque of Abdullah Bin Al-Mubarak, one of the most prominent and widely respected historical Sunni



persons. With these acts, ISIL proved, once and again, that its attacks were not founded in religion, but on their twisted manipulative discourses, that have nothing to do with religion or belief. These acts are founded in hate and inhumanity.

Our teams have been working tirelessly to uncover the scope of ISIL's attacks targeting all those who stood against it, with a dedicated investigative unit for the crimes committed against the Sunni community.

This includes interviewing witnesses and survivors and supporting the excavation of mass grave sites. In addition, our experts very recently launched a digitization project with Al Anbar Criminal Court to digitize and preserve the courts' records and cases pertaining to ISIL crimes. These operations contribute to drawing the full picture of ISIL's criminality and enhances our different lines of inquiry. We will go on with such investigations, aiming to establish the legal qualification of the crimes committed by ISIL perpetrators as international crimes, meaning war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

With this said, I must stress that UNITAD's work in Anbar would not be possible without the close cooperation with victim and survivor communities, as well as our Iraqi counterparts including the Iraqi judiciary. I reaffirm my thanks to the Iraqi Jurisprudence Council, for their continued support, and I commend the Council's firm



position against ISIL.

The bereaved families who have waited for long to see the truth uncovered, and for justice to prevail have welcomed UNITAD and welcomed me today, and to them I say, your plights remain at the core of our work. Commemorating ISIL victims from the Sunni community comes in line with our principle that there is no hierarchy of victims. Each and every victim matters, from all affected communities. Yet, remembrance is not the only way we honor the victims and their families. It is through true justice and accountability for the many crimes committed by ISIL perpetrators that we do so.

Through my visit today I reiterate my Team's commitment to continue its work to establish the truth and serve justice to all victims, including those from the Sunni community. We are here among you and will continue to work jointly with all stakeholders to meet your calls for justice.



Baghdad, 22 May 2023 – Today, the Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met president of Yazda Organisation, **Mr. Haider Elias**, to discuss mutual cooperation, and UNITAD's work with civil society organisations towards promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes. Recently, UNITAD conducted a virtual training for Yazda on open-source data gathering. The training aimed to enhance participants' skills in collecting and analyzing open-source information in accordance with international standards and best practices.



Mosul, 28 May 2023 - Today, Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was warmly received by H.E. **Judge Raed al-Mosleh** at the Presidency of the Nineveh Federal Appeals Court.

They discussed ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the Court, and visited together Nineveh Counter-Terrorism Court, in its final reconstruction stages.

While seeing different sections of the court Special Adviser Ritscher was highly impressed, including by the work completed through UNITAD's Digitization Project, funded by the EU. He commended the partnership with the Iraqi judiciary in promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes.

Iraqi Mass Graves and Medico-Legal Directorates, with UNITAD's support, excavated grave sites in Hawija

Baghdad, 28 May 2023 - Iraqi Mass Graves and Medico-Legal Directorates, with UNITAD's support, excavated grave sites in Hawija, believed to hold the remains of female Yazidi victims of ISIL.

The excavated remains were handed over to the Medico-Legal Directorate for further forensic analyses.

UNITAD continues to support national counterparts in locating and excavating graves of victims of ISIL from all afflicted communities. This is essential in providing solace to bereaved families, and for the Team's investigations on the path of holding perpetrators accountable.



Special Adviser Christian Ritscher visited Mosul's famous Al-Nouri Mosque

Mosul, 29 May 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher visited Mosul's famous Al-Nouri Mosque, a 12th century landmark that was destroyed by ISIL in 2017.

Special Adviser Ritscher was impressed by UNESCO Iraq's efforts to restore the mosque to its former glory under their Revive the Spirit of Mosul project.

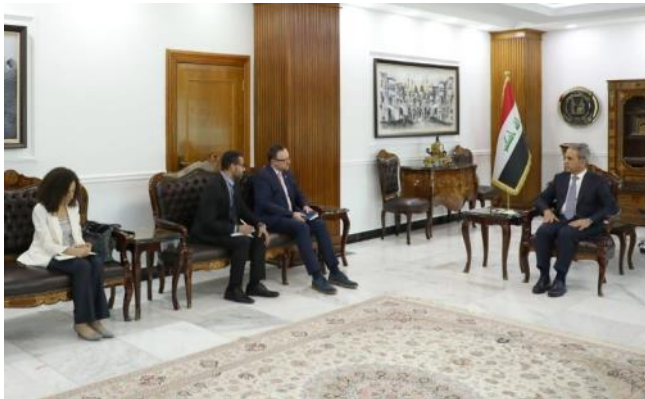




Erbil, 30 May 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was delighted to meet H.E. Judge Abdul Jabbar Hassan, Head of KRI Judicial Council, to brief on progress in UNITAD's work, and ongoing cooperation with Kurdish authorities, for which the Special Adviser expressed his thanks.



Erbil, 30 May 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was pleased to meet Dr. Dindar Zebari, KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy, in Erbil, to discuss mutual cooperation and continuous support to UNITAD's work, including facilitating The Team's operations in KRG.



Baghdad, 31 May 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met H.E. Judge Faiq Zidan, President of the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council, to discuss mutual cooperation with competent investigative judges in promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes.

They discussed how to maximize utilizing the sheer amount of evidence available on ISIL crimes, and ongoing efforts to adopt an appropriate legal framework to pave the way for prosecuting ISIL members for international crimes in Iraq.



Baghdad, 31 May 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met H.E. EU Ambassador to Iraq, Ville Varjola to discuss the continued mutual cooperation in the EU funded Digitization project. Special Adviser Ritscher commended the role of the EU in supporting UNITAD's work in pursuit of accountability for ISIL international crimes. Most recently, UNITAD and Al Rusafa Central Investigation Court inaugurated the new phase of this project, while UNITAD also initiated its implementation with Al Anbar Criminal Court to digitize and preserve the courts' records and cases pertaining to ISIL crimes.

UNITAD commemorates the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression

Baghdad, 04 June 2023 - This International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression, UNITAD stresses the importance of accountability for core international crimes as a way for protecting children from acts of aggression. Through a dedicated "Gender and Children Unit", the Team investigates ISIL international crimes against children from various communities in Iraq and supports prosecution of ISIL perpetrators for these crimes. In 2022, UNITAD supported the Swedish district court in the prosecution of ISIL female member for

committing international crimes, particularly war crime. The perpetrator was prosecuted for her omission as a legal guardian to protect her son from

being recruited and used as a child soldier by ISIL in battle. He was 12 at the time of enlistment and subsequently died.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF INNOCENT CHILDREN VICTIMS OF AGGRESSION

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New York, 06 June 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met H.E. Ambassador **Michel Xavier Biang**, Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations, currently member of the SC, to brief on UNITAD's work and its unique mandate as an investigative Team established at the request of Iraq and working closely with local authorities.



New York, 06 June 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met Mr. **Domingos Fernandes**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the UN, currently member of SC, to brief on UNITAD's work in promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq, and discuss possibilities for future cooperation.



New York, 06 June 2023 - Ahead of the UN Security Council briefing, Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was warmly welcomed by Mr. **Sarhad Fatah**, Charge d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations. They discussed ongoing cooperation between the Team and the Government of Iraq that is essential to the success of UNITAD's mandate.

Special Adviser Ritscher thanked Iraq for the continuous support to UNITAD, as this unique partnership is exemplary in promoting accountability for ISIL crimes throughout the world.



New York, 07 June 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, H.E. Amb. **Jeffery DeLaurentis** to brief on UNITAD's work and expressed gratitude for the United States' strong support to the Team's mandate, including funding mass grave excavations, and investigations into ISIL crimes against Sunni and Christian communities.



New York, 07 June 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** met H.E. Amb. **Geng Shuang**, Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the UN, and briefed him on UNITAD's work and the ongoing cooperation with Iraqi authorities to promote accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq throughout the world.



New York, 07 June 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was welcomed by H.E. USG **Alice Wairimu Nderitu**, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, to discuss ongoing mutual cooperation in promoting accountability for the crime of genocide by ISIL perpetrators against the Yazidi community in Iraq. Special Adviser Ritscher briefed USG Nderitu on UNITAD's ongoing investigations and the excellent cooperation with Iraqi authorities, as part of the Team's unique mandate. They also discussed ways to help amplify the voices of Iraqi victims and survivors.

UNITAD: Unique partnership with Iraq and continued commitment to justice for victims of ISIL crimes

Baghdad, 07 June 2023 – Special Adviser and head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher briefed the United Nations Security Council on the 10th report that details the Team’s work over the past reporting period.

Special Adviser Ritscher explained that 5 years since its establishment at the request of Iraq, UNITAD continues to be an international team with a unique mandate, working in cooperation with national authorities, while promoting accountability for the international crimes committed by ISIL throughout the world.

In his briefing, Special Adviser Ritscher reiterated the Team’s commitment to the pursuit of justice for all Iraqi communities afflicted by ISIL atrocities. In this regard, the Special Adviser indicated that the Team engages with religious and tribal leaders, representatives of affected communities and survivors of ISIL crimes, saying: “I have been impressed by the support given to my Team by the affected communities, especially the ones I recently visited in Taza Khurmatu, in Hiit and in Ramadi,” highlighting that : “I was deeply touched by the wise words of His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayed Ali Al Sistani, who said that: all ISIL victims matter equally, with no hierarchy. This same principle is the foundation of UNITAD’s work.”

Presenting the progress in the Team’s investigations, Special Adviser Ritscher mentioned that the UNITAD has worked on several case-assessments, including on the development and use of chemical weapons by ISIL, on gender-based crimes and crimes against children, crimes committed against the Sunni community in Al-Anbar, and the attacks against the Christian communities in Ninewa. Additionally, regarding ISIL attacks against the Yazidi and the Shia communities, case-briefs have also been enhanced with additional evidence and



analyses.

Special Adviser Ritscher stressed that cooperation with Iraqi authorities is key for success, and that success comes through seeking accountability for ISIL international crimes in evidence-based trials, before competent courts. He explained that what is required to achieve this success are three elements: “competent courts, admissible and reliable evidence, and an appropriate legal framework.”

Towards this end, he expressed that the Team is committed to support the: “Iraq-led process for the implementation of a legal framework that enables the prosecution of ISIL criminal acts as international crimes, before national courts”, prompting dealing with the brutal attacks of ISIL as international crimes and not just membership of a terrorist organization. Cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary, as Special Adviser Ritscher indicated, encompasses also enhancing capacities of Iraqi judges, ongoing joint case-building, and the mega digitization project, which has led so far to the digitization of the impressive amount of 8 million pages of ISIL documents from the holdings of the Iraqi authorities,

including Kurdish authorities. In Iraq, there is no shortage of evidence on ISIL crimes, and with these innovative initiatives, Iraqi judges informed they are able to significantly improve response times in relation to case files and requests for information, signaling lasting change as a result of these innovative efforts.

Speaking of the Team’s support to international accountability efforts, Special Adviser Ritscher stated that UNITAD has become: “an indispensable member of the international network created to fight impunity for ISIL crimes,” mentioning that the Team is currently supporting 17 Third-State jurisdictions.

Concluding his briefing, Special Adviser Ritscher reiterated that UNITAD: “continues to be impartial, independent, and credible in upholding the United Nations best practices, and relevant international law.” He also stressed the importance of having fair trials before competent courts in Iraq with the active participation of victims and survivors, “Without that, UNITAD’s mandate and purpose will not be fulfilled” as Special Adviser Ritscher said.

UN investigative team outlines findings around ISIL chemical weapons use

New York, 8 June 2023 - During their nearly four-year reign of terror in Iraq, ISIL extremists developed at least eight chemical agents, tested them on humans, and carried out at least 13 attacks, UN experts reported on Thursday.

Senior officials with the UN Investigative Team promoting

accountability for ISIL crimes, UNITAD, presented some of their findings to Member States meeting at UN Headquarters in New York.

For the past five years, UNITAD has been gathering evidence of crimes committed during ISIL’s self-proclaimed caliphate from June 2014 to December 2017, which could be used to

prosecute the extremists in national or foreign courts.

Prosecution is rare

Christian Ritscher, Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, recalled that chemical weapons use is outlawed internationally and could constitute a crime against humanity, war crime or

UN investigative team outlines findings around ISIL chemical weapons use *(continued)*

even contribute to genocide, if a specific group is targeted.

“To the best of my knowledge, the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors has rarely been adjudicated, if at all, in any court - whether national or international - around the world. As UNITAD, we would like to play our part and aim to change this,” he said.

The investigations into ISIL’s development and use of chemical and biological weapons began two years ago, looking into the March 2016 attack on the town of Taza Khurmatu and whether other incidents had taken place elsewhere.

‘Sophisticated’ programme

Team Leader Paula Silfverstolpe said ISIL’s operations represent the culmination of nearly two decades of experimentation by Sunni jihadi groups, marking “the most sophisticated programme developed by non-State actors so far”.

The overall manufacturing of weapons and ammunition fell under ISIL’s self-styled Department of Defence, specifically the Committee of Military Development and Manufacturing (CMDM), which had a monthly budget of over a \$1 million as well as extrabudgetary funds to purchase raw materials.

More than 1,000 combatants were involved in production, according to ISIL payroll records.

Hundreds were deployed to the chemical weapons programme, and specific job advertisements were placed to recruit scientists and technical experts, including from abroad, drawing people from countries such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Belgium.

A terrible ‘first’

Specialist research and development teams were located at the then extremist-run University of Mosul in northern Iraq, rural parts of Anbar province, and the city of Hawija, home to ISIL headquarters.

Ms. Silfverstolpe said the militants developed at least eight chemical agents - aluminium phosphide, botulinum toxin, chlorine, cyanide ion, nicotine, ricin, thallium sulfate and sulfur mustard, which is also known as mustard gas.

ISIL was also the first non-State group to develop a banned chemical warfare agent and combine it with a projectile delivery system.

The toxins sulfur mustard, chlorine and aluminium phosphide are banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and evidence demonstrates that ISIL weaponized their use in mortars, rockets and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The terror group also explored the possibility of acquiring anthrax but there has been no evidence so far that combatants used it, or other biological agents, in any attacks, although investigations continue.

Human testing and bonus payments

UNITAD has also collected evidence which indicates that ISIL tested chemical agents on humans - including ricin, nicotine and thallium sulfate - as well as animals such as rabbits.

ISIL records demonstrate that top leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who died in 2019, authorized the use of chemical weapons by troops and even approved bonus payments for those soldiers deploying them. “Martyrdom payments” were made if they died.

Al-Baghdadi also personally ordered the attack against Taza Khurmatu “with the purpose of causing as many casualties as possible”. Of the 42 projectiles launched against the town, at least 27 contained sulfur mustard, which causes blisters and painful burns. Two children died and thousands of people, including first responders, were injured.

‘Widespread and systematic’ attacks

Judge Ali Noaman Jabbar of the Taza Investigation Court said the re-opening of the case and UNITAD’s interest has motivated numerous victims and their families to provide their testimonies.

“The impact caused by the chemical attack includes various diseases such as cancer, skin diseases, miscarriages, deformities in embryos, chronic diseases, and psychological impact and trauma,” he said in a video message.

The attack on Taza Khurmatu “was definitely not an isolated case”, Ms. Silfverstolpe said. Information shows that at least 12 other attacks were carried out in other locations, with unconfirmed reports of 35 more.

“It was quite a widespread and systematic phenomenon, as far as the information that we have collected so far,” she said.

Honour the victims

UNITAD will continue to work with Iraq and other countries towards building cases in connection with 21 “persons of interest” suspected of involvement in the ISIL chemical weapons programme, who include foreign nationals.

While some are believed to be dead, others have been detained or are living in third countries.

Although the caliphate has been destroyed, Mr. Ritscher warned that the terrorism threat has not disappeared.

“We need to advance criminal accountability in relation to the use of chemical weapons in the name of victims and survivors of ISIL to promote peace and reconciliation in Iraq, but also because it is a responsibility of the entire international community, given that such threats and crimes may present themselves in other countries,” he said.

By UN News.



UNITAD attends Tikrit Air Academy Massacre anniversary commemoration

Baghdad, 09 June 2023 - Commemorating 9 years since the Tikrit Air Academy Massacre, UNITAD senior delegation joined the bereaved families in a ceremony marking the anniversary, during which Ms. Defne Akca, Chief of Office of Field Investigations, delivered remarks on behalf of Special Adviser Christian Ritscher.

Ms. Akca stressed that the victims who lost their lives at the hands of #ISIL are never forgotten. Accountability for ISIL international crimes remains essential to ensure that those who committed such gruesome acts do not escape justice.

In 2022, UNITAD published a multimedia video in cooperation with

SITU Research, detailing the Tikrit Air Academy Massacre and the findings of

the Team's investigations into this crime.



New York, 08 June 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was delighted to meet H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Abushahab, Deputy Permanent Representative of UAE to the UN, the Security Council Presidency for June, and discussed the progress in UNITAD's work and ideas for potential cooperation between UNITAD, UAE and Iraq, including on ISIL economic crimes.



New York, 09 June 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met H.E. Ambassador Nathalie Broadhurst, Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the UN to discuss ongoing cooperation, and thank France for its support to UNITAD's work, and its financial contribution to investigations of ISIL crimes against Christians, ISIL development of Chemical Weapons and destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq.



New York, 10 June 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met H.E. Ms. Albana Dautllari, Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations to discuss UNITAD's work and progress towards accountability for ISIL international crimes. SA Ritscher thanked Albania for its continuous support to the Team's work and accountability efforts.



New York, 10 June 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was delighted to meet H.E. Ambassador Hernan Perez Loose, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations and brief him on UNITAD's work. They discussed potential opportunities for cooperation and support to investigations and accountability for ISIL crimes in Iraq on international level.

SA Ritscher meets PR of Germany to the UN

New York, 10 June 2023 - Special Adviser Ritscher was pleased to meet H.E. Ambassador Antje Leendertse, Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN to update her on UNITAD's work, and discuss ongoing cooperation with Germany and its leading role in pursuing accountability for ISIL international crimes.

In 2021, a German court sentenced Taha Al J; an Iraqi member of ISIL for life, found guilty for the crime of genocide against Yazidis in Iraq; a landmark conviction that was the first of its kind.



UNITAD, Iraq, and India co-host special event at UNHQ: "ISIL's use of chemical weapons: global threat"

Baghdad, 13 June 2022 – The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), jointly with The Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations, and The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations co-hosted a special event titled "ISIL's Use of Chemical Weapons: Global Threat."

Held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Special Event brought together participants from the diplomatic community, civil society and different UN offices.

"I want to stress that my Team has assembled sufficient relevant information to think that the threat of chemical weapons' development and use, by non-state actors such as ISIL, continues." Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher indicated in his opening remarks. He also said that UNITAD's investigative work in this regard is: "ground-breaking and setting the sediments for unprecedented judicial avenues, for prosecuting crimes linked to chemical weapons developed by non-state actors." Reassuring that: "UNITAD will spare no effort in working towards this goal, precisely when atrocity crimes such as the development and use of chemical weapons are at stake."

In his remarks, Ambassador R. Ravindra, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations said: "Holding ISIL accountable, particularly for crimes against minority communities, is crucial for fostering reconciliation and lasting peace in Iraq. India provided initial financial support to UNITAD's key investigations, and has bolstered this objective."

On his part, Mr. Sarhad Fatah, Charge d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of



Iraq to the United Nations indicated: One of the main and important milestones mentioned in the tenth UNITAD Team Report is the completion of the initial case assessment report on the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by the terrorist organization ISIS in Iraq, which is supposed to expand the issue and prosecute the elements of the organization who used these weapons and worked to develop their capabilities."

Special Adviser Christian Ritscher renewed his gratitude to the Government of Iraq, especially the Iraqi judiciary, for their support and partnership that facilitates this line of investigation. He also stated that: "In 2021, UNITAD initiated a major investigation into this line of enquiry, thanks to the financial support of India and later on, the one from France." Further, he thanked the Permanent Missions of India and Iraq for co-hosting this event.

H.E. Mr. Ali Noaman Jabbar, Judge of the Taza Investigation Court at Kirkuk governorate recounted, through a recorded video message, the chain of events that took place on 8 March 2016, when ISIL shelled Taza Khurmato with

nearly 40 locally made rockets, loaded with chemicals at civilians affecting hundreds of people with mustard gas. He also described the aftermath of the attack, the investigations opened by the Iraqi judiciary, and his court's close cooperation with UNITAD on this line of inquiry.

During the Special Event, presentations were provided by the lead of the investigative unit responsible for investigating ISIL development and use of chemical weapons, and technical experts, including Mr. Talgat Toleubayev, Regional Coordinator at CBRN Risk Mitigation and Security Governance Programme (UNICRI). Expert presentations who provided valuable insights about the investigation findings and the issues pertaining to non-state actors as ISIL's deployment of chemical weapons.

Special Adviser Ritscher had indicated in his briefing to the United Nations Security Council a day earlier, that he prioritized this line of inquiry and that the Team has produced case-assessment report on ISIL's use of chemical weapons, as the team continues to advance its investigations into this crucial line of inquiry.

Special Adviser Christian Ritscher highlights the unique partnership between UNITAD and Iraq

Baghdad, 26 June 2023 - UNITAD and the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) of the Government of Iraq held a Strategic Discussions Workshop, during which the Team presented the work accomplished over the past 18 months, over 2 days of presentations on different areas of work and discussions on upcoming activities and discussed its vision for the future, incorporating proposals by NCC representatives into the action points, to be implemented in the coming months.

Special Adviser Christian Ritscher highlighted the unique partnership between UNITAD and Iraq, while H.E.



Ambassador Haider al-Athari spoke on behalf of H.E. Dr. Mohammed Hussein Bahr AlUloom, Deputy Foreign

Minister and NCC Chair, thanking UNITAD for its work and close cooperation with Iraq.

UNITAD welcomes German court conviction of ISIL female member for aiding and abetting genocide against Yazidis

Baghdad, 26 June 2023— Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) Mr. Christian Ritscher welcomed today the German Higher Regional Court of Koblenz conviction of ISIL female member Nadine K. for committing international crimes, particularly Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes against a young Yazidi woman in Iraq.

"This conviction is an example of what meaningful justice means to survivor communities of ISIL heinous international crimes. The key witness in this case, travelled from Iraq to Germany to confront her perpetrator in court. She participated as a co-plaintiff in the proceedings and testified before court over 6 days. This is the kind of justice victim communities are questing, and the kind of justice UNITAD is designed to seek, in

Iraq as well as throughout the world."

UNITAD provided support to German prosecution authorities by identifying and interviewing the key witness (N.) the Yazidi woman who was held as a slave for 3 years by the ISIL couple, Nadine K. and her husband.

Nadine K., a German national who joined ISIL with her husband in late 2014, was sentenced to nine years and three months in prison, for membership in a terrorist organization abroad, in one case, in addition to another case on international crimes. The court found her guilty of aiding and abetting genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes for the enslavement and abuse of a young Yazidi woman in support of ISIL's brutal campaign to eradicate the Yazidi religious minority. In 2016, Nadine K.'s husband received the 21 years old Yazidi woman as a "gift". The woman was raped several times and was forced to do the

housekeeping. The ISIL couple treated her as a private property.

"The pursuit of justice is a long, steadfast journey that is bound to yield fruit. This conviction brought solace and comfort to the victims and attests that ISIL perpetrators shall find no safe haven. I commend the courage and the resilience of the witness, and the valiant efforts of the German persecutors in this case," said Special Adviser Ritscher. He added that "ISIL crimes in Iraq constitute some of the most gruesome acts we have seen in recent history. Individuals responsible for such acts must be identified and ultimately tried and convicted for their crimes. UNITAD will continue to exert every possible effort to support the prosecution of ISIL criminals and ensure that they are held accountable for their heinous international crimes."



Humanitarian

Funds from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development allow UNHCR to continue delivering essential services to refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 04 May 2023 - UNHCR, the UN refugee agency in Iraq, in cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government and Ministry of Interior, with generous financial support from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, opened a new registration centre in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil.

The new centre will function as a one-stop shop for registration and protection services, allowing UNHCR to

obtain biodata to provide its certificates and support refugees according to their specific needs. At the centre, refugees can access an information desk to learn about humanitarian and public services and legal assistance. Women and children survivors of violence also have access to specialised psychosocial services.

In addition to UNHCR staff and its protection partners; INTERSOS, Terre des Hommes, Al-Mesalla, Kurdistan

Save the Children, and WCHAN, the registration centre will also house governmental entities, namely General Assayish and the Erbil Directorate of Residency. As a result, refugees will immediately be able to secure their humanitarian residency permits, which are the documents provided by the authorities to asylum-seekers and refugees to regularise their stay in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and to access public services. It is expected that

Funds from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development allow UNHCR to continue delivering essential services ... (continued)



24,000 refugees a month will benefit from all these services.

"Registration with UNHCR is a necessary step in the life of a refugee. It will guarantee them to secure a legal residency with the Kurdish authorities and give them access to public and humanitarian services." Said UNHCR Representative in Iraq, Mr Jean-Nicolas Beuze. "Today's opening of the registration centre is a testament to the great cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government. We are glad that

it benefits from the financial support from KFAED as partners with us to protect refugees," Beuze added.

Nisreen Rubaian, the representative of UNHCR to the State of Kuwait thanked and appreciated the Kuwait government and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and its role in supporting displaced persons and refugees in the MENA region and around the world, especially in response to the pressing humanitarian needs due to protracted crisis in Syria

and Yemen. Kuwait Fund have worked on strengthening their joint efforts to meet the growing humanitarian needs in light of historical numbers of asylum and displacement through sustainable infrastructure projects.

"Today, we are witnessing another achievement written in the record of our joint work in serving our Syrian refugee brothers and host communities. This project is considered one of 5 projects signed with UNHCR towards infrastructure for refugees; we are proud of this strategic partnership and hope it will achieve its ultimate impact on easing challenges they face." Said the General Director of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Mr. Waleed AlBahar

The newly established building will function as a registration centre for refugees and other protection activities. It will eventually serve as a secondary school for the neighbourhood. Education is a priority for the Kuwait government, UNHCR and the Kurdish government to support education for the most vulnerable.

UK Ambassador to Iraq visits Hassan Sham camp to see IOM Iraq and partners' support to displaced persons

Baghdad, 11 May 2023 - UK Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Mr. Mark Bryson-Richardson, visited Hassan Sham camp to see IOM Iraq and partners' support to displaced persons and to hear about the needs in the camp and barriers to return.

IOM supports durable solutions for addressing displacement in Iraq, which requires coordination for voluntary returns to areas of origin, integration into host communities, or relocation within the country, leaving no one behind.



Australian Ambassador to Iraq and a delegation visited IOM Iraq's projects in Kirkuk

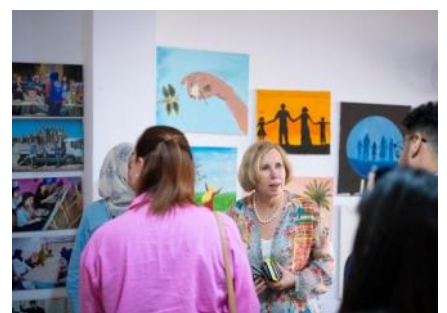
Kirkuk, 14 May 2023 - Australian Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Ms. Paula Ganly, and a delegation visited IOM Iraq's projects in Kirkuk and spoke to women, community leaders and activists about barriers to returning to places of origin and what it takes to integrate into society.

The delegation visited the Ministry of Youth and Sport's Community Centre in Kikruk's Wahid Huzairan neighborhood whereby IOM supports a community center in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has funded IOM projects in Kirkuk on mental health and psychosocial support, CSO capacity building and legal services.

IOM Iraq's legal counselling center in Kirkuk is run entirely by Iraqi women legal professionals who are skilled in providing services specific to the needs of women and girls in the community. Funded by The Australian Embassy in Iraq and The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the women legal professionals support women and

girls in civil documentation to housing, land and property rights.



IOM pledges to support the 71,000 Iraqi families that are still living in damaged or unsafe housing

Baghdad, 15 May 2023 - "In 2014, we fled from Daesh and left our home in Jerf Al Sakhar, Babil. It was a journey fraught with uncertainty and fear, but one that ultimately led us to a new beginning in Baghdad's Al Latifiya district.

We transformed a two dunam plot of land with a crumbling house into our haven of safety and love for our children. It wasn't easy; the walls were cracked, the roof was barely intact, and doors and windows were non-existent. Yet, we were determined to create a home where our children could grow and thrive.

Thankfully, we then received IOM support. IOM repaired our roof, installed new windows and doors, and transformed our humble dwelling into a



secure home.

With their help, we could finally sleep soundly. I can keep my seven children safe. It is such a great relief.

My family of ten is safe, happy and together under one roof – and that's the most precious gift of all."

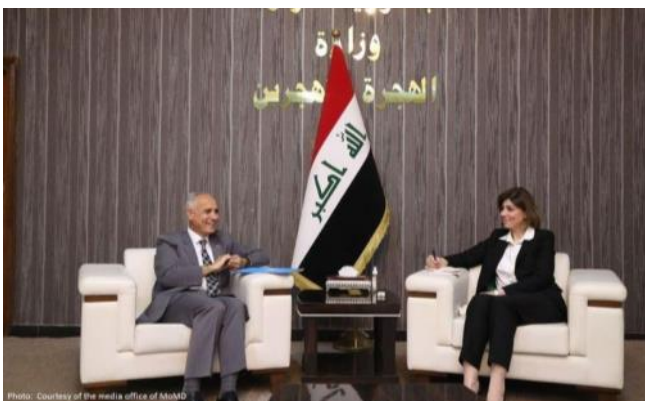
Muthana, 42, is a farmer in Baghdad's

Al Latifiya district. IOM Iraq supported the rehabilitation and reconstruction of his home.

Today, as we commemorate the Day of Families, IOM pledges to support the 71,000 Iraqi families that are still living in damaged or unsafe housing and are in dire need of our support.

DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai meets with key donor partners in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 May 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, met with key donor partners in Iraq. A great way to present the whole of UN's Strategic Plan for durable solutions in Iraq. Together, we #LeaveNoOneBehind. DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai: "Great to meet with our key donor partners today, I am grateful for substantive, frank discussion. We will continue to work together with the government and our partners and donors to find #DurableSolutions to internal displacement and meet the remaining needs of IDPs and returnees!"



Baghdad, 17 May 2023 – Today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, met with the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Jabro. They discussed UN support for finding durable solutions for returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq and strengthening coordination between the UN and different sectors of the Government at regional and national levels to achieve this goal.



Erbil, 21 May 2023 - Today, the Head of the UN OCHA office in Iraq, Ms. Monique Maani, met in Erbil with Ms. Srwa Rasoul, Director-General of the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC), Ministry of Interior, Kurdistan Regional Government. Discussions with KRG JCC focused on the humanitarian transition to durable solutions and strengthening bilateral coordination efforts. OCHA shared copies of the 2023 Iraq Humanitarian Transition Overview (HTO).



Kirkuk, 28 May 2023 - The head of OCHA Country Office in Iraq, Ms. **Monique Maani**, met in Kirkuk today with the Acting Governor of Kirkuk, **H.E. Rakan Al-Jubouri**, and briefed him on the humanitarian transition. Ms. Maani thanked him for the support on the humanitarian file and stressed continued cooperation with the local authorities in the interest of IDPs and returnees in the Governorate.



Duhok, 12 June 2023 - Today, UNFPA representative met with the esteemed Governor of Duhok, **Dr Ali Tatar** and had a fruitful discussion, where UNFPA reiterated its unwavering commitment to addressing residual humanitarian issues in the Governorate to leave no one behind. Notably, **Mr Nestor Owomuhangi**, representing the UNFPA, called upon the Governor to extend his invaluable support for the forthcoming population census in Iraq.

Preparations for the Global Refugee Forum are underway in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 June 2023 - Preparations for the Global Refugee Forum are underway in Iraq. The Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kurdistan Regional Government and UNHCR Iraq, with key partners, organized a two-day workshop to find solutions for refugees and stateless persons. Together let's turn promises into impactful actions and make a difference in the world.



UNHCR Iraq on World Refugee Day - 20 June 2023

Baghdad, 20 June 2023 – UNHCR is celebrating #WorldRefugeeDay across Iraq #WithRefugees. With artwork made by refugees, music, play by refugee children and students sharing stories of hope. Today and every day, let's make Refugees feel welcome and included.



89 families returned to their homes in Sinjar

Sinjar, 22 June 2023 - Welcome back home!

Last week after many years of being displaced, 89 families returned to their homes in Sinjar.

IOM Iraq is thrilled to support their voluntary, safe and dignified return, and is already on the ground offering support for the next steps.

In a pleasant sign, neighbors and friends and relatives have arranged to offer snuggles and sweets to the returnees, which marked a new page of

hope and renovation. This return was supported by the U.S.

Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.



WFP Iraq Representative and the Ambassador of France to Iraq signed a partnership agreement

Baghdad, 22 June 2023 - At the World Food Programme (WFP) offices in Baghdad today, WFP Iraq Representative, Ally-Raza Qureshi, and the Ambassador of France to Iraq, Eric Chevallier, signed a partnership agreement. WFP Iraq is grateful for the generous donation made by the Government of France in support of the Muthana women who are most in need of assistance.



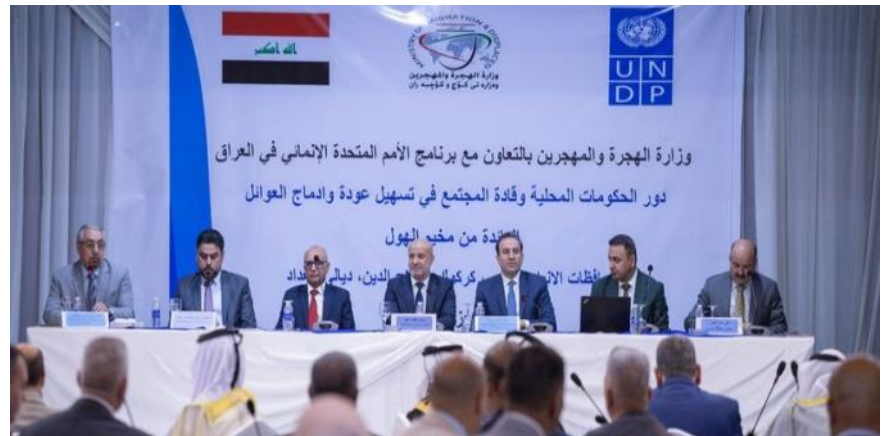
Reintegration

UNDP and Ministry of Migration and Displaced encourage community reintegration in six governorates

Baghdad, 08 June 2023 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Migration and Displaced have hosted a series of meetings this week for over 200 local authorities and community leaders from Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates to encourage the sustainable community reintegration of displaced families.

Supporting the Government of Iraq's priority to facilitate the return of Iraqi families from Al-Hol camp in north-east Syria to Al-Jada'a One Rehabilitation Center in Ninewa Governorate and areas of return, UNDP is implementing related projects in governorates liberated from ISIL. Supporting community acceptance is a key part of UNDP's comprehensive approach to reintegration, which includes housing and infrastructure rehabilitation, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and livelihoods training and opportunities.

During three separate meetings held from 5-7 June, local authorities and community leaders from the six



governorates reviewed the situation of returning families to their areas, exchanged views to enhance the return process, and agreed on key approaches to support community acceptance. Discussion was encouraged by Ms. Evan Jabro Yacoub, Minister of Migration and Displaced and Mr. Zidan Khalaf Obaid, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq on Human Rights, alongside governors and local government representatives.

“Ensuring the sustainable

reintegration of displaced Iraqi families, including those being repatriated from Al Hol camp, who have been cleared through security procedures, is a priority for UNDP. Meetings such as these to foster community receptivity for reintegration ensure that the government, local community leaders, and the UN are working as one,” states UNDP Resident Representative, Auke Lootsma.

“These workshops promote peace and national reconciliation and encourage the interventions necessary from tribal leaders to rehabilitate affected areas in Iraq. The MOMD will work with UNDP with a unified approach to implement the ministry's plan according to the Government of Iraq's priorities,” says Ms. Evan Jabro Yacoub, Minister of Migration and Displaced.

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.



U.S. Ambassador Alina Romanowski visited the Al-Qadisiyah Electrical Substation in Ramadi City

Ramadi, 30 April 2023 - U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ms. Alina Romanowski, visited the Al-Qadisiyah Electrical Substation in Ramadi City. The substation was heavily damaged during the conflict with ISIS, resulting in a limited power supply to neighboring communities. The substation was fully rehabilitated with support from USAID Iraq and implemented by UNDP Iraq, ensuring uninterrupted power to more than 150 thousands of nearby residents and businesses.



UNDP partners with private sector companies in Karbala to boost youth employment

Karbala, 03 May 2023 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has signed a Statement of Intent with eight private sector companies in Karbala during the second phase of a Job Matching Project aimed at curbing youth unemployment in the governorate.

The Job Matching Project is designed to equip young individuals with the skills and knowledge that are required for today's labor market. The initiative empowers youth to kick-start their own ventures or secure job opportunities in private sector firms, supporting the Government of Iraq's priority to address unemployment and create work opportunities for young women and men. Additionally, the project seeks to foster the active engagement of the private sector in driving social development in Iraq toward economic empowerment and modern community solutions.

"This partnership with the private sector in Iraq is essential due to the significant role of these companies in developing innovative solutions to tackle development challenges. Together with the private sector, we can bring about transformative change by reducing the unemployment rate in Iraq through securing job



opportunities," says UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Auke Lootsma.

"This Job Matching Project is an important example of innovative collaboration with the private sector. The government is grateful to UNDP for facilitating this partnership, which promises to create new avenues for economic growth and empowerment for the youth in the region," says Governor of Karbala Nsaif Jassim Al-Khattabi.

The impact of the Job Matching Project in Karbala has been implemented in two phases, with over 100 previously unemployed youth securing sustainable job opportunities with private sector companies. UNDP's Economic Diversification Programme supports the strengthening of business

ecosystems, especially in high-impact labor-intensive economic sectors and provides support to the government of Iraq to implement its private sector development strategies.

UNDP would like to thank the eight private sector partners for their commitment to signing the Statement of Intent: Asiacell, Al-Qamar for Printing and Marketing Limited Company, Al-Hathaf General Contracting Limited Company, Al-Serraj Al-Munir for Real Estate, Agricultural and Industrial Investments Limited Company, Bareeq Al-Sabika Company for General Contracting, Ltd, Emaar Albilad Intl. Company, Karbala International Group, and Zain Iraq Telecommunications Company.

8 local business owners saw their shops rehabilitated with IOM support

Anbar, 07 May 2023 - In Amiriyat Al Fallujah district, Anbar Governorate, 8 local business owners saw their shops rehabilitated with IOM support. Located in the main market, the shops now feature modern, well-designed and well-equipped facilities. By hiring local youth to implement the rehab process,

this initiative created new jobs in the area, while also providing much-needed public services and infrastructure support to bolster economic growth in the region.

This project was made possible with support from the Government of Germany through KfW.



Sweden contributes additional US\$ 1.9 million to support stabilization in Iraq



Baghdad, 04 May 2023 – The Government of Sweden has contributed an additional SEK 20 million (US\$ 1.9 million) to UNDP’s flagship programme, the Funding Facility for Stabilization. Today, a signing ceremony with Her Excellency Ms. Jessica Svårdström, the Ambassador of Sweden to Iraq, and UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq Auke Lootsma formalized this generous contribution. Since the establishment of the Facility in 2015, the Government of Sweden has contributed SEK 434 million (US\$ 42 million) to stabilization efforts in Iraq. With this additional funding, UNDP

will be able to continue rehabilitating critical infrastructure and services damaged during the conflict with ISIL and setting the stage for community-based reintegration.

“The Government of the Kingdom of Sweden has been a valuable partner to UNDP. This new contribution comes at a critical time. While a lot of progress has been made, our work is far from over,” says UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Auke Lootsma.

“We thank the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden for its unwavering commitment to making a lasting impact in the lives of the people of Iraq.

Working together, we can ensure that gains made in previous years are sustained and further built upon,” he adds.

“Sweden has a close bilateral relationship with Iraq. The fact that 3% of the Swedish population has its origins in Iraq has created strong people-to-people contacts between our countries. Sweden will continue to support a stable and secure Iraq, including through our bilateral development cooperation,” says Swedish Ambassador to Iraq, Her Excellency Ms. Jessica Svårdström.

“Sweden is proud to be a part of stabilization efforts in Iraq and remains committed to contribute to this collaborative work to build a better future for the people displaced and affected by the ISIL conflict,” she adds. As of April 2023, UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization has completed more than 3,500 projects across the five liberated governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah Al-Din. These projects, which include the rehabilitation of schools, hospitals, water systems, electricity networks, and homes, and the creation of short-term employment, have improved the lives of over 8.3 million Iraqis and facilitated the return of 4.9 million people displaced by the ISIL conflict.

UN-Habitat marks Europe Day and its partnership with EU

Baghdad, 09 May 2023 - Today, UN-Habitat is celebrating the close partnership between the European Union and UN-Habitat in building a safe and welcoming school environment for children in Iraq. Every child has the right to access quality education.

Through Support for Urban Recovery and peacebuilding in the Western Ninewa programme under EU MADAD Fund, UN-Habitat rehabilitated Al Mahaba Mixed Primary School in Tel Qasab, Sinjar District. As a part of the Europe Day celebration, students are painting the school’s walls to express their happiness to have access to quality education in a cheerful space.

In Western Ninewa, UN-Habitat is handing over core housing units to a number of vulnerable families in Tel Uzair, Ba’aj District. This momentous achievement demonstrates the positive impact that we can make when we work together. UN-Habitat is committed to continuing its efforts to build resilient, sustainable communities in Iraq and beyond, and we’re grateful for the EU MADAD fund in making it all possible.

UN-Habitat, with the collaboration of the community, youth center, and the municipality, planted trees to combat desertification in Tel Uzair, Ba’aj District. We believe that sustainable urbanization is crucial for creating a more resilient and equitable future for all. Through Support for Urban Recovery and Peacebuilding in Western Ninewa programme under EU MADAD fund, UN-Habitat is working to build a greener, more livable environment for returnees in Iraq.

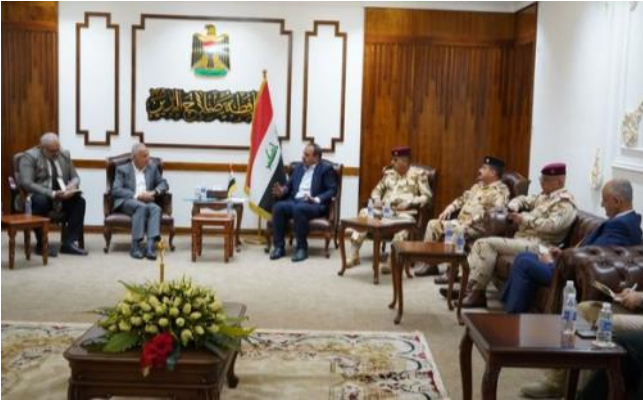
On #EuropeDay2023, UN-Habitat has celebrated the values and strong ties that unite Iraq and the European Union. In cooperation with Mosul Municipality, and

under the watchful eye of the park management team, more than 30 children enjoyed a beautiful sunny day in Al-Yarmouk park, playing and cycling along the bicycle track. The initiative was organized by Mosul-based Al-Jud orphan organization who supports orphan children.

In Basra, as part of the Europe Day celebration, UN-Habitat, in collaboration with Shatt Al-Arab District and the Jurf el Malah community, organized a football match for young people on the newly constructed football pitch, which is part of a larger project to create a public park in the neighborhood. We believe that public spaces are essential for building stronger community bonds and promoting social cohesion.

Through our work in Jurf el Malah, we’re creating opportunities for young people and families to come together, play, and have fun in a safe and welcoming environment. Everyone deserves access to public spaces and parks, which can improve physical and mental health and promote social interaction and community engagement.





Salah Al-Din, 9 May 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai**, visited Salah Al-Din today. During the visit, he met with **Governor Ismail Khudair Al-Halloub** to discuss the transition from humanitarian response towards sustainable durable solutions and development and the remaining needs of the people of Salah al-Din. The DSRSG/RC/HC also held a consultation meeting to address how government, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations can work together to better respond to protracted displacement.



Baghdad, 10 May 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai**, met with Minister of Finance, **Ms. Taif Sami**. Key discussion points focused on aid coordination and cooperation with the Government of Iraq and the United Nations. The DSRSG/RC/HC reaffirmed the UN's commitment to support Iraq's development aspirations.

Photo courtesy of the Iraq Ministry of Finance.

Norwegian Ambassador visits Salah al-Din to see UNDP's work on stabilization and social cohesion

Salah al-Din, 10 May 2023 - Norwegian Ambassador to Iraq and Jordan, His Excellency Mr. Espen Lindbæck, and Chargé d'Affaires of the Norwegian Embassy in Iraq, Mr. Erik B. Husem, today visited Salah al-Din to see UNDP's work on stabilization and social cohesion.

Their visit included a tour of the Tikrit Teaching Hospital and Vocational Training Centre, which were rehabilitated by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization. Both damaged extensively during ISIL, these critical facilities are now open and serving the people of Salah al-Din.

Tikrit Teaching Hospital, Salah al-Din's largest hospital, serves more than 1.5 million people, while the Vocational Training Centre provides skills training to over 2,500 people every year.

In the afternoon, Ambassador Lindbæck and Mr. Husem met with youth, women, media, and tribal and religious leaders from Baiji and



discussed social cohesion and community reintegration of displaced families in the area.

During the visit, they also met with Salah al-Din Governor Mr. Ismail Khudair Halloub, Salah al-Din Health Directorate General Dr. Raed Ibrahim Hamad, Vocational Training Centre Manager Head Ms. Vivian Ibrahim, and Baiji Mayor Mr. Mohamed Mahmood.

The Government of Norway funded the

rehabilitation of the Surgical and Emergency Department, CT scan room, blood centre laboratories, and Cardiac Unit of Tikrit Teaching Hospital, as well as the medical equipment and furniture in the hospital's main building. In addition, Norway funded the equipment students at the Vocational Training Centre use to learn sewing, hairdressing, baking and food processing, electrical work, carpentry, welding, and information technology.

KfW Development Bank delegation visits Mosul

Mosul, 11 May 2023 - This week, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Auke Lootsma and Mosul University President and Chancellor Dr. Kossay Kamalaldeen Al-Ahmady welcomed and toured Mr. Stephan Opitz, a member of the Management Committee of KfW Development Bank, around the campus.

Mr. Opitz visited the University's Theatre Hall, Central Library, Soil and Concrete Laboratories, and President's

Building, all rehabilitated through the generous support of the Federal Republic of Germany provided through KfW Development Bank. During the visit, he also met faculty and staff and UNDP engineers and discussed with them the impact of the rehabilitation of Mosul University on Iraq's education system. Through Germany's support, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization has completed 33 projects at Mosul University, providing a safe

and conducive learning environment for many young Iraqis.

After the Mosul University tour, Mr. Opitz visited the Oncology Hospital at Al-Shifaa Complex, which is being rehabilitated by UNDP through funding from the Federal Republic of Germany provided through KfW. Once opened, this hospital is expected to serve more than 40,000 patients yearly and have 200 medical staff.

While in West Mosul, Mr. Opitz also

KfW Development Bank delegation visits Mosul *(continued)*



had a chance to visit UNDP's housing projects in Qatheb al-Ban neighborhood. So far, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization has completed

over 12,400 homes, of which 9,887 were funded by Germany. More than 111,000 people have returned through these housing projects.

"Visiting Baharka camp for the first time, I am impressed by the good cooperation between government, UNICEF and local NGOs to provide important and crucial psychosocial services for the children in the camp", said Mr. Opitz during his visit to Baharka IDP camp, Iraq, where children and women are benefiting from Health and Child Protection services being funded by Germany, through KfW Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ).

KfW is a long-time donor for UNICEF and is committed to the well-being of vulnerable children around the world.

Japan renews commitment to support partner countries with funding from the Japanese supplementary budget

Vienna, Austria, 14 May 2023 – A kick-off event at the Vienna International Centre has marked the start of five new projects implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, the State of Palestine and Ukraine. With funding of US\$ 3 million from the Japanese supplementary budget, these projects seek to respond to partner countries' urgent needs for support on their path to inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

Since UNIDO's inception, Japan has been a vital supporter. Over the recent period 2017 to 2022, Japan was the largest governmental funding partner of UNIDO, with voluntary contributions of US\$ 86.8 million.

At the kick-off event, Ambassador Takeshi Hikihara, Permanent Representative of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna, Gerd Müller, Director General of UNIDO, and representatives from partner countries, reaffirmed their commitment to tripartite cooperation to generate the maximum impact for communities most in need.

In his remarks, Ambassador Hikihara

commended UNIDO's many tangible results in partner countries. He said "I thank all project managers, officers and consultants for their dedicated work, expertise and ingenuity. I strongly trust in the successful implementation of these projects. We appreciate UNIDO's ability to facilitate a dynamic process of transfer of technologies and know-how between the partner countries, us as a donor, and our respective private sectors".

UNIDO's Director General remarked, "We are all experiencing a number of connected crises: wars, climate change impacts, inflation and rising inequality,

recovering from the COVID pandemic. And as always, such crises hit the poorest of the poor the hardest. To deal with them, we need above all international solidarity, and to get back to track on reaching the Sustainable Development Goals," adding "I sincerely thank Japan for our long, close partnership and firm commitment to support partner countries through UNIDO's expertise."

In Iraq, UNIDO will apply its expertise in food processing industries through a project to address the lack of livelihoods, employment and food insecurity in two Governorates.



UN-Habitat handed over the Al Ahrar Mixed Primary School to school principals

Baghdad, 14 May 2023 - As a result of climate change and conflict, the need for a holistic response to upgrading underserved neighborhoods in Iraq is becoming clear.

With generous funding from the EU and as part of UN-Habitat efforts to improve the living conditions of

vulnerable communities in these neighborhoods, UN-Habitat handed over the Al Ahrar Mixed Primary School to school principals upon completing rehabilitation and expansion work. The school headmaster stated this project not only motivated teachers and students to be

more attentive but also that the families of students were delighted to have a secondary school in the neighborhood since some families could not afford to send their children to schools in other neighborhoods.



Youth policy dialogue to improve Iraq's business ecosystem

Baghdad, 17 May 2023 – (ITC News) The International Trade Centre sets forth recommendations for a conducive business environment in which young entrepreneurs can thrive, saying structural changes are needed.

Youth entrepreneurs working in agriculture, business support organizations including start-up incubators, international organizations and government representatives convened in Baghdad to encourage informed policymaking for a stronger entrepreneurship ecosystem in Iraq.

The Youth Policy Dialogue discussed the findings of the Youth Barometer Report published by the International Trade Centre last year, which analysed youth perspectives to employment and entrepreneurship in Iraq. In addition, case studies of young entrepreneurs helped identify policy priorities and actions to address the challenges that young entrepreneurs face when setting up a business.

The participants developed recommendations for improving access to finance, market access, business registration, education and collaboration between the public and private sector. More concretely, they focused on opening bank accounts, cheaper banking services, lower loan interest rates, as well as a streamlining



offline and online business registration of small businesses in Iraqi governorates, and regular exchanges on platforms used by all ecosystem stakeholders.

These aspects will be presented and discussed in further detail in the second edition of the Youth Barometer Report, to be published later this year.

The Youth Policy Dialogue was organized under the International Trade Centre's "Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq" (SAAVI) project, funded by the European Union.

About SAAVI

The "Strengthening the agriculture and

agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq" (or SAAVI) project 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 is part of the Agri-food Business Development Programme, funded by the European Union (EU).

Over 2500 people in Heet can now enjoy safe drinking water

Heet, 25 May 2023 - Over 2500 people in Heet can now enjoy safe drinking water, after UNDP rehabilitated Al-Somoud Water Complex in Anbar, improving the quality of water that goes to homes and farms.

Destroyed during ISIL, the water complex was out of service for seven years. People in the area relied on a water pump connected directly to the

river without any filtration. With this new pipeline and facilities, farmers can now plant more crops, the water complex is able to reach more people and serve a wider area.

This project was implemented by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization with support from Norway in Iraq.



UNDP has rehabilitated 32 water treatment projects in Salah Al-Din, providing reliable, safe water to 1,100,000 residents

Salah al-Din, 23 May 2023 - Today, more than 40,000 people in 15 sub-districts of central Baiji, Salah al-Din can access safe drinking water.

UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization with funding from the Government of Iraq installed a new water pipeline network in the area, to improve the drinking water supply and enable IDPs to return home.

Until now, UNDP has rehabilitated 32 water treatment projects in Salah Al-Din, providing reliable, safe water to 1,100,000 residents.



UNIDO empowers Iraqi Officials through comprehensive training on food safety and hygiene to address food insecurity

Erbil, 27 May 2023 - The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has successfully concluded the first of two extensive training programs on food safety and hygiene as part of the Japanese-funded project, "Emergency livelihood support to mitigate the food insecurity crisis among vulnerable people in Iraq." Government officials from the ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Industry in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) underwent a rigorous training session from May 13 to 18, 2023.

The comprehensive training course aimed to strengthen the understanding and skills of government officials, providing them with the tools and knowledge required to enhance food safety, hygiene, and quality. By familiarizing participants with the highest food safety standards and ministry guidelines, the training aimed to equip them to provide extension services and share best practices with food service establishments, facilitating greater compliance with industry regulations.

During the six-day sessions, participants delved into various aspects of food handling, processing, storage, and contamination. Esteemed food safety experts from the Quality Control Department under the Ministry of Industry led the training, imparting in-depth knowledge on measures, tools, and regulations for the safe handling of food.

Khalis Muhmamed, a participant of the training, expressed his satisfaction

with the program's outcomes, stating, "we now possess a deeper understanding and the necessary skills to conduct food safety checks. Equipped with this knowledge, we can guide food manufacturing workers in enhancing their food safety practices, thereby fostering growth within their businesses."

Recognizing the pivotal role of food safety in sustainable development, Muhmamed added, "Food safety plays a crucial role in agricultural development and food security, forming the foundation for long-term, sustainable growth."

The training also emphasized the significance of food safety in safeguarding public health. Arkhawan Ibrahim, another participant, highlighted the program's focus on the risks associated with food processing, stating, "The training shed light on quality assurance and enhancement measures, addressing key determinants of human health."

Acknowledging the shared

responsibility in ensuring food safety, Ibrahim emphasized the collective effort required from all members of the food supply chain and regulatory authorities to detect malpractices and hazards.

Armed with their newfound knowledge and skills, the participants are now equipped to provide food enterprises with expert guidance on food safety practices, ensuring compliance with existing regulations. Establishing consumer trust in the quality and safety of local food products is essential for fostering economic growth within the food industry and generating increased employment opportunities.

The UNIDO-led training program marks a significant milestone in enhancing food safety standards and addressing the food insecurity crisis in Iraq. By equipping government officials with the necessary expertise, the project aims to promote sustainable development, agricultural growth, and improved food security across the country.



Government of Iraq and UN in Iraq convene UNSDCF 2020-2024 first Joint Steering Committee meeting

Baghdad, 28 May 2023 - The first Joint Steering Committee (JSC) meeting of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020-2024 (UNSDCF) took place today at the Ministry of Planning. Chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning, the meeting brought together more than 30 UN and senior government officials to discuss the progress of the UNSDCF and foster close collaboration for the remaining two years of UNSDCF, as well as for the development of the roadmap for the next programming cycle.

The UNSDCF aligns with Iraq's national priorities, and the establishment of the JSC as the overarching governing body dedicated to implementing the UNSDCF in Iraq was a significant outcome of the meeting. During the session, participants endorsed the 2022 Annual Results Report, outcome of the mid-term review of the Cooperation Framework and agreed on the appointment of government co-chairs to join the five Priority Working Groups. Meeting participants also noted the funding gap for implementing the remaining activities of the Cooperation Framework and agreed to collaborate to

mobilize resources including from the government.

Highlighting the vital partnership between the Government and the UN System, the Minister of Planning acknowledged the significant contributions of the UN in terms of policy support, technical expertise, and resources to advance national development priorities. He stressed the importance of enhancing government ownership and designing a clear strategic cooperation framework that incorporates inputs from key stakeholders, ensuring alignment with national strategic priorities.

Echoing this sentiment, the UN

Government of Iraq and UN in Iraq convene UNSDCF 2020-2024 first Joint Steering Committee meeting *(continued)*

Resident Coordinator emphasized that "The JSC serves as the high-level accountability forum between the UN and the Government of Iraq for the Cooperation Framework. It plays a pivotal role in providing strategic direction, oversight, and coordination for the UN's programmatic and operational interventions in Iraq's development sector." In his closing remarks, he underscored the Committee's commitment to monitoring the progress made in implementing the Cooperation Framework, which aims to propel Iraq's development trajectory. He emphasized the critical role of government engagement and leadership in aligning national priorities with the Cooperation Framework, as well as in regularly monitoring its implementation and results.



The JSC meeting marked a significant milestone in Iraq's pursuit of sustainable development, demonstrating the commitment of both the Government and the UN System to work collaboratively for the betterment

of the country. Through ongoing collaboration and effective implementation of the UNSDCF, Iraq aims to achieve its developmental goals and propel itself toward a prosperous future.

Water complex rehabilitated by UNDP and USAID provides safe drinking water for over 30,000 people in Basra



Basra, 28 May 2023 – Today, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Government of Iraq inaugurated the Al-Hussein water complex, bringing clean, potable water to more than 30,000 people in Hay Al-Hussein subdistrict and helping to ease the water crisis in Basra Governorate. Built in 1977, the Al-Hussein water complex provided untreated water from the R-Zero station to homes, nearby industries, and military bases for over 40 years. Despite increasing water demand, the Al-Hussein water complex stopped operating three years ago because of the facility's outdated and damaged equipment. Its closure

severely affected the water supply in the sub-district and surrounding areas, leading to health concerns for residents as well as negative impacts for local businesses and agricultural production. Rehabilitated by UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP) funded by USAID, the Al-Hussein water complex is now fully operational with upgraded water pumps and treatment equipment to ensure the water that goes to homes, schools, and other establishments is safe for human consumption. Moreover, at least 45 people have resumed work upon the water treatment plant's reopening. "Access to clean water is one of the most pressing challenges Iraq faces.

The scarcity of water and outdated infrastructure affects the health and well-being of millions of Iraqis and hampers the country's development. The reopening of the Al-Hussein water complex is a step forward to build capacity and promote the importance of safe water and sanitation for people's health," says UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq Auke Lootsma, speaking at the inauguration ceremony. "UNDP remains committed to working with our steadfast partner, USAID, to support Iraq and help ensure that its people have access to critical services and opportunities that enable them to lead healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives," he adds.

"Improving Iraq's water infrastructure and management of this precious resource directly contributes to the country's stability and prosperity," United States Ambassador to Iraq, Her Excellency Alina L. Romanowski said. "The United States, through USAID, is proud to be working with UNDP to rehabilitate the Al-Hussein water complex, which is helping improve the lives of thousands of local residents." Since 2019, UNDP's Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme, with support from USAID, has been rehabilitating critical water treatment plants in Basra. So far, nine water treatment plants in Shatt al-Arab, Al-Qurna and Abi al-Khaseeb districts have been completed, serving 149,000 people.

UNDP has engaged three technical experts to support the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in implementing vital reforms

Baghdad, 25 May 2023 - UNDP has engaged three technical experts to support the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in implementing vital reforms. Areas of focus include labor market observatory, economic empowerment, and business incubation.

Our Funding Facility for Economic Reform Project is supported generously by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and will enable the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to enhance technical capacities and ensure a transformative reform process.



Together with the Government of Iraq, UNDP strives to enhance the efficiency of Iraq's microfinance industry

Baghdad, 26 May 2023 - Together with the Government of Iraq, UNDP strives to enhance the efficiency of Iraq's microfinance industry.

UNDP Iraq held a comprehensive meeting with key stakeholders including the Central Bank of Iraq, Council of Ministers General Secretariat, Chamber of Commerce in Baghdad, microfinancing institutions, and other relevant organizations, with

generous funding from USAID.

The meeting addressed the role of microfinancing in Iraq's economic development, reducing youth unemployment, and digital transformation, including the transition to electronic payment.

Through understanding challenges faced by microfinancing institutions, we can work together to strengthen their contribution to the local economy.



Confluences

Erbil, 29 May 2023 - The UN-Habitat Iraq team, led by the Head of Kurdistan Region of Iraq Office, Mr. Ryosuke Teraoka, was warmly received by the Chief Executive Officer of Toyota Iraq, Mr. Yutaka Ezaki, and his management team. The meeting provided recognition of common points between the actions of both in the country, particularly in significant aspects of the development of people and territories in different regions of Iraq within SDGs framework.

Issues pertaining to the recovery and reception of Internal Displacement People (IDP), such as housing, employability, sustainable

development, conscientious management of natural resources, green public spaces, and women's empowerment in communities are examples that draw us closer.

Discovering initiatives that share the same mission as ours—to construct inclusive, secure, resilient, and sustainable cities and communities—is always a delightful surprise.

We eagerly anticipate future meetings, where we can further explore shared goals, identify more points of convergence, and continue contributing to the urban and human development of Iraq.



Empowering rural communities toward resilience in Iraq

Salah al-Din, 29 May 2023 - Salah al-Din Governorate lies in the center of Iraq, north of Baghdad, with a significant portion of residents engaged in agricultural activities. Radasa, 43, was born and raised in the rural area of Al Shirqaat, Salah al-Din. She is one of 30 beneficiaries who received both

livelihoods and psychosocial support from UNDP and one of a handful of women who chose to receive training and support with cattle keeping and breeding.

Radasa completed the sixth level of primary school before marrying. After the birth of her ten children, including

seven daughters and three sons, her husband succumbed to renal failure. Prior to his sickness, her husband was a contracted security guard.

"I wanted to be a teacher, but I got married," she explains. "Now, I am the sole provider for my family."

To provide for her children, Radasa

Empowering rural communities toward resilience in Iraq (continued)



works long hours on a nearby farm. “I go at 4am to the farm to work and return home at 11pm. We make 6,000 Iraqi dinar per day trimming the fields and planting crops like okra (about \$4 USD).” Following Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) sessions and vocational training, Radasa received one cow and a small ox. She plans to use the cow to produce milk for her family and to sell to community members. Despite the hard labor, Radasa is determined to set an example for other working women. “I advise every woman to work on a farm, in a factory, anywhere she can to support her family. I advise them to continue to try to succeed in life,” Through training sessions and meetings held by local partner

Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development (FUAD), Radasa and other women beneficiaries were brought together. “All of these women are my friends. We advise each other and encourage each other.” As a part of the project, and in the community in general, families who are perceived to affiliated with ISIL are receiving support to reintegrate in Al Shirqaat. Radasa has no qualms in welcoming these families as her neighbors. “I have no problem with the perceived ISIL-affiliated families returning. They don’t hurt me. I have no issue with them, and they have no issue with me.” Community acceptance for reintegration is a key component of UNDP’s work across the liberated governorates of Anbar, Ninewa, and

Salah al-Din. Providing durable solutions including livelihood training and opportunities and MHPSS is critical to ensure resilience and a strong social fabric among communities. For breadwinners like Radasa, there is no option but to find ways to provide and take advantage of every possible opportunity. “I have to be strong,” says Radasa. “I have daughters.” “I want my boys to be teachers or government officers. I want my girls to be doctors. They watch me constantly. I work hard to shield them from everything I am going through.” Occupied by ISIL from 2014 to 2016, before liberation, many families from Al Shirqaat District in Salah al-Din fled their homes and became displaced. During the struggle to re-claim the area, destruction left vital infrastructure damaged, increasing vulnerability and social distress. To ensure sustainable solutions for community resiliency, UNDP and local partner FUAD have provided MHPSS and vocational training on cattle and sheep breeding, shopkeeping, and baking for community members. Following the training, small grants were awarded to participants to assist with developing their businesses. Support for Social Cohesion in Iraq is a five-year programme launched in January 2020 to promote stronger, peaceful and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.

The Diyala Youth for Peace Group, supported by UNDP and the Government of Denmark, has restored a sports facility in Baquba

Baquba, 31 May 2023 - An inclusive society welcomes people of all abilities, ensuring no one is left behind. The Diyala Youth for Peace Group, supported by UNDP and the Government of Denmark, has restored a sports facility in Baquba, Diyala Governorate, for people of determination.



UNDP inaugurated Khor Al-Zubair Water Complex in Basra

Basra, 01 June 2023 - UNDP inaugurated Khor Al-Zubair Water Complex in Basra which was rehabilitated by UNDP and UNICEF, with the support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The water complex receives untreated water, processes it and pumps clean drinking water to around 100,000 residents of Al- Zubair, Safwan, and Um Qasr sub-districts.



Starting trade at the new livestock market in Telafar

Telafar, 04 June 2023 - After the inauguration of the new livestock market on 26 March 2023 and official handing over to Telafar Municipality, the market is now fully operational and open for business.

Considered as one of the largest markets in western Nineveh region, it attracts up to 1000 traders and customers from the districts of Rabia, Zummar, AlShamal, Qairouan, and Sinjar during the week, and some 20,000 people on Fridays.

The new market facility, funded by the European Union and implemented by UN-Habitat, measures 8,400 sqm and offers nearly 2,000 sqm of covered areas for trading sheep and cows, aside from



20 shops, an admin office, guard rooms, a small veterinary clinic, feeders,

drinking cans, and large trash containers.

Building boats and dreams on the shores of the Tigris and Euphrates

Thi-Qar, 05 June 2023 - Salam's craft of boat-making is not merely a livelihood; it's a vibrant art form passed down through the generations by his Sumerian ancestors. It requires design, construction, and a dash of inventive creativity.

Residing in Chibayish district of Thi-Qar Governorate in southern Iraq, Salam lives a humble life. A loving husband and father to five children, his fascination with boat construction was sparked in his early years. As a child, he followed his father like a devoted apprentice, absorbing every step of the boat-building process in the family workshop, from finding the right piece, right down to the finishing steps.

Salam cherishes these memories, recalling the delight of watching boats taking shape in his hands and the proud, radiant smile that filled his father's face with each completed project.

"With my father's passing in 2007," Salam shares with us, "I inherited the workshop, relying on my experience in the boat-building industry. I decided to bring new life into the business with fresh designs and innovative styles to attract a wider customer base". However, over the past decade, Iraq has been adversely affected by the impact of climate change: droughts, water scarcity and land degradation have been especially hard in southern Iraq, where Salam lives.

Iraq is the fifth most affected country by climate change. Between 2016-2022, over 73,000 people have been displaced in central and south Iraq due to climate change, with a tenfold increase in 2022 alone, compared to 2021. Many are moving to cities in search of new lives and better jobs.



"Climate change in Iraq led to reduced demand for fishing boats," continues Salam. "My business has shrunk. My boats were used by those who fish in the lakes. Now, fewer people depend on the river. It gets better from time to time when water level rises."

Yet, Salam carried on with dedication and persistence, never contemplating abandoning his craft or venturing into a new profession. Over the years, Salam upgraded his business with IOM's Enterprise Development Fund that supports small and medium enterprises in southern Iraq.

A financial grant enabled him to install a solar energy system, purchase new equipment and machinery. He also trained and hired three additional staff. This expansion helped increase production, enhanced efficiency and reduced operational costs.

"Expanding and upgrading the workshop was essential but financially daunting," Salam recalls. "IOM's support was crucial; we barely managed to finish two boats a week

with an old machine and three workers. Power instability was a major problem. Now, with six workers, we successfully complete four boats per week."

Salam is now considering new plans to market his boats beyond Iraq's borders, with a particular focus on the Gulf countries. "The influx of customer inquiries we're witnessing is indeed promising. It's a substantial accomplishment for us," shares Salam.

The Enterprise Development Fund of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) aims to restore basic economic infrastructure by providing capital to small and medium enterprises in primary and secondary economic sectors that suffer from high demand for manpower, with the aim of enabling these companies to resume expansion operations. By targeting key sectors and providing financing, the EDF encourages the rapid recovery and job creation necessary for the recovery of local economies.

By Rafal Abdulateef, Sarah Ali, IOM Senior Public Information Assistant

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and ILO strengthen collaboration to promote entrepreneurship development in Iraq

Baghdad, 05 June 2023 - (ILO News) The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the ILO will strengthen their collaboration to support business and entrepreneurship development in Iraq, by building the capacities of Ministry staff on one of ILO's flagship business management training programmes - Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB).

Twenty-two trainers from the Ministry will be trained on the package, and certified so they can train hundreds of women and men who are looking to start or expand their own small and medium enterprises.

"In collaboration with the ILO, we will implement Start and Improve Your Business training programme, which will build the capacity of young people in Iraq in their journey to becoming entrepreneurs, paving the way for self-employment. This initiative will contribute to reducing unemployment in the country," said Raed Jabbar, Director General of the Department of Labour and Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

The collaboration falls under ILO's PROSPECTS programme, which is funded by the Government of the Netherlands. Under PROSPECTS, the ILO is supporting thousands of forcibly displaced persons and host community members to access more and better livelihoods and decent job opportunities

through different interventions.

This includes working with partners from public and private institutions to advance business and financial education among thousands of youth and partnering with banks and microfinance institutions to facilitate access to much-needed loans so that young entrepreneurs can develop their businesses.

"We are delighted to strength our collaborations with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs - one of ILO's key partners implementing the Decent Work Country Programme in Iraq which seeks to promote employment opportunities and decent work principles," said ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq Maha Kattaa during a meeting to mark the launch of the new initiative.

"Through the trainers who will be certified to implement the SIYB programme, we aim to ensure the sustainability, continuity and

institutionalization of this package within the Ministry's services, so more young people can be provided with support to develop their own small businesses," added Kattaa.

Following the completion of the initial Training of Trainers (TOT) programme, trainers will begin delivering the training package to young entrepreneurs, under the supervision of ILO's Master Trainer.

The SIYB programme is structured into four separate training packages, which are designed to respond to the progressive stages of business development - Generate Your Business Idea, Start Your Business, Improve Your Business, and Expand Your Business.

Under PROSPECTS in Iraq, over 2,000 women, men, youth, and forcibly displaced populations have benefited from trainings to improve their entrepreneurship and financial knowledge.



Ministry of Trade and WFP complete Public Distribution System digitalization in Najaf

Al-Najaf, 06 June 2023 - The Government of Iraq's Ministry of Trade (MoT), in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), has successfully completed the digitalization process for the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Al-Najaf Governorate, supporting efficiency and improving services for citizens.

This innovative digital solution replaces the outdated paper system, bringing the power of digital technology to optimize the PDS and enhance user experience. This will allow citizens benefiting from the system to conveniently access and update their entitlements and family information using their personal smartphones.

During the inauguration of the digital process and systems at the PDS branch in Al-Najaf, H.E. Mr Atheer Dawood Al-Ghurairy, Iraq's Minister of Trade, emphasized the significance of this digitalization initiative. He highlighted that the process ensures inclusivity,

transparency, and accountability, and will be implemented nationwide, making it a comprehensive reform. Currently, registration for digital cards is underway in the governorates of Muthana, Kirkuk, Duhok, with Baghdad and Basra scheduled for the next phase.

"This strong collaboration between the Iraqi Ministry of Trade and WFP is a testament to our joint commitment to support the people of Iraq, particularly the most vulnerable and food insecure," said WFP Iraq Representative and Country Director Ally-Raza Qureshi. "Through this partnership, we are paving the way for more efficient and meaningful changes in government processes, ultimately helping the people of Iraq."

Reforming Iraq's social protection system is a top priority at the national level, and WFP supports the government to facilitate the provision of PDS rations to eligible people. By harnessing the power of digitalization, WFP is supporting the

necessary reforms to optimize the system.

WFP has actively provided technical support to enhance people's access to social protection, which is a crucial component of WFP's strategic assistance to the Government of Iraq, incorporating best practices for optimization. In addition to supplying IT equipment, WFP has prioritized strengthening the capacity of MoT staff through knowledge transfer training. This empowers them to take a leading role in the reform process, ensuring long-term sustainability and self-reliance.

WFP extends its gratitude to the generous support of its donors, including the European Union, the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Their contributions have made it possible to carry out this reform process successfully.

The Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) has successfully evaluated the maturity of the Iraqi public sector



Baghdad, 7 June 2023 - The Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) has successfully evaluated the maturity of the Iraqi public sector in various e-government domains. Based on global best practices, this assessment has provided valuable insights and recommendations.

The assessment has comprehensively analyzed the current level of digital maturity in 14 categories,

encompassing aspects such as coordination, financing, information security, and accessibility to services.

Through this evaluation, we have gained a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within Iraq's digital landscape.

Digital transformation has become an imperative in the face of the crises. Travel bans, physical closure of schools, workplaces, and businesses, the

increased need for the provision of online services due to the lockdown restrictions imposed (e.g. healthcare services) have prompted countries to turn to digital solutions to be able to operate effectively.

Within this regard, UNDP and Estonia's e-Governance Academy (eGA) in close coordination with the Council of Ministers Secretariat (COMSec) developed a Digital Landscape Assessment tool to support Iraq to assess its digital landscape within the framework of the SDGs and identify digital entry points for acceleration towards the SDGs. The overall aim of the tool is to support Iraq in the development of its digital transformation roadmaps, as well as inform the national development plan and sector strategies.

Full report is available at:

https://www.undp.org/iraq/publications/digital-landscape-assessment-iraq?fbclid=IwAR3Q0-BV38h2XS00z_Qyi9wtRw3pGI7FADzhLt78BLZiOHuWL340cJ3XE#

Canada contributes to financing a project to enhance climate resilience of Southern Iraq's agriculture sector and empower women as change agents

Baghdad, 08 June 2023 - The Government of Canada represented by the Embassy of Canada to Iraq and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq have signed a four-year agreement to implement a project aiming to strengthen the climate resilience of vulnerable agriculture households in the Southern Iraqi Governorates of Babil, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Al Diwaniyah, Thi-Qar and Wasit. The project will empower women as change agents for climate-smart agriculture and address the food-energy-water nexus.

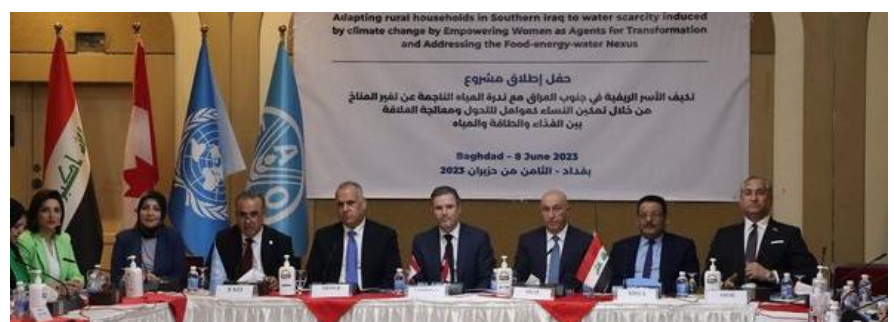
Activities under the agreement include providing technical assistance, strengthening the leadership and active engagement of women farmers in the promotion and adoption of climate smart agriculture, improving agricultural value chain efficiency and rural electrification. Furthermore, the activities will also provide updated digital tools for a more sustainable natural resource management in agriculture.

The project implemented in cooperation and partnership with the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Water

Resources as well as other governmental partners, local governments, agricultural federations and non-governmental organizations, will work on sustainability, awareness of climate change, and the adoption of climate-smart technologies and practices. The project launch ceremony was attended by His Excellency the Minister of Environment, Mr. Nizar Muhammad Saeed, the Assistant Director General and Regional Representative of the Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Dr. Abdul Hakim Al-Waer, the Technical Deputy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Mithaq Al-Khafaji, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Water, Mr. Raed Al-

Jashami, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment, Prof. Dr. Jassim Al-Falahi and the Director General of the Iraqi Women Empowerment Department, Dr. Yusra Karim Mohsen, His Excellency the Canadian Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Gregory Galligan, in addition to representatives of the Ministries of Planning and Health, the targeted governorates, non-governmental organizations, and the representative of the FAO in Iraq, Dr. Salah Al-Haj Hassan and his team.

FAO RNE ADG Dr Abdulhakim El Waer, opened the ceremony saying "The agriculture sector is still a major source of income for the poor and food insecure in this region and is



Canada contributes to financing a project to enhance climate resilience of Southern Iraq's agriculture sector ... (continued)

furthermore the largest source of rural employment in Iraq. A strong and resilient agricultural development is critical to Iraq's vision of a more diversified and private sector led economy with active engagement of women farmers as change agents for climate smart agriculture." He also extended his thanks and appreciation to both the Government of the Republic of Iraq and the Canadian Government. HE. Nizar Muhammad Saeed Minister of Environment commented, "It is a great opportunity to implement this important project aimed at minimizing the impact of climate change and strengthening women's strategic role as change agents for climate action. We expect that the technological innovations introduced by the project will contribute to improving the efficiency of natural resource management. Thank you, the Government of Canada and FAO, for supporting the people of Iraq".

For his part, Dr. Mithaq Al-Khafaji, the Technical Deputy of the Ministry of Agriculture, expressed his appreciation, saying: "This is a very important project that addresses the Water-

Energy-Food Nexus and introduces different innovative approaches and technologies to promote among others Climate Smart Agriculture it through Farmer Fields Schools, and Solar Energy as a tool for enhancing agricultural value chain efficiency and rural electrification. I would like to express sincere appreciation to the Government of Canada represented by H.E the Ambassador for this generous contribution and thank Global Affairs Canada and FAO for making this achievement".

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Water, Mr. Raed Al-Jashami, affirmed the ministry's readiness to support and assist in the implementation, and noted the importance of the timing of this project to face the challenges resulting from climate change.

The Ambassador of Canada to Iraq, H.E. Gregory Galligan stated "Canada is committed to helping Iraq adapt to the impacts of climate change and water scarcity by strengthening the climate resilience of its agriculture sector. Similarly, as a main source of employment for Iraqi women, it is necessary to enhance the role of women

in promoting climate-smart agricultural practices. Through this project, Canada looks forward to working with FAO and the Government of Iraq to improve the climate resilience of vulnerable agriculture households in southern Iraq and supporting women as essential agents of change.

Both, The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment, Dr. Jassim Al-Falahi, and the Director General of the Iraqi Women Empowerment Department, Dr. Yusra Karim Mohsen, stressed the pioneering role of women and civil society in change to meet the challenges resulting from climate changes.

To conclude, The FAO Representative in Iraq Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan extended his thanks and gratitude to the participating governmental partners. He also highlighted the support and partnership with the Canadian government to help adapt to climate change and highly valued the active participation of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations.

UN-Habitat Iraq organized the 7th awareness-raising session on HLP rights and successfully distributed the next batch of Land Occupancy Certificates

Sinjar, 16 June 2023 - With the support of local authorities and community leaders, UN-Habitat Iraq's Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Rights programme organized the 7th awareness-raising session on HLP rights and successfully distributed the next batch of Land Occupancy Certificates under the KOICA-funded project "Promoting Peace and Stability in Iraq by Facilitating Sustainable Returns". At the awareness-raising session, participants were briefed on the importance of HLP rights, and informed on how to access HLP rights claims through UN-Habitat. Land Occupancy Certificates were distributed to 34 households, including 4 female-headed households. To date, we have delivered a total of 925 Certificates.

This project aims to support the displaced population of Sinjar by facilitating their HLP rights claims and improving their living conditions by rehabilitating houses and providing basic services. Due to a history of discriminatory policies and practices,

the Yazidi minority were previously not allowed to register their land rights in Iraq. Made possible through the generous support of KOICA, UN-Habitat's HLP programme allows the Yazidi community's HLP rights to be officially recognised and protected, and landowners obtain Land Occupancy documentation for the first time in

modern history.

Since 2017, UN-Habitat has been mapping Yazidi land rights in Sinjar and has so far registered more than 16,716 claims and issued as many land occupancy certificates to prove HLP rights of displaced persons and returnees, benefiting more than 105,800 beneficiaries.



ILO implements a financial inclusion initiative

Baghdad, 17 June 2023 - The International Labour Organization (ILO) under the ILO PROSPECTS partnership, has been active in supporting entrepreneurial pathways for refugees, IDPs and host community members. Recognizing the challenges entrepreneurs face in their journey to start or grow their businesses, the ILO has been implementing a financial inclusion initiative providing young women and men and small business owners with access to much-needed financial services and trainings in business development and financial education to help them start and develop their own businesses. A key element of the initiative is a partnership with the Central Bank of Iraq and the Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees to facilitate access to affordable financial services for young Internally Displaced Persons and host community members. The initiative has allowed three partner



banks - the Iraqi Middle East Investment Bank, the National Bank of Iraq and Cihan Bank for Islamic Investment – to provide entrepreneurs with loans so they can set up or grow their businesses without asking for onerous guarantee requirements. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Central Bank of Iraq under the “One Trillion Initiative”

leading to a disbursement of loans to Iraqi entrepreneurs through the partner banks using an innovative guarantee scheme and a comprehensive model that responds to the main challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Iraq.

Factsheet is available at: <https://bit.ly/IraqFI>

The transformation of Hawija's industrial zone is a testament to the resilience and determination of its people

Hawija, 18 June 2023 - The transformation of Hawija's industrial zone is a testament to the resilience and determination of its people. Through Employment for Public Works activities and debris management, IOM has been supporting the Hawija Industrial Zone community to pave the road to an easier return home for IDPs. This project was supported by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



UN-Habitat handed over the first 26 rehabilitated houses in Jafriyah Village

Sinjar, 19 June 2023 - On Monday, 19th June, the local authorities and community of Sinjar united in celebration as we handed over the first 26 rehabilitated houses in Jafriyah Village. This significant ceremony represents a major milestone in UN-Habitat Iraq's ongoing mission to provide adequate housing and foster peace and stability by facilitating sustainable returns for internally displaced persons. This most recent achievement was made possible through the generous support of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). With the completion of these houses, displaced families can now begin a new chapter filled with stability and hope.

UN-Habitat Iraq is proud to be one of the first UN Agencies to work in Sinjar, and to coordinate projects targeting the most underserved villages. By engaging in extensive community-based consultations and forging close collaborations with local authorities, we have been able to establish trust and rapport with the beneficiaries, ensuring that these houses meet their most pressing needs. Looking forward, our focus, under the KOICA-funded project titled "Promoting Peace and Stability in Iraq through Facilitating Sustainable Returns," is to continue our efforts in providing returnees with adequate housing, as well as access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene

facilities. By doing so, we strive to ensure lasting stability and offer a renewed sense of hope to the Yazidi community.



From an inhospitable wasteland into an attractive public space



Heet, 21 June 2023 - Introducing Al-Qahira Park in Heet, a remarkable transformation by UN-Habitat Iraq, local authorities, and residents of all

ages. Together, we have turned a abandoned 3,570 square meters into a vibrant oasis. This stunning park now boasts lush

green spaces, an open-air gym, cozy gazebos for families, a convenient leasing shop, and well-maintained public toilets.

Along with European Union (@EUinIraq), great supporter of the program "Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development" since 2019, we are not only revitalizing public and green spaces, but also restoring a sense of normalcy to the city and the lives of its residents, especially in the aftermath of the conflict with ISIL.

With the governance of the park now in the hands of local leaders and the community, we envision a bright future for Al-Qahira Park.

May it thrive and bring joy and harmony to all who visit.

UN-Habitat Iraq prepares handing over of the 50 rehabilitated houses and the Al-Til school to the Solagh Area community in Sinjar District

Sinjar, 26 June 2023 - Before handing over the 50 rehabilitated houses and the Al-Til school to the Solagh Area community in Sinjar District, it is essential to ensure that everything is perfect. The Government of Japan, a great supporter of the project "Recovery Support to Returnees in Iraq to Strengthen Socio-Economic Stabilization, including Improved Food Security," has provided all the necessary support to closely accompany each step of the project.

During our last technical visit to the project locations, we had the opportunity to interact with several families, including the Barakat family, whose houses are currently undergoing rehabilitation. Barakat Khalaf, a 67-year-old man, has been living in a damaged house in Solagh with his

entire family of 18 members for the past six months.

The struggles faced by the Barakat family, as well as the 50 other families, are about to come to an end. They will not only have access to a house but also to clean water, urban infrastructure, a school for their children, and improved food security. All the necessary elements for a safe and sustainable

return will be provided, including the construction of a potable water network and marketplaces in Sinjar City.

UN-Habitat Iraq and the Government of Japan are fully committed to contributing to safe and secure living environments for families like the Barakat's. Through this partnership we aim to enable them to return, rebuild, and restart their lives with hope.



Iraq's Ministry of Water Resources celebrates establishment of a department dedicated to safe management of hydraulic infrastructure thanks to the support of Italy and UNIDO

Baghdad, 26 June 2023 - Funded by the Government of Italy through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has been working together with the Ministry of Water Resources of Iraq to build the Ministry's capacity to safely manage its national hydraulic infrastructure. H.E. Aoun Diab Abdullah, Minister of Water Resources, and Ali Thamer, Director

General of the State Commission of Dams and Reservoirs (SCODAR) welcomed H.E. Mr. Maurizio Greganti, Italy's Ambassador to Iraq, to celebrate the establishment of the National Dam Safety Department (NDS) in Baghdad.

During the welcoming remarks, the Minister noted the importance of the Department in the work of SCODAR in particular, and for the water resources system in general, in light of what Iraq

suffers from major water challenges. He further mentioned

"The various training programs implemented during this project by UNIDO have enhanced the capabilities of employees at dams and barrages in the field of monitoring the work of hydraulic infrastructure and ensuring their safe operation".

As part of a years-long commitment by Italy to sustain the water sector in Iraq and of a broader UNIDO intervention,

Iraq's Ministry of Water Resources celebrates ... (continued)

the NDSO has been established to oversee Iraq's national hydraulic infrastructure. In particular, the NDSO will be central to dam safety and management of water resources, to monitor and to supervise existing national hydraulic infrastructure, to identify and advocate for appropriately funded operation and maintenance of existing facilities, and to advise on future national hydraulic infrastructure investments in Iraq. The Department seeks to leverage the significant expertise of Italy with Iraq's largest dam, the Mosul Dam, to train staff and deliver technical assistance at other hydraulic infrastructure around the country.

The overall project, funded by the Government of Italy through the Italian Development Cooperation Agency is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Water Resources in the form of skills training, dam safety system advisory and technology transfer to establish a robust dam safety programme.

In his comments Ambassador Greganti praised the work of the Italian company Trevi for its work on rehabilitating the Mosul Dam. He said, "The work done by Trevi on the Mosul Dam was an outstanding success - one of the greatest repair intervention on dams ever realized. It was only natural to build upon the skills transferred back then to create a dedicated team at the Ministry that could supervise, operate and advise on water reservoirs in the Country. If the hydraulic system



is a critical infrastructure in every Country, all the more so for Iraq. A proper management of dams and reservoirs will have a huge impact on the livelihood of many Iraqis - and Italy is proud to have contributed."

Iraq's extensive reservoir network is central to the country's socio-economic development strategy. The state's ability to manage water resources for consumption, irrigation and energy production is critical to Iraq's stability and its sustainable development. In particular, hydropower is and will continue to play a key role in Iraq's energy mix as the impacts of climate change are projected to increase.

SCODAR's Director General Ali Thamer added that "The project is fully in line with the Ministry's strategy for water and land resources. It is also in line with the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan,

and it contributed positively and in support of the Ministry and SCODAR orientation towards gender equality, as the project sought to increase the participation of female technical staff in the SCODAR in training related to the project".

The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation stated, "We are proud of a project that is both valuable and durable for its impact on the human capital and the natural resources of Iraq. Thanks to the intervention on the infrastructure, from now on the capacity of water storage in Mosul Dam is significantly increased and through the training provided, the staff will be able, in the long term, to keep the structure safe and properly manage the water resources of a country that is facing the challenges that climate change is imposing globally and especially in this region."

UN ASG/UNDP Assistant Administrator/UNDP Regional Director for Arab States visits Iraq

Iraq, June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari, visited Iraq from 18 to 22 June 2023.

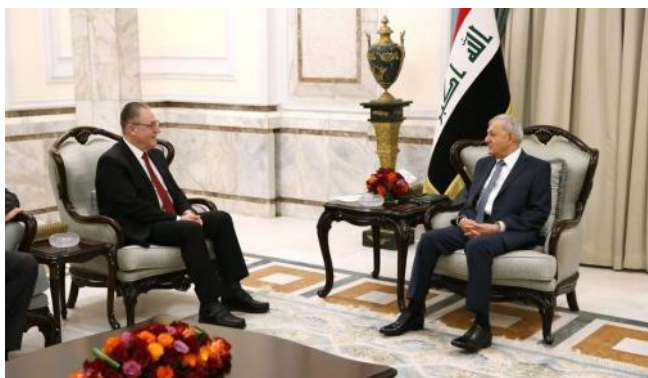
Mr. Al Dardari's visit comes at a

critical time for Iraq. Following stabilization gains, Iraq is currently in the midst of a transition toward sustaining peace through long-term development solutions.

Mr. Al Dardari held discussions on the transition from humanitarian to development support with leading

thinkers, economists, community leaders, and experts in the areas of climate change, environmental policy and financing instruments to support a green transition towards a sustainable economy.

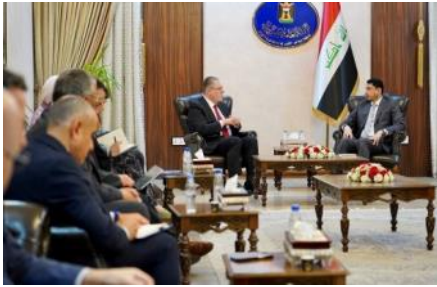
Here are highlights of his visit.



Baghdad, 18 June 2023 - In Iraq today, a key focus is on sustaining peace. The United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, and President of the Republic of Iraq, **H.E. Abdullatif J Rashid**, shared joint priorities including sustainable water management, renewable energy and economic diversification in Iraq.

"Supporting development in Iraq today means addressing climate change, diversifying the economy and bolstering social cohesion. Today, with H.E. President of Iraq, Abdullatif J Rashid, we discussed the country's promising future" - Abdallah Al Dardari, UN ASG and UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States.

UN ASG/UNDP Assistant Administrator/UNDP Regional Director for Arab States visits Iraq (continued)



Baghdad, 18 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, met today in Baghdad with Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers H.E. **Mr. Hamid Al-Ghazi**. They discussed issues including supporting youth employment and prioritizing e-governance in Iraq. Equal access to services is key to ensuring no one is left behind.



Baghdad, 18 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, met today in Baghdad with Chief Justice of Iraq, **Judge Faiq Zidan**. "Combating corruption and enhancing integrity, accountability and the rule of law are key to development".



Baghdad, 18 June 2023 - Country Coordinator at International Labour Organization in Iraq, **Ms. Maha Kattaa**: "In my capacity as the officer in charge of the DSRSG/RC/HC in Iraq, it is a great pleasure to welcome, together with the UN Country Team, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, who is currently visiting Iraq and the region".



Baghdad, 18 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, met today in Baghdad with Central Bank of Iraq Governor H.E. **Mr. Ali Mohsen Ismail Al-Alaq**. They discussed development priorities including diversifying the economy and boosting the private sector. Supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises is vital for the economy to flourish.



Karbala, 19 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, and UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, **Mr. Auke Lootsma**, today visited the **Al-Abbas Holy Shrine** in Karbala Governorate. Every year, millions of people visit Iraq's holy sites. Religious tourism helps to foster community projects and green jobs.



Karbala, 19 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, and UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, **Mr. Auke Lootsma**, met today with the Governor of Karbala, **Mr. Nassif Al-Khattabi**. They discussed support to renewable energy and agriculture. Supporting a green economy is key to sustainability in Iraq.



Karbala, 19 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, and UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, **Mr. Auke Lootsma**, today received a tour of the Al-Saqi renewable energy and agriculture project in Karbala Governorate. The project is supported through the Al-Abbas Holy Shrine to cultivate strategic crops.



Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - At The Station in Baghdad, **youth from Iraq** touched on the role of young people in economic diversification through driving innovative ideas and new technology with United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative, **Mr. Auke Lootsma**.



Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, met today with the Minister of Environment, H.E. **Mr. Nizar Amidi**. The meeting emphasized the importance of joint work and accessing funds for climate action in Iraq.

UN ASG/UNDP Assistant Administrator/UNDP Regional Director for Arab States visits Iraq *(continued)*



Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - Enhancing and supporting implementation of climate action Iraq's vision towards a green economy discussed in round table organized by **Bahr Al-uloom Charity Foundation**, attended by United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, **Mr. Ali Al-Alak**, government officials, Council of Representatives, advisors, private sector and NGOs.



Erbil, 21 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, and UNDP Iraq Resident Representative, **Mr. Auke Lootsma**, at a roundtable with the Invest Kurdistan Board of Investment and Chair **Minister Mohammed Shukri**, opportunities and challenges are discussed to grow a green economy and enhance the business environment for public/private partnerships in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



Erbil, 21 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, and UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, **Mr. Auke Lootsma**, today discussed with the Prime Minister of Kurdistan Region of Iraq, **Mr. Masrour Barzani**, water resource management and good governance. Good governance ensures no one is left behind.



Erbil, 21 June 2023 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, and UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, **Mr. Auke Lootsma**, today discussed with the President of Kurdistan Region of Iraq, **Mr. Nechirvan Barzani**, climate financing and diversifying the economy in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Today, climate change is a defining issue.

UNDP Regional Director for Arab States concludes visit to Iraq with commitment to support a green economy

Baghdad, 23 June 2023 - The United Nations (UN) Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Arab States, **Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari**, has concluded a five-day mission to Iraq with a commitment to support new development priorities in the country. During meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders, **Mr. Al Dardari** prioritized UNDP's support for Iraq's transition to a green economy in Iraq, including water resource management, support to renewable energy, economic diversification, and enhanced public-private sector partnerships.

"Over the past week, I have witnessed the resilience and ambition of the Iraqi people. I want to reiterate UNDP's readiness to support the country as it transitions to a new development phase. With a focus on mitigating climate change and diversifying the economy, we can boost private sector opportunities and youth employment to ensure long-term stability and

stronger, more cohesive communities," **Mr. Al Dardari** emphasized.

During his mission, **Mr. Al Dardari** met with the President of Iraq, the President and Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Chief Justice of Iraq, the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, the Governor of the Iraq Central Bank, the Minister of Environment, and the Minister of the Board of Investment for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Discussions focused on support to a resource-efficient and socially robust green economy.

Visiting Karbala Governorate, **Dr. Al Dardari** toured the Al-Saqi renewable energy and agriculture project supported through the al-Abbas's Holy

Shrine in Karbala Governorate, experiencing how green jobs and community projects are being provided in the area through religious tourism.

Connecting with United Nations partners and international donors, **Mr. Al Dardari** expressed the need for stakeholders in Iraq to work together to set priorities and work toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

During multiple roundtables with a cross-section of youth, civil society, government officials, and investment specialists, **Mr. Al Dardari** heard opportunities and challenges and pledged UNDP's support to institutional development towards a just and prosperous future for the Iraqi people.



A high-level delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture visits FAO Iraq's projects funded by the European Union in Iraq in Ninewa



Ninewa, 09 May 2023 - A high-level delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture, led by Dr. Mithaq Al-

Khafaji, recently visited FAO Iraq's projects funded by the European Union in Iraq in Ninewa, to follow their

progress and impact on beneficiaries.

In Bashiqa, the delegation observed the results of adopting the full package for developing wheat cultivation, which was introduced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture to improve crop productivity in one of the project beneficiaries' fields.

FAO Iraq representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, stated that adopting this package has increased productivity by more than 30% and increased revenue from land use by introducing fodder cultivation, in addition to improving soil quality.

FAO delegation participates in the distribution ceremony of modern agricultural equipment and laboratory devices to farmers and agricultural departments in Ninewa

Nineveh, 09 May 2023 - UN FAO delegation recently participated in the distribution ceremony of modern agricultural equipment and laboratory devices to farmers and agricultural departments in Nineveh, as part of the European Union in Iraq funded project implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and local partners.

In his opening speech, FAO Iraq representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, valued the project's achievements and acknowledged the cooperation between FAO and the ministry. He also emphasized that this support will contribute to the development of major crop and livestock value chain and promote food security. He further pointed out that the success of the project in Ninewa will serve as a model and will be



replicated in other regions of Iraq, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture and the Director of Agriculture in Ninewa praised the efforts made by project team and extension officers under this project. They also thanked the European Union for its funding and support, and stressed

the need to scale up this experience.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates of appreciation to the project team. This was followed by a demonstration of some of the modern equipment and devices, which were distributed to farmers and representatives of the ministry departments.

Farmers and mentors completed the 2nd grafting training session with different plants (watermelon with pumpkin) in Safwan, Basra

Basra, 13 May 2023 - Grafted plants resist soil diseases, have stronger roots and adapt better to adverse conditions (water scarcity, salinity, heavy soils). Grafting is a vital tool for farmers to build resilient agriculture and adapt to climate change. Following the success of the first grafting training (tomatoes and eggplant), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq continues the FFS program with the support of the European Union in Iraq. Farmers and mentors completed the 2nd grafting training session with different plants

(watermelon with pumpkin) in Safwan,

Basra.



Government consultations advance Iraq's Potato Sector Strategy

Erbil/Baghdad, 15 May 2023 - As part of efforts to support the development of the potato sector strategy in Iraq, consultations at governorate level were held in Baghdad today. Another consultation was held in Erbil on 9 May.

These consultations constitute a milestone for drafting the potato sector's national strategy as public and private sector representatives, including farmers, processors, traders, retailers, and agri-support business services, as well as development partners actively engaged in the discussions.

The potato sector holds untapped potential for growth as potatoes are expected to have the second highest future demand in the Iraqi horticulture sector after tomatoes.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) is leading the preparation of the strategy with the technical support of the International Trade Centre (ITC) within the framework of the European Union-funded project, "Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq" (SAAVI) and technical and advisory support from the International Potato Center (CIP).

The strategy will provide a roadmap for national stakeholders to improve the competitiveness of farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector. It will be accompanied by a detailed five-year Plan of Action with measurable and prioritized actions.

The consultations build on structured discussions with farmers and small businesses, as well as sector-level assessments, production site visits and targeted interviews. More than 500 competitiveness surveys focusing on agribusinesses and farmers and over 3,000 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.

These efforts build on 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 and officially launched in July 2022 and are currently under implementation.

On the side-lines of the multi-stakeholder meetings, the National Core Team, a public and private sector coordination structure under MoA leadership, participated in working sessions and visited farms from the SAAVI agribusiness alliances with support from Norwegian Refugee Council. The Core Team provides guidance to the implementation of the strategies. It also oversees the design process of the potato sector strategy.

About the International Trade Centre's SAAVI project: 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.

This project is part of the EU-funded Agri-food Business Development Programme (AfBDP). The European Union in Iraq funds international partners - the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)- under the umbrella of AfBDP. Central to the AfBDP is an agri-food value chain approach that supports stabilisation and governance, while promoting sustainable and decent job creation.



FAO and Iraqi Beekeepers Association in Karbala celebrate World Bee Day

Karbala 20 May 2023 - Country Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, invited by Iraqi Beekeepers Association in Karbala, celebrated today World Bee Day and the contribution of these pollinators to increasing food production and biodiversity.

Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan highlighted in his speech the importance of bees, these food heroes, for the ecosystem, sustainable development, and food

security. He honoured a group of beekeepers from various governorates of Iraq, in recognition of their efforts and contribution to the development and success of this sector in Iraq.

FAO Iraq had a distinctive role in this sector, by developing a project in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture to support the beekeeping sector, by calling for more awareness on social media about protecting bees, encouraging beekeepers, and encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable production practices.



WFP in Iraq supports beekeeping communities in Basra, Maysan, Thi-Qar, and Muthanna by developing the skills and resources of 400 beekeepers

Baghdad, 20 May 2023 - The World Food Programme in Iraq supported beekeeping communities in Basra, Maysan, Thi-Qar, and Muthanna by developing the skills and resources of 400 beekeepers. This was possible thanks to generous contributions from Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and the Government of Germany.



FAO Representative in Iraq delivered a presentation at the prestigious Kurdistan - Britain and Europe Business Council (KBE) Forum 2023

Erbil, 23 May 2023 - Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq, delivered an insightful presentation at the prestigious Kurdistan - Britain and Europe Business Council (KBE) Forum 2023 held in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, on 22 May 2023. Summary of his contributions:

FAO Iraq representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, explored Iraq, especially KRG's approach to the development of the agricultural sector highlighting the role of FAO Iraq in supporting its development. Together, we are tackling challenges and promoting sustainable practices.

Boosting trade and export opportunities: Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan shed light on investment prospects within the agriculture sector, emphasizing the efforts of FAO Iraq in fostering trade partnerships and

supporting market access. Let's seize these opportunities together! #InvestInAgriculture

Tackling challenges together: Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan addressed the challenges faced by the agriculture sector, highlighting the role of FAO Iraq in providing technical expertise, capacity building, and innovative solutions. Together, we are building resilience. #ResilientAgriculture

Transitioning to modern agricultural systems: Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan explored the transformation from classical to modern agricultural systems, emphasizing the work of FAO Iraq in promoting sustainable and climate-smart agriculture practices; noting the support of the European Union, Sweden, and Canada.

Progress in ensuring food security: Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan discussed the strides made in enhancing food security, highlighting the initiatives



and support provided by FAO Iraq in building resilient food systems and improving access to nutritious food. #FoodSecurity #HungerFreeIraq

We extend our gratitude to the organizers of the #KBEForum2023 for hosting such an important platform. Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan contributions, along with the support of FAO Iraq, have been invaluable in our collective pursuit of a sustainable and climate-resilient future for Iraq

FAO training on proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use and biosecurity in field activities

Baghdad, 24 May 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR)-KRG, conducted a workshop, from 21 – 24 May, on Proper personal protective equipment (PPE) use and biosecurity in field activities as part of the project activities entitled "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq" funded by the United States

Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).

The workshop aimed to increase the veterinarian field capacities and promote how they can use personal protective equipment (PPE) properly in the field. It also aimed to train technical field staff on how to protect themselves from exposure to pathogenic agents and to manage the field-based biosecurity and biosafety standards.

Thirty-Eight specialists from the

veterinary services in Baghdad, Erbil, Duhok, Nineveh, Anbar, Wasit, Muthanna and Basra, including four from each federal and KRG Ministry of Health participated in the training. The session was attended by the FAO-Representative in Iraq and officials from relevant ministries.

FAO Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, concentrated on the importance of these workshops for field veterinarians, especially since many lethal emerging and re-emerging

FAO training on proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use ... (continued)

zoonotic diseases are reported within the country and in the whole region such as Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF); therefore, it requires a dedicated and sustained effort including specific technical and professional training.

Proficiency using PPE in the field is one of the important elements that contribute to biosafety and biosecurity, which provide physical barriers that prevent the hands, skin, clothing, eyes, nose, and mouth from coming into contact with infectious agents and avoiding contamination of samples during collection. This will contribute to avoiding the spread of disease in animal and human population.

The four-day training also included a field visit and practice to apply the

training materials presented during the workshop.



Stakeholders from across the spectrum shed light on farmer organization models and cooperatives in Iraq and their role in supporting the development of the agricultural sector

Baghdad, 29 May 2023 - An event was held by partners implementing the European Union Agri-food Business Development Programme (AfBDP) in Baghdad on Monday (May 29) to discuss the development of farmers' organizations and cooperatives in Iraq and ways to strengthen their role so they can better respond to the needs of society, particularly the most vulnerable.

The event marks the first in a series of events under the AfBDP, to showcase and discuss relevant topics under the boarder Agri-food Business Development Programme, which seeks to strengthen governance and promote sustainable job creation in Iraq's agri-food sector through activities that address the entire food value chain.

Social and solidarity economy entities such as cooperatives and farmers' organizations can play a crucial role in supporting the development of these value chains by facilitating coordination among farmers, improving access to markets and finance, and advocating for more conducive policy and regulatory reforms.

"This event today is an opportunity, the first of its kind that brings together stakeholders from the various sectors of the government, the private sector and organizations, to come up with recommendations that will help regulate or organize cooperative work with a new concept...I invite all organizations to provide their support so that we can modernize the concept of cooperative work in Iraq," said Mithaq



Abdul-Hussein, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The first event was attended by relevant entities, including representatives from the Council of Ministers, the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Agriculture, Planning, Education and Higher Education, as well as workers' and employers' organizations, farmers' associations, civil society organizations, parliament, representatives from banks in Iraq, universities and research institutes. It also included other stakeholders involved in the development of the agricultural sector.

It also brought together EU's AfBDP members which include the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the International Organization for

Migration (IOM), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and COWATER.

Participants took stock of the current situation of agricultural cooperatives and farmers groups in Iraq, some of the challenges and opportunities with the different models for business clusters in agriculture and how they can be supported to grow into sustainable entities, including through the creation of a conducive policy environment for cooperative development and promotion of farmers groups in Iraq.

Partners under the AfBDP highlighted some of the work they are undertaking to support cooperatives and farmers' organization models, in terms of implementing certain models of farmer organizations, supporting cooperatives to advance employment and decent work, financing climate adaptation,

Stakeholders from across the spectrum shed light on farmer organization models and cooperatives... *(continued)*

among others.

"The EU has been a long standing partner of Iraq in supporting the agricultural sector as a way to diversify the economy and promote jobs creation. Agricultural cooperatives can and should play an important role in supporting farmers and this model is successful working in many areas of the world both in the developed and developing world. Today's discussion was important to understand the challenges faced by agricultural cooperatives in Iraq, and to discuss how to make them more effective in targeting the needs of the farmers,"

said Ville Varjola, Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq.

"Cooperatives should be seen as important partners in socio-economic development. Their democratic nature, collective ownership and focus on self-help create a unique means of empowerment. At a time when the world of work is experiencing unprecedented changes, we look forward to continuing to grow our partnerships in this field, in order to support sustainable development and a more just, inclusive and safe future of work with decent work for all," added Maha Kattaa, ILO Country

Coordinator in Iraq.

Since 2021 the European Union has funded several international partners in Iraq - ILO, FAO, IOM, UNESCO, ITC, GIZ and COWATER - to collaborate under a large Agri-food Business Development Programme that uses a programmatic approach by leveraging each agency's strengths to address different weaknesses in the private sector and agri-food sector in a coordinated fashion. Central to many of the projects in the AfBDP is an agri-food value chain approach that supports stabilization and governance, and promotes sustainable job creation.

WFP and the Ministry of Water Resources together successfully rehabilitated 70,000 hectares of land for farming, contributing to the fight for zero hunger

Baghdad, 01 June 2023 - "Today, the World Food Programme (WFP) joined the Minister of Water Resources (MoWR) in celebrating our collective achievements in 2023. Together, we have successfully rehabilitated 70,000 hectares of land for farming, contributing to the fight for zero hunger". Today, let us shift our focus toward building a better future for the people of Iraq. Recognizing the risks droughts pose to our security, it is crucial that we prioritize drought preparedness. The collaborative drought study conducted by MoWR and WFP marks the first step".



The FAO Pavilion receives an overwhelmingly positive response at the first "Agriculture, Food, Water, and Livestock Exhibition"



Mosul, 05 June 2023 - The inaugural Agriculture, Food, Water, and Livestock Exhibition commenced on Sunday, May 28, 2023, in Mosul. The exhibition was hosted at the halls of Mosul University's Faculty of Physical Education. The exhibition was officially inaugurated by HE the

Minister of Agriculture Abbas Jabr Al-Alaywi, the Governor of Nineveh Najm Al-Jubouri and a number of deputies of the Nineveh Governorate, in the presence of the Director of Agriculture of Nineveh Dr Rabie Youssef Soran.

All participants praised the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO)

stand, especially the products presented by Nineveh dairy women farmers supported by the project "Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq", funded by the European Union and implemented by FAO in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture through the staff of Nineveh Extension officers.

Success stories of project beneficiaries were also shared with the participants. In addition, different types of these products were presented to the participants: milk, cheese, Qechwa and Qimar.

The Minister of Agriculture expressed his appreciation for the high quality of the showcased products, and this is a

The FAO Pavilion receives an overwhelmingly positive response ... (continued)

testament to the success of the project in encouraging the development of local products that are now on a par with imported counterparts. It is worth noting that the Project activities in developing only the livestock value chain has reached more than 20,000 thousands of farmers, mostly women.

Dr. Chedly Kayouli, FAO livestock expert, played a pivotal role in overseeing the implementation of innovative techniques, training, and capacity building. He emphasized the transformative impact of these interventions, stating, "Through these innovative approaches, we have empowered women farmers, enhanced their livestock husbandry, improved milk processing, and strengthened marketing skills. This holistic approach not only significantly improves livelihoods but also contributes to sustainable development, with a strong emphasis on empowering women throughout the agricultural value chain."

In light of this achievement, the Ministry of Agriculture has taken on the responsibility of extending the project's implementation to the governorates of southern Iraq, with the aim of driving agricultural progress and improving the overall agricultural landscape.

In this regard, the Director of Agriculture in Nineveh, Dr Rabie

Youssef Soran, highlighted the remarkable achievements of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) project in Nineveh. The success of the project can be seen through various interventions that have had a significant impact. In particular, the project has supported milk collection and processing centres by equipping them with state-of-the-art international equipment. In addition, modern agricultural technologies, such as green fodder cultivation, have been widely adopted by livestock farmers in the districts and sub-districts of Nineveh. These advances have contributed greatly to the agricultural landscape of the region.

On the other hand, Engineer Haider Nasr, the coordinator between FAO and Nineveh Agriculture Directorate, pointed out the importance of such projects to develop the agricultural reality, both in its plant and animal parts. The FAO project in Nineveh has provided the beneficiaries of the project with all modern technologies, such as nutritional supplements like molasses, which has led to an increase in the quantity and quality of milk. Milk collection and processing centres have been set up, equipped with refrigerators to preserve the milk spoiled by the high temperatures in summer, while the manufacturer or producer can now buy milk, store it

easily and produce it whenever he wants.

It is worth noting that the project has continued to provide support to returnees, particularly to women's groups in all districts and sub-districts. These women's gatherings have become a focal point for rural women's aspirations due to the importance of what the project has provided to them.

Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, the FAO representative, highlighted the valuable cooperation and funding provided by the European Union, stating, "We are proud of the strong partnership between FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, supported by the European Union. This collaboration has been instrumental in implementing this successful project, which has significantly improved the livelihoods of farmers in Nineveh Governorate. We are committed to continuing our support to the agricultural sector in Iraq and replicating this experience in other regions, aiming to drive sustainable development and ensure food security."

With the unwavering support of international collaborations and the dedication of local stakeholders, the agricultural landscape in Nineveh Governorate is steadily transforming, empowering farmers and contributing to the sustainable growth of the region.

Hydroponic Agriculture, an innovative solution amid a water crisis

Baghdad, 12 June 2023 - Ammar's story begins in the Iraqi capital where he was born and raised. As a young boy, his curiosity was ignited by two seemingly unrelated events: witnessing the age-old traditions of farming around him and an encounter with technology imported from a far-off land. His father's trip to Japan in the 80s brought back a bunch of intriguing gadgets, which, to young Ammar, were fascinating tokens of innovation and progress. These early inspirations ignited a flame in Ammar, fusing together his love for agriculture and technology, and setting him on a path to become an entrepreneur with an extraordinary vision.

Today, Ammar is at the heart of an ambitious venture — a smart farm that seeks to tackle one of the biggest challenges that his home city of Baghdad faces: Water scarcity. His project utilizes hydroponic technology, a system that enables plant growth in a



water-based nutrient-rich solution, eliminating the need for soil and significantly reducing water usage.

This was a concept he was not born with, but a vision carefully crafted and developed over time. After building an initial small-scale prototype, Ammar turned to UNDP for expert guidance. Receiving technical support from the

Environment program of UNDP Iraq, Ammar then took his ambitions overseas to Jordan, where he further expanded his knowledge and skillset through dedicated coursework.

Upon his return to Baghdad, armed with newfound expertise and a reinforced vision, Ammar invested his personal savings into his new venture -

Hydroponic Agriculture, an innovative solution amid a water crisis (continued)

"Al-Hayane Farm". This isn't just any farm, but a sustainable and innovative hub of agricultural technology. Along with hydroponics, "Al-Hayane Farm" incorporates aquaponics — a system integrating fish farming with hydroponics, where the waste produced by the aquaculture provides nutrients for the plants.

Yet, his innovation did not stop there. Understanding the pressing need to conserve energy, Ammar incorporated passive cooling through evaporation into the farm design — a technology that harnesses the natural process of water evaporation to cool the surrounding air, thus saving around 85% of energy consumption.

Spread over 1400 square meters and powered by 80% solar energy, "Al-Hayane Farm" is a testament to sustainable agriculture. Each year, the

farm could produce over 120 tons of fruits and vegetables including strawberries, lettuce, and onion. It could also significantly reduce environmental impact by cutting plastic usage by 60%, water usage by 75%, and CO2 emissions by 30 tons per year.

The financial prospects of this venture are equally promising. According to Ammar, a similar project could see a 65% return on investment in the first year and potentially provide around 20 permanent jobs and 80 temporary ones. It could also ensure a substantial income for a family of six.

However, for Ammar, his venture goes beyond monetary gain. His ultimate goal is to demonstrate the feasibility and profitability of sustainable agriculture to his family, neighbors, and the larger community. He believes

that despite the challenges Baghdad faces, its residents can create and enjoy the benefits of sustainable and profitable businesses. His family, his first supporters, work alongside him on the farm every day, embodying the very proof of the potential success of his ambitious vision.

Ammar's journey is an inspiring blend of ambition, innovation, and resilience. His story symbolizes a new era of green revolution for Baghdad and perhaps even for the rest of Iraq. Through his vision, Ammar demonstrates that with the right blend of traditional wisdom, innovative technology, and a determination to overcome challenges, one can create a future that is not only sustainable but also economically thriving.



FAO and the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture launch the Al-Rafidain Application for Agricultural Extension

Baghdad, 15 June 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Iraq is delighted to announce - jointly with the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture - the launching of the Al-Rafidain Application for Agricultural Extension. This App serves the agriculture sector including plant and animal, empowering farmers with real-time information.

During the launch event held today in

Baghdad, FAO Iraq Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, stressed that the Al-Rafidain Application strengthens the agricultural extension system through digital innovation.

The Al-Rafidain Application is available on Android and can be downloaded on the Google Play Store via this link: <https://bit.ly/46056Tj>

Enhance your agricultural knowledge with the #AlRafidainApp!



FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, with the EU support, conduct field demonstrations on producing high quality organic fertilizers (compost)

Baghdad, 15 June 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and the Ministry of Agriculture with the support of the European Union, conducted field demonstrations on producing high quality organic fertilizers (compost) in the tomato production area in Safwan

and Al-Zubair. This is a practical and cost-effective technology which will replace a major part of chemical fertilizers and reduce pollution. FAO-EU are supporting farmers in southern Iraq to adopt more sustainable practices to mitigate climate change and to increase their income.



Resilient Iraqi farmer on his way to make it big

Baghdad, 22 June 2023 - (ITC News) For Micro-, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises Day 2023, International Trade Center (ITC) celebrates small entrepreneurs from all over the world. Small businesses account for 90% of the world's businesses, 60 to 70% of

employment, and 50% of the global economy. They contribute to local and national economies and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Tell us about yourself.

I am Ahmed Yonis Saleh, a commercial potato farmer in Al Quba village, Telkief District in Ninewa governorate. I have been running the potato production business for over 20 years and I own 25 hectares of farmland. I mainly produce Rivera and Arizona

Resilient Iraqi farmer on his way to make it big *(continued)*

table potato varieties, in the Spring and Autumn farming seasons, to meet domestic market needs.

My annual production is 1,800 tons of potatoes. From this production, I earn an income of between \$250,000 to \$300,000 per annum, generating 20 to 30 % profits per annum.

My business also generates employment for both my family members and other vulnerable youth and women in the community. In addition to using family labour, I employ about six people on a permanent basis and 40 youth and women on a temporary basis. The people employed on a temporary basis are engaged to perform specific tasks such as cleaning, sorting, packaging, and loading/offloading potatoes.

I am also a member of Greenland Agribusiness Alliance established by the European Union (EU) funded SAAVI project.

What are the challenges that you face or have faced as a small business?

As a small business, I face several challenges including lack of capital to expand my farming business, limited access to remunerative markets, limited cold storage capacity to store my products for selling off-season and high production costs due to the high costs of inputs. I also face exploitation by middlemen at the local wholesale market as they determine the prices of

products which puts us in a challenging situation. Due to the limited access to finance, I often purchase seeds from an input supplier on credit and I pay back with interest which significantly reduces my profit margins.

What are your needs to expand your business?

To expand my business, I need access to affordable finance to invest in and purchase quality inputs and modern machinery for irrigation and harvesting. I also need to increase the current capacity of my cold storage facility. I will also need support to be linked to bigger buyers to sell at competitive prices compared to the local market. To address the current monopoly, more suppliers of inputs are required in Al Quba to ensure fair competition with the existing suppliers, thus improving access and quality of inputs as well as reducing the prices for potato farmers.

How have you found the support from ITC helpful?

The support I received from ITC's EU funded SAAVI project is very helpful. For instance, I have been able to increase my knowledge and skills on disease management and post-harvest handling due to the training. I also benefited from selling my products to Carrefour and Holland Bazar at higher prices.

As an alliance, we recently received



part of the grants to help us buy sprinkler irrigation kits. This will support me in irrigating my land.

What would you say has been your best success as a business so far?

My best success has been improving productivity, increasing the size of land under production, and improving the quality of my potatoes. I built a small cold storage facility to store my potatoes and I have also acquired a truck for transporting the potatoes from the farm to the storage facility and to the market. My profit margin has increased as well.

Your message to other small entrepreneurs?

Start small, study your project or business, do not be in debt, analyze the market and expand after you make a profit on your investment.

Empowered rural women and returnees by improving milk production and cheese quality increased their income

Baghdad, 23 June 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq recently organised a comprehensive workshop for extension officers in Nineveh, under the project funded by the European Union, jointly implemented with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Discussions focused on follow-up and evaluation of project activities for improved milk production and green fodder development, communication, logistics and training. Dr. Chedly Kayouli, FAO Iraq livestock expert who facilitated the workshop, highlighted the positive impact. Modern equipment and new technologies have empowered rural women and returnees, improving milk production and cheese quality increased their income.

The wide cultivation of green fodder crops in Ninewa has changed agricultural practices, improved animal health, and boosted agricultural

production cycles.

FAO Iraq expert stressed the

importance of documenting success stories and supporting good partners.



Iraq invests in building a social security system that protects workers

Baghdad, 17 May 2023 - The Council of Representatives in Federal Iraq voted on Wednesday (May 17) to adopt the new Social Security Law for Private Sector Workers, which introduces far-reaching reforms to the social security system for private-sector workers.

The new law, which will replace Law No. 39 on Pension and Social Security for Private-Sector Workers of 1979, brings the social security system for private sector workers in closer alignment with ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), which was officially ratified by the Government of Iraq in March 2023.

The law significantly expands the legal coverage of the social security system, covering all workers including informal workers, the self-employed and contributing family workers. It also expands the range of entitlements to include maternity and unemployment benefits for the first time. The law will also provide health insurance obtained from public, cooperative, and private providers.

A statement issued by the Labour and Civil Society Organizations Committee highlighted the law was “among the priority draft laws in the government programme, in response to the developments of the current situation as well as the future, and in line with the International Labour Organization’s appeal to expand coverage to the private sector”.

Under the European Union funded programme to reform social protection,

and in line with the priorities of the Decent Work Country Programme for Iraq, the ILO has been working with its tripartite constituents - government, employer, and worker representatives - and the parliamentary committee in the review of the social security law. This has included bringing together legal as well as actuarial experts to assess the comprehensiveness, coherence, sustainability and alignment of the social security law.

The ILO has also been supporting the Government and tripartite partners to strengthen their capacity to implement the new provisions of the law and strengthen the efficiency in the delivery of social security and related employment services.

“The ILO welcomes the adoption of the new law, which is a key milestone in expanding the scope of support provided to workers by covering a wider range of risks,” said ILO Coordinator in Iraq Maha Kattaa. “For example, unemployment benefits are crucial to prevent workers who become

unemployed from falling into poverty, providing them with support while they seek new employment opportunities. Similarly, the introduction of maternity benefits will ensure women are supported before, during and after childbirth, thus potentially improving health outcomes.”

“We look forward to strengthening collaboration with all parties to ensure the effective implementation of the law, and to bring millions of workers in the private sector under the umbrella of social security,” added Kattaa.

Priority now will be placed on the Department of Social Security under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to upgrade its procedures and systems to efficiently administer the reforms introduced under the law, with the support of the ILO.

The ILO and partners will also embark on an awareness raising campaign for workers and employers on their rights and responsibilities under the social security law, in efforts to support the expansion of coverage to more workers.



Roundtable discussion on urbanization in Iraq: labour market implications and role of Social Security Funds

Baghdad, 07 June 2023 - As part of the monthly Policy Dialogue Forum organized by the International Labour Organization and the Ministry of Planning, a roundtable discussion was held on Wednesday June 7, 2023, addressing the implications of urbanization on the labour market in Iraq.

The event brought together key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Planning, the ILO, the International Trade Center, thought leaders and specialists on urban planning and development.

Dr. Muhammad Al-Sayed, Director General of Regional and Local Development at the Ministry of Planning, emphasized the significance

of urbanization in both urban and rural development. He pointed out that the rapid urbanization process has resulted in the concentration of services in the capital, leading to imbalances with other cities. Dr. Al-Sayed stressed the importance of regulating the relationship between urban and rural areas and fostering cooperation between them. He highlighted the importance of reducing disparities and ensuring opportunities presented in urban cities should be also available in rural communities. In an effort to manage urbanization challenges, he shared that the government is planning to establish five new cities.

During the roundtable, Dr. Amjad Rabi, Chief Technical Advisor for Social

Security, ILO Iraq, delivered a presentation in which he highlighted that cities provide cost advantages to producers and consumers, making cities economically advantageous.

Additionally, the density of cities facilitates cost-effective service provision. Dr. Rabi also highlighted the enduring positive association between urbanization and per capita income, which has been recognized as one of the "stylized facts" of the development process. However, he pointed out that within urban communities, there can be significant disparities. Addressing the labour market, Dr. Rabi pointed out that despite the massive additions to the urban labour force, these numbers are often not reflected in the formal

Roundtable discussion on urbanization in Iraq ... (continued)



sector or unemployment statistics. A substantial portion of the new entrants to the urban labour force tends to join the informal sector, which usually does

not enjoy the measures of protection (health, social protection, decent work, maternity). He pointed out to the experience of other countries, where

reserves of social security funds are used in social investments that lead to a better urban planning.

The round table discussion saw the active participation of several experts, who made valuable contributions that enriched the dialogue. The event provided a platform for in-depth analysis and exchange of ideas on the pressing issues of urbanization and its impact on the labour market in Iraq. The ILO and the Ministry of Planning continue their collaborative efforts to address these challenges, aiming to foster sustainable urban development, promote equitable employment opportunities, and improve overall living conditions in the country.

The ILO-supported, National Training Centre for labour, occupational safety and health and social security inspectors inaugurated in Baghdad

Baghdad, 08 June 2023 - On Wednesday, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Ahmed Al-Asadi inaugurated the ILO-supported National Training Centre for Labour, Occupational Safety and Health and Social Security inspectors.

On the side-line of the event, an ILO office was opened within the Ministry to enhance coordination and cooperation between the two entities.

"We planted some trees in a small garden surrounding the centre. We hope that this would give the facility greener prospects and inspiration for a better tomorrow, with an objective to provide decent work for all workers in Iraq," said ILO Country Coordinator Maha Kattaa.

On the side-line of the event, an ILO office was opened within the Ministry to

enhance coordination and cooperation between the two entities in Iraq.



End child labour in Iraq

The United Nations in Iraq, including ILO and UNICEF call on all partners to ensure enhanced social justice and step up the fight against child labour

Baghdad, 12 June 2023 - This year's World Day Against Child Labour links advancing social justice with tackling child labour, under the slogan "Social

Justice for All. End Child Labour!" Social Justice in the World of Work means promoting productive and freely chosen employment; enhancing measures of social protection; promoting social dialogue; and promoting fundamental principles and rights at work. It also means that we need to protect the fundamental rights

of every child against the worst forms of child labour.

In Iraq, as in many parts of the world, one of the root causes for child labour is poverty and economic deprivation, leaving families struggling to make ends meet. Years of conflict, displacement, and economic downturn has left many children in Iraq in or at risk of child labour. The UNICEF-supported 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6) indicates that 5 per cent of children aged 5-14 years in Iraq are engaged in child labour, with higher rates among children living in low-income households and in rural areas.

"Children should learn and play not work. They deserve opportunities that allow them to thrive and build a promising future," said Ghulam Isaczai, the United Nations Resident



End child labour in Iraq *(continued)*

Coordinator for Iraq. “To eliminate child labour, we must continue to work with the government and all relevant stakeholders to enhance policies, build capacities and institutions, to address root causes that force many young children into work”, he added.

Iraq has ratified key fundamental conventions that protect children from all forms of child labour, namely ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age, and ILO Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour that have been in force since 1985 and 2001. It is also a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In recent years, efforts by the Government of Iraq and social partners have been made to find practical solutions to directly address the needs of children. The institutionalisation of the ILO-supported Child Labour Monitoring System (CLMS) is one example. The system identifies vulnerable children from host, refugee and internally displaced communities at risk of or already in child labour and provides them with the needed protection and support. The ILO and UNICEF have built the capacities of government officials, civil society organisations, academic institution representatives and other stakeholders on ways to adopt and implement the CLMS across the country.

This, along with the nine child friendly learning spaces (CFLS) established or revived with ILO support, in close coordination with local authorities including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has provided thousands of children in or at risk of child labour with non-formal education, recreational activities and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support – leading to many out of school children returning to school or those engaged in child labour to be pulled out of work.

Part of the response to address the root causes of child labour, is ensuring that families of working children have opportunities to build new skills and access decent employment, so their children no longer have to work. Working closely with vocational centres in Dohuk and Ninewa, the ILO has provided hundreds of parents and caregivers of working children with vocational trainings covering different professions. Many caregivers have also been referred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs’ Employment Platform, so they can access employment support, including job placement.

Strengthening the social protection system in Iraq is pivotal in improving lives and ensuring that families are protected from childhood to old age.

The ILO, UNICEF and WFP continue to work with the government of Iraq in reforming the social protection system to ensure that the vulnerable and the poor, including children, youth, women, elderly, informal workers, persons with disabilities and Internally Displaced Persons benefit from equitable access to an integrated social protection system.

A key milestone in recent months has been the adoption of the new Retirement and Social Security Law for Private Sector Workers, which expands the legal coverage of the social security system, covering all workers including informal workers, the self-employed and contributing family workers. It also introduces entitlements that include maternity and unemployment benefits. The new law brings the social security system for private sector workers in closer alignment with ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), which was officially ratified by the Government of Iraq in March 2023.

These efforts are steps in the right direction and will contribute to a long-lasting impact on families and their children. On this World Day Against Child Labour, we reinforce that social justice for children and their families remains a top priority and a responsibility of all partners to ensure that no one is left behind.

ILO Country Coordinator with officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs visited brick factories, where cases of the worst forms of child labour are prevalent

Baghdad, 12 June 2023 - On World Day Against Child Labour, ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Maha Kattaa, together with officials and inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs visited brick factories in Al Nahrawan near Baghdad, where cases of the worst forms of child labour are prevalent.

“Seeing young children living in such

extreme poverty and working in such hazardous conditions is a true wake up call to all of us on the urgent need to end this practice that is depriving so many children of their childhood and their education, and exposing them to all forms of risks, including exploitation.

World Day Against Child Labour is a reminder of the plight of working

children, and on this day, we call on the government and all our partners to put an end to child labour and mainly the worst forms in Iraq,” said Kattaa.

Iraq has ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which are central to the fight against child labour.



ILO holds workshops for heads of social security departments and social security inspectors to build their capacities in areas related to inspection

Erbil, 16 June 2023 - The International Labour Organization and its training arm, the International Training Centre held workshops from 13 to 15 June in Erbil for heads of social security departments and social security inspectors to build their capacities in areas related to inspection.

The workshops, organised under the "Social Protection Programme for Iraq: Leveraging Effective Response and Accelerating Reform," supported by the European Union, brought together 41 officials from across Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.



Security Sector Reform

UNODC participates in Iraq's first conference on countering drug trafficking

Baghdad, 09 May 2023 - UNODC participated in Iraq's first conference on countering drug trafficking, with the presence of the Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, Minister of Health, and Secretary General of the Arab Council of Ministers of Interior. UNODC Iraq Head of Office delivered a statement on behalf of UNODC's Executive Director and stressed the importance of the conference in highlighting the needed strategic cooperation and action to face illicit trafficking of drugs and its dangers.



The Executive Committee for Security Sector Reform briefed international partners on the state of play of the development of a new reform framework

Baghdad, 10 May 2023 – Today, the Executive Committee for Security Sector Reform briefed international partners on the state of play of the development of a new reform framework for Iraq's security sector with the support of UNDP Iraq and international partners NATO, UNAMI, EUAM, US, UK.



Codes of conduct are vital to prevent and combat corrupt practices

Baghdad, 12 May 2023 - UNDP and Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council held a workshop today to share experiences on codes of conduct for over 30 judges and judicial experts from UNDP, Iraq, Morocco and Tunisia. The workshop engaged the drafting

committee for the code of conduct on international standards and best practices around the globe. The code will ultimately enhance judicial integrity and ethical behavior among professionals working closely with the courts.

This workshop is part of UNDP's Anti-Corruption and Arbitration Initiative, generously funded by UNDP's long-standing partner, the European Union. Codes of conduct are vital to prevent and combat corrupt practices.

Fostering justice to curb corruption in Iraq

Baghdad, 23 May 2023 - The EU-funded project Support to justice initiatives curbing corruption and promoting commercial dispute resolution builds on Iraq's national efforts to improve transparency and accountability across state institutions and supports Iraq to deliver to its national and international commitments with regard to the fight against corruption. It aims to improve the country's legislative and strategic framework for combatting corruption, supports the justice sector to better process corruption offences, and fosters the development of commercial courts and arbitration mechanisms. It also empowers Iraqi civil society to take a more active role.

Women judges and prosecutors bring a much-needed gender perspective to the fight against corruption by ensuring that specific challenges faced by women are adequately addressed and breaking down discriminatory attitudes.

Working to achieve a gender balance among judges and prosecutors in Iraq

and introducing gender mainstreaming as a tool at all levels of the judiciary is vital.

On 21 May, in Baghdad, UNDP held a roundtable for Iraqi women judges and prosecutors to discuss challenges to the investigation of corruption and to explore opportunities to support and enhance their role in fighting corruption.

This initiative is part of the European

Union funded project "Supporting Justice Initiatives to Reduce Corruption and Promote Settlement of Commercial Disputes". UNAMI (Human Rights Office) and UNDP are jointly supporting the Supreme Judicial Council in its efforts to enhance the prosecution and adjudication of corruption cases through following the work of specialized courts, analysis and feedback of outcome.



Small and Medium Enterprises working to face corruption and enhance business integrity



Baghdad, 14 May 2023 - Corruption remains a significant obstacle to achieving sustainable development and prosperity, impacting every sector of society. It hinders economic growth and good governance, discourages foreign investment, reduces public trust in businesses and creates an unfair competition for companies. To effectively counter corruption, it is necessary for countries to adopt a comprehensive and systematic approach that involves all stakeholders. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are key players in this fight and can play a critical role in promoting integrity and countering corruption, and their active participation in this endeavour is imperative.

As part of its ongoing efforts to support Iraq in addressing corruption in the private sector, UNODC organized a two-days hybrid workshop in Baghdad, Iraq, under the theme "Anti-Corruption and Business Integrity" at the premises of the Iraqi Anti-Corruption Academy and brought together 31 representatives from Iraqi SMEs in Iraq, the Commission of Integrity, the Ministry of Industry and the Central Bank.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness for commitment in the Iraqi private sector by sharing information and experiences on international Anti-Corruption standards, regulations, and frameworks. During the two days, UNODC experts provided insights on

the different types of corruption, their impact on the business environment, and effective measures to combat corruption through risk assessments, internal controls, and ethical and compliance programs. Besides, the participants were introduced to the corruption risk assessment tool that UNODC has developed for SMEs. They learned how this tool can be useful in addressing most common corruption risks within their line of work, especially for SMEs that have limited financial resources to address corruption.

The workshop also provided a platform for SMEs to engage in direct dialogue with national authorities on the challenges they encounter in their industries, and to exchange ideas on how to contribute to the country's efforts to promote integrity and combat corruption in the private sector, paving the way for a better and more sustainable future for all.

This workshop was conducted in collaboration with the Iraqi Commission of Integrity of Iraq and held within the framework of the project "Strengthening the Private Sector Capacity to Prevent Corruption and Enhance Integrity in the Arab Countries", funded by Siemens Integrity Initiative.

How to utilize tools to strengthen the role of CSOs in monitoring judicial proceedings for corruption cases

Baghdad, 01 June 2023 - Civil Society Organization representatives joined the UNAMI Human Rights Office and UNDP in Baghdad to explore their crucial role in fighting corruption, ensuring accountability, and promoting justice.

By exchanging experiences, particularly focusing on initiatives aimed at enhancing investigations and trials related to corruption cases, we explored how to utilize tools to strengthen the role of CSOs in monitoring judicial proceedings for corruption cases.

We emphasized the importance of adhering to international standards in the adjudication of corruption cases,



including monitoring and reporting on human rights, fair trial standards, and the protection of informants.

We are determined to unlock the

potential for cooperation between CSOs and the United Nations, as we work hand in hand to monitor and follow up on corruption-related cases in Iraq.

UNICEF with Judicial Institute in Kurdistan Region-Iraq enhance access to Child-Friendly justice system

Erbil, 02 June 2023 - UNICEF recently collaborated with Judicial Institute in Kurdistan Region-Iraq to enhance access to Child-Friendly justice system. The workshop strengthened capacity building, integrated Justice for Children into the academic curriculum, and promoted diversions and alternatives to detentions. UNICEF thanks the Government of Japan for supporting this project.



More effective when working together on financial investigations

Baghdad, 06 June 2023 - “More effective when working together on financial investigations” UNDP’s capacity building initiatives on anti-money laundering and financial investigations funded by U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Intl Narcotics & Law Enforcement (INL)

comprise inter-agency and multi-disciplinary trainings. A handbook developed for practitioners is continuously adapted and enriched with lessons learned from its application.

UNDP is working to curb corruption and promote commercial dispute

resolution in Iraq with the European Union.

From 29- 30 May, sessions brought together 40 experts from the Federal Commission of Integrity and relevant authorities to build capacity in the areas of corruption risk assessment and monitoring in public procurement.

The power of collaboration!

Ramadi, 11 June 2023 - Community Policing (CP) brings together community members and law enforcement to jointly address safety and security concerns – because problem-solving is always better together.

In the spirit of this approach, IOM welcomed a delegation from the Germany Embassy in Iraq at the CP Office in Ramadi, established through German support. It was a fantastic opportunity for meaningful person-to-person engagement with dedicated CP

officers and community members. Together, we're building bridges,

fostering understanding and creating a safer, stronger future for all.



UNDP and Government of the Netherlands open the Ninewa Criminal Investigation Court and support local peacebuilding through model police stations and peace agreements



Baghdad, 11 June 2023 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the Ministry of the Interior, and support from the Government of the Netherlands, today opened the Ninewa Criminal Investigation Court.

Led by the esteemed High Judge of Ninewa, Judge Raed Hameed, and a panel of nine judges, the court will be pivotal in ensuring access to justice for the local population and securing the region's long-term stability by ensuring the safety of 500,000 area residents. Since Mosul was occupied by ISIL, the court operated from a municipal building in Tel Kaif district. The new courthouse will move court services related to criminal investigations permanently to West Mosul, enabling greater efficiency and accessibility for those seeking justice.

UNDP also operates two out of its six model police stations in Mosul. Model police stations tailor police services to the needs of communities and encourage public faith in policing. They

are a pillar of UNDP's citizen-centered security approach within overall security sector reform support. In addition to enhancing community security in Ninewa, UNDP and the Government of the Netherlands have supported the development of ten peace agreements across Ninewa and Kirkuk. The lead-up to these peace agreements has included dialogues with local authorities, religious leaders, community and tribal leaders, women, and youth, resulting in individually tailored recommendations.

"We are grateful to our long-standing partner the Government of the Netherlands for their support in all aspects of our peacebuilding work in Ninewa Governorate, as well as our strong partnership with the Government of Iraq. Through these projects, we are working together to re-establish trust of the local population in public service delivery, including the delivery of justice," says Auke Lootsma, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative.

H.E. Hans Sandee, the Netherlands

Ambassador to Iraq, states, "Today's opening of the criminal investigation court is a landmark in the history of Mosul. It is an important step toward justice and a symbol of hope for the Maslawi and people of Ninewa."

"The inauguration marks a major milestone for us. After the city's liberation from ISIL, courts, public institutions, and schools were destroyed. Then, we started to rehabilitate, with thanks to UNDP. This is an important part of our rehabilitation, to bring life back to Ninewa," says Mr. Najim Al-Juburee, Governor of Ninewa.

Judge Dr. Faiq Zaidan, President of the Supreme Judicial Council, says, "I congratulate the people of Ninewa Governorate in general, and my fellow judges in particular, on the opening of the new building for the Ninewa Criminal Investigation Court, in cooperation with UNDP, which will support the application of the principle of the rule of law and the achievement of justice in Ninewa Governorate."

The construction of the Ninewa Criminal Investigation Court was implemented by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) with support from the Government of the Netherlands. Since 2015, the Netherlands has contributed US\$ 107.458 million to FFS and US\$ 8.5 million to security sector reform, making it one of UNDP's largest contributors in Iraq. With support from the Government of the Netherlands, UNDP has rehabilitated 49 law enforcement facilities, including four courthouses, five national security buildings, 34 police stations, one police training center, and 10 police directorate offices.

Mine Action

UNMAS delivered a gender workshop for 18 female officers

Baghdad, 13 June 2023 - UNMAS in Iraq successfully delivered a one-day gender workshop in Baghdad for 18 female officers from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence, and the Directorate for Mine Action. The workshop aimed to increase awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in mine action. Participants spent the day discussing main challenges, opportunities, as well as obstacles that hinder women's active participation in the mine action sector and mine action activities.





Baghdad, 03 May 2023 - The Director General of the Iraqi Department of Mine Action, **Dr. Sabah Hassan Al-Husseini**, met today, with the UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, **Mr. Pehr Lodhammar**. They discussed various aspects of joint technical cooperation.



Baghdad, 16 May 2023 - UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, **Mr. Pehr Lodhammar**, recently met with the French Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency **Mr. Eric Chevalier**, at the Embassy of France in Baghdad, to provide an update on the operations of UNMAS in Iraq. Enabling the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced personnel (IDPs) is a top priority for UNMAS in Iraq. The Government of France has been the key supporter of mine action in Iraq and has contributed to the UNMAS in Iraq program since 2018. The generous contributions from the Government of France continue to enable UNMAS to deliver essential support to protect civilians from the threat of explosive ordnance and enhance the capacity of the national implementing partners. UNMAS in Iraq looks forward to continued cooperation with France.



Baghdad, 23 May 2023 - Recently UNMAS in Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, **Pehr Lodhammar**, met with the Australian Ambassador to Iraq, **H.E. Ms. Paula Ganly**, at the Embassy of Australia in Baghdad. The discussion covered the operations and activities of UNMAS in Iraq, including the nationalization efforts, gender mainstreaming initiatives, and technical support to the Government of Iraq, as well as highlighting the various mine action challenges in Iraq. Over the years, Australia has steadfastly supported UNMAS gender and diversity initiatives in Iraq. UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Australian Government for their generous support in facilitating mine action activities in Iraq and looks forward to further collaboration.



Baghdad, 26 May 2023 - The first **Local Mine Action Support Group (LMASG)** meeting was recently held in Baghdad. Attended by 18 diplomats from 12 countries, the engagement was established by UNMAS in Iraq to ensure sustainable mine action responses in the country. The UNMAS in Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, **Pehr Lodhammar**, chaired the meeting and delivered a presentation on the previous and current operations, activities, achievements, and challenges the organization has faced in the country. It was agreed that a second LMASG would occur in August.

More than 9,000 children have been killed or maimed in Iraq since 2008 - UNICEF

Baghdad, 6 June 2023 – A staggering 315,000 grave violations against children in conflict were verified by the United Nations between 2005 and 2022 worldwide, a stark illustration of the devastating impact of war and conflict on children.

As states, donors and the humanitarian community meet in Norway for the Oslo Conference on Protecting Children in Armed Conflict*, UNICEF has reported that, since monitoring began in 2005 (since 2008 in the case of Iraq), the UN has verified 315,000 grave violations committed by parties to

conflict in more than 30 conflict situations across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

These include:

- More than 120,000 children killed or maimed.
- At least 105,000 children recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups.
- More than 32,500 children abducted.
- More than 16,000 children subjected to sexual violence.

The UN has also verified globally more than 16,000 attacks on schools and

hospitals, and more than 22,000 instances of denial of humanitarian access for children.

For Iraq, the numbers are staggering, with over 9,000 children killed or maimed (3,119 killed and 5,938 maimed) since 2008 to the end of 2022. Despite the considerable reduction on the number of reported cases in the last years, the overall number represents, on an average, more than 1 child killed every other day and one child maimed daily over the reported period.

As these are just the cases that have been verified, the true toll is likely to be

More than 9,000 children have been killed or maimed in Iraq since 2008 - UNICEF *(continued)*

far higher.

Additionally, many millions more children have been displaced globally from their homes and communities, lost friends or family, or separated from parents or caregivers.

“Any war is ultimately a war on children,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “Exposure to conflict has catastrophic, life-changing effects for children. While we know what must be done to protect children from war, the world is not doing enough. Year after year, the UN documents the visceral, tragic and all too predictable ways that children’s lives are torn apart. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that children do not pay the price for the wars of adults, and to take the bold, concrete action required to improve the protection of some of the world’s most vulnerable children.”

In this context, UNICEF has supported the care and protection of millions of affected children across conflict situations to enhance their well-being, including through the provision of mental health and psychosocial support, child protection case management, family tracing and reunification, and services for child survivors of gender-based violence. In 2022, UNICEF reached almost 12,500 children globally who exited armed forces or armed groups with reintegration or other protection support, and more than 9 million children with information that they can use to protect themselves from explosive remnants of war.

Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, also present in the Conference, spoke about the need of reintegration for children in Iraq following so many years of conflict, “As a response to years of conflict, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Government of Iraq and partners, target four profiles of children in need of reintegration, including children returning from North-East Syria, children released from detention, children perceived to be affiliated with armed groups, and other vulnerable children. These UNICEF reintegration programmes target three levels: individual, community and institutional. However, successful long-term reintegration is contingent on ongoing basic service provision to ensure that children can access their rights, as highlighted in the Paris Principles.”

Unfortunately, the scale of the child protection risks to children affected by

conflict is not matched by the scale of funding available to address these issues. New analysis by Humanitarian Funding Forecasting, commissioned by UNICEF, Save the Children, the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility, reveals that by 2024, the child protection sector will require US\$1.05 billion, increasing to US\$1.37 billion by 2026, to address the protection needs of children in armed conflict. This includes critical services like family reunification, mental health support, and the prevention of recruitment into armed groups.

However, the study also indicates an impending funding shortfall. If the current pace of humanitarian funding continues, the projected shortfall would stand at US\$835 million in 2024, growing to US\$941 million by 2026. This gap could leave conflict-affected children exposed to the immediate and lasting impacts of war, child labor,

protection workforces.

UNICEF is also calling on humanitarian actors to invest in policies that place children and their protection at the centre of humanitarian action in situations of armed conflict.

“We must deliver a child protection response that is equal to the challenges we face,” said Russell. “We need to do everything we can to reach all children in need, particularly the most vulnerable. Protection services for children must build upon existing systems and community structures, and support children’s rights, participation, and their best interests. Programmes and advocacy in these contexts must unfailingly put children and their protection at the centre of humanitarian action.”

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Notes to editors:

*UNICEF is a co-organizer of the conference along with the Government of Norway, Save the Children and



trafficking, and violence.

As leaders convene in Oslo, UNICEF is calling for governments to make bold new commitments to:

- Uphold and operationalize the international laws and norms already in place to protect children in war – including to protect schools, hospitals and other protected objects like water and sanitation facilities from attack, to stop the recruitment and use of children by armed groups and forces, to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.
- Hold perpetrators to account when children’s rights are violated.
- Step up critical resources to fund the protection of children in conflict at the scale and speed required, in line with growing needs. This must include investment in humanitarian response and in national child

ICRC, and in partnership with OCHA, the African Union, the Office of the SRSG Children and Armed Conflict (O-SRSG CAAC), and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

UNICEF has made the following commitments to strengthen its commitment to protect children in conflict:

- UNICEF commits to placing children and their protection at the centre of its work in humanitarian action through the development and implementation of an organizational Centrality of Protection Policy. This commitment integrates the protection of children across sectors and into UNICEF’s global policies, strategies, priorities, and work plans, and means a deliberate doubling down on our mandate to advocate for the protection

More than 9,000 children have been killed or maimed in Iraq since 2008 - UNICEF *(continued)*

of children and their rights as a top priority, at a time when children are increasingly under attack.

- UNICEF commits to allocate internal resources equal to fifty per cent of the annual cost of sustaining a minimum level of staffing to monitor, document and verify grave violations

against children and to engage with parties to conflict. While doing so, UNICEF will work to mobilize the balance needed from partners, and to go beyond that minimum staffing wherever required.

- UNICEF commits to putting into practice a new Global Initiative on

Child Reintegration that, together with government and non-governmental partners and across sectors, intends to transform how we support children who have exited armed forces and groups during and after conflict.



UNMAS hosts a senior Danish official at its clearing site

Baghdad, 28 June 2023 - In Iraq, UNMAS recently hosted the Danish Senior Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Accountability (MEAL) Advisor, Mr. Thyge Poulsen, at the UNMAS office in Baghdad for the first time. The team was pleased to brief Mr. Poulsen on UNMAS operations and activities in Iraq, including the nationalization efforts, gender mainstreaming initiatives, and technical support given to the Government of Iraq mine action authorities.

Following the briefings, the UNMAS team organized a site visit for Mr. Poulsen to observe the work of UNMAS implementing partner DanChurchAid at a clearance site in Tel Kaif in partnership with the Health and Social Care Organization in Iraq (IHSCO IRAQ). The visit allowed Mr. Poulsen to firsthand better understand the ongoing activities and also to see the

impact the clearance has on the farmlands and how the local communities utilize the land post clearance. During the visit, Mr. Poulsen also met with the IHSCO Explosive Ordnance Risk Education team.

The Government of Denmark has always been a staunch supporter of

UNMAS and has generously supported programme activities in Iraq with a cumulative financial assistance of over USD 30 million since 2016.

UNMAS would like to thank the Government of Denmark for its generous support towards mine action activities in Iraq.



Healthcare

IOM supports access to essential healthcare for all migrants, including those at risk of occupational diseases

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.

IOM highly endorse and encourage employers to improve labor conditions for workers in line with International Labor Standards.

A complete blood test can be taken at Hay Sumer PHCC as a hematology machine was donated by IOM

Hay, 04 May 2023 - Until recently, residents of Hay Sumer relied on expensive private clinics or telehealth facilities when they needed a complete blood count. Now they could take this test at Hay Sumer PHCC when a hematology machine was donated by IOM.

IOM also provided a series of trainings on the equipment to the doctors and laboratory technicians to: enhance the accessibility of the service; availability of medical and laboratory equipment and how it affects society; and improve the quality of care and the capacity of staff caregivers.

This donation was made possible with the support of German Federal Foreign Office.



The remarkable WHO, Ministry of Health and UNICEF in a press conference celebrate Iraq's immunization achievements



Baghdad, 02 May 2023 – Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, joined Minister of Health, H.E. Dr. Salih Al-Hasnawi and UNICEF

Representative in Iraq, Ms. Sheema SenGupta in a press conference celebrating Iraq's immunization achievements.

“WHO Iraq's strategic partnership with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF Iraq has led to significant progress in immunization coverage across Iraq”, said Dr Zouiten.

“We are working with UNICEF and WHO to vaccinate children, especially those who have not been vaccinated,” said Dr. Saleh Al Hasnawi, Minister of Health during a press conference to conclude World Immunization Week 2023.

Iraq has made great progress in immunization with over 90% coverage achieved for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis immunization, and measles coverage reached 88% - the highest in two decades. It's important to continue prioritizing vaccinations and protect the health and well-being of our communities #ForEveryChild.

Second round of joint external evaluation of International Health Regulations concluded in Baghdad

Baghdad, 03 May 2023 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Iraq, concluded this week a three-day workshop on the self-evaluation phase of the second round of Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR).

The workshop brought together 88 participants representing various sectors, including the Ministry of Health, food safety, animal health, environmental health, points of entry and security sectors, with the aim of assessing the country's capacities to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to public health hazards, whether occurring naturally or due to deliberate or accidental events.

“This round of Joint External

Evaluation is critical to enhance multisectoral collaboration for health security in Iraq, support the country in completing the self-evaluation phase of the JEE and prepare for the external evaluation phase,” said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq. “The JEE will assist Iraq in determining the most pressing gaps in the country's human and animal health systems, allowing them to prioritize opportunities for improved preparedness and rapid response to public health risks,” he added.

The JEE comprises two stages: the self-evaluation phase by IHR national stakeholders using the JEE tool and the External evaluation phase by external experts (WHO and partners) jointly with nationals. The outcomes of the evaluation are paramount in

informing the updates to the National Action Planning for Health Security (NAPHS).

The first JEE, held in March 2019, assessed Iraq's capacity for health security and provided a baseline for progress in IHR core capacities. The evaluation covered 19 technical areas across prevention, detection, response, points of entry, and hazards, and provided a basis for strengthening health security in Iraq.



New Intensive Care Unit for respiratory tract infection hospital supported by Canada opens in Sulaymaniyah

Sulaymaniyah, 03 May 2023 – A new Intensive Care Unit for Respiratory Tract Infection Hospital in Sulaymaniyah was inaugurated today, strengthening health infrastructure in the region and providing access to life-saving and specialized respiratory care services for over 730,000 residents.

The newly constructed facility officially opened during an inauguration ceremony with Canadian Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Gregory Galligan, Kurdistan Regional

Government Minister of Health, Dr. Saman Barzanji, Sulaymaniyah Governor, Dr. Haval Abu Baker, and Sulaymaniyah Directorate General of Health, Dr. Sabah Haorami.

UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization and the Government of Canada built the Intensive Care Unit for Respiratory Tract Infection Hospital and equipped it with advanced medical tools. The unit has 20 isolation rooms, each with a ventilator and humidifier, patient monitor, mechanical bed, and

necessary medical devices and accessories. The hospital was also provided with a defibrillator, a video laryngoscope, an ECMO device, and generators.

“We are grateful to the Government of Canada for its commitment to supporting the people of Iraq. The construction of this specialized facility brings treatment closer to people needing immediate medical attention and also eases the burden on major hospitals in the region,” says UNDP

New Intensive Care Unit for respiratory tract infection hospital supported by Canada opens in Sulaymaniyah *(continued)*

Iraq Resident Representative Auke Lootsma.

"Canada is proud to support the establishment of this Intensive Care Unit in Sulaymaniyah that will bring life-saving healthcare services to the doorstep of its residents and surrounding communities. Our partnerships with the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Government of Iraq will not only improve the quality and accessibility of healthcare services but also boost the resilience of the healthcare system, enabling it to respond with agility to future crises and pandemics," says Canadian Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Gregory Galligan.

"The opening of this facility marks a significant milestone in the efforts to revitalize Sulaymaniyah's health sector and improve its capacity to respond to public health emergencies such as pandemics," says KRG Minister of Health, Dr. Saman Barzanji.

"In recent years, respiratory tract infections have become one of the threats to Sulaymaniyah's public



health. Through this state-of-the-art intensive care unit and with our highly skilled and compassionate medical experts and health professionals, we will be able to provide the best possible care and treatment to patients with respiratory diseases such as pneumonia, bronchitis, and COVID-19," says Governor of Sulaymaniyah, Dr. Haval Abu Baker.

The construction of the Intensive Care Unit for Respiratory Tract Infection

Hospital in Sulaymaniyah, which began in March 2022, took one year. Its design was developed by UNDP engineers in consultation with the Sulaymaniyah Health Directorate.

The Government of Canada has contributed US\$ 39.844 million to UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, supporting 116 projects on infrastructure rehabilitation and livelihood creation and benefitting over 324,000 people.

Australian Ambassador visits Al-Shifaa Complex to see the progress of UNDP's rehabilitation work in West Mosul

Mosul, 04 May 2023 - Australian Ambassador to Iraq Her Excellency Ms. Paula Ganly today visited the Blood Bank, Radiology Centre, and Al Batool Maternity Hospital in Al-Shifaa Complex to see the progress of UNDP's rehabilitation work in West Mosul.

Along with other donors, Australian Embassy, Iraq has equipped the Blood Bank, Radiology Centre, and Al-Batool Maternity Hospital with brand-new furniture. When opened, these health facilities are expected to serve over 800,000 people.

UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization continues to rehabilitate the Al-Shifaa Complex with support from various donors. Once a place for

Iraq's most modern medical facilities, the complex became one of ISIL's last

headquarters and was severely damaged during the conflict.



On International Nurses Day, we pay tribute to nurses in Iraq and across the world

Baghdad, 12 May 2023 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Iraq: "Since I started working in the health sector, I witnessed the critical role played by nurses around the world. On International Nurses Day, join me in paying tribute to nurses in Iraq and across the world".



WHO and Ministry of Health conduct joint investigation and response plan for meningitis outbreak in Halabjah and Sulaymaniyah



Sulaymaniyah, 9 May 2023— Following a surge in meningitis cases in Halabjah City and Sulaymaniyah governorate since mid-April 2023, an expert team from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health was deployed to the affected areas to perform a joint epidemiological investigation of the reported cases and develop a swift response plan to curb the transmission of the disease.

Preliminary laboratory results from 24 collected samples showed a mixture of bacterial (streptococcus pneumonia) and viral (enterovirus) meningitis, indicating two responsible pathogens. Further laboratory investigations are underway for more conclusive results. The majority of cases occurred in school-aged children, with males affected twice as often as females. The upward trend in cases is still ongoing, with the epicentre of the epidemic located in the center of Halabja and nearby Serwan City.

“No deaths have been reported so far; nonetheless, it is crucial that we act quickly to detect, confirm and treat cases to effectively curb the transmission and control the outbreak,” said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq.

Visits to Wafaa Hospital in Halabja and Dr Jamal Ahmad Rashid's Pediatric Teaching Hospital in Sulaymaniyah shown a sudden increase in meningitis cases in the last two weeks, mainly affecting children under ten years old. Healthcare professionals have been working tirelessly to treat patients, but challenges such as a critical shortage of staff, essential medicines, and supplies have been observed in both hospitals.

WHO has obtained 20 cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) samples from the affected hospitals, which will be shipped to a WHO collaborating Laboratory for further analysis. In the meantime, WHO ordered rapid diagnostic test kits

for meningitis to facilitate the timely identification of causal pathogens and enable prompt public health action.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, WHO will organize a multidisciplinary training on meningitis for surveillance staff, healthcare professionals, and laboratory technicians in Halabja and Sulaymaniyah during the week of May 21, 2023. This training aims to quickly scale up frontline response capacities in the affected areas.

“Our current priority is to curtail the spread of the meningitis outbreak and deliver urgent and effective care to those affected. We are working closely with the WHO team to develop and deliver a robust response including heightened surveillance and enhanced laboratory capacities,” said Dr Riyadh Al-Hilfi, Director-General of the Public Health Directorate in the Ministry of Health.

Depending on the identified causal pathogen, response strategies may include a pneumococcal vaccination campaign for children, adherence to infection prevention control measures, and enhancing community education and awareness.

“In response to the current outbreak, WHO has already begun to take prompt actions by enhancing the surveillance, data collection and laboratory capacity for and case management,” said Dr Chiori Kodama, Medical Officer, Infectious Hazard Prevention and Preparedness programme at the WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

WHO holds few scientific sessions to sensitize doctors and health workers to the CCHF case management protocol

Baghdad, 13 May 2023 - To enhance early detection and diagnosis of Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) and reduce the associated mortality rate, the

World Health Organization (WHO) held scientific sessions this week in Baghdad, Basra, and Thi Qar governorates to sensitize doctors and health workers to

the CCHF case management protocol and raise their awareness about prevention and control measures.

WHO participated in the 19th International Scientific Conference of the College of Medicine - University of Baghdad

Baghdad, 14 May 2023 - The World Health Organization (WHO) participated in the 19th International Scientific Conference of the College of Medicine - University of Baghdad. During the conference, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, reaffirmed the WHO's commitment to collaboration and

partnership with Baghdad University and relevant stakeholders to work towards achieving #HealthForAll and ensuring Universal Health Coverage in Iraq.





Baghdad, 15 May 2023 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met with the Chargé d'Affaires of the Norwegian Embassy in Iraq, Mr Erik Husem. Dr Zouiten commended Oslo University's role in supporting health digitalization efforts in Iraq and explored opportunities for further collaboration between Norway and WHO Iraq to advance health security and achieve Universal Health Coverage in Iraq.



Baghdad, 17 May 2023 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met with the Ambassador of Australia to Iraq, H.E Ms. Paula Ganly, and briefed her on the health digitalization progress in Iraq. They discussed ways to foster partnership between WHO Iraq and Australia to advance the health system and achieve Universal Health Coverage in Iraq.



Baghdad, 25 May 2023 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met with the Ambassador of Kuwait to Iraq, H.E. Tariq Abdullah Al-Faraj, to explore ways for further enhancing the strong partnership between WHO Iraq and the state of Kuwait to advance health digitalization in Iraq. Kuwait has always been a committed and generous partner to WHO in Iraq.



Baghdad, 28 May 2023 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, met with the UAE Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Salem Al-Zaabi, to discuss ways of collaboration to strengthen the healthcare sector in Iraq. They agree that effective governance and health digitalization are crucial to advancing health systems and achieving #HealthForAll Iraqis.

Ministry of Health, WHO Iraq, and UNICEF with funding from Saudi Arabia through Alwaleed Philanthropies, launched a national multi-antigen immunization campaign (2nd round)

Basra, 21 May 2023 - The Basra Health Directorate, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, WHO Iraq, and UNICEF with funding from Saudi Arabia through Alwaleed

Philanthropies, launched a national multi-antigen immunization campaign (2nd round) to protect children under 5 years old from vaccine-preventable diseases, with special focus on polio and

measles. The campaign will last for 10 days.

Together, we can safeguard the health and well-being of every child in Iraq.

World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health, concludes a 4-day basic emergency care course

Erbil, 23 May 2023 - To enhance immediate life-saving interventions for acutely ill patients, the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health, recently concluded a 4-day basic emergency care course, targeting 15 medical emergency specialists and nurses representing emergency hospitals in Erbil.



"Hello, world. I cannot talk yet, but I want to tell my story"

Erbil, 24 May 2023 - "I wish I had a name, but I don't have one yet. I still carry my mother's name so you can call me 'son of Nisreen' as written on the bracelet they put on my tiny wrist.

I was born on 8 April 2023 - nine weeks before my birth due date - weighing 800 grams. Yes, just 800 grams! Previously premature babies like me with this low birth weight would not have made it this far but, apparently, I am lucky. I am lucky to be born in a hospital newly rehabilitated and equipped with the latest medical technologies to give the gift of life to little human beings like me.

I spent my first 50 days of life in this small transparent box called 'incubator'. I sleep in it; I eat in it; and I so far spent all my days enjoying its warmth. Yes, I am lucky and my start in life might look difficult, but my days are not in danger anymore.

Every day, people dressed in gowns and white coats come to check on me, some tickle me with their rubber gloves. Yesterday, a nurse even gave me a painful injection. I wanted to cry, but I could not!.. but for the last few days, I see the smiles on the faces of the doctors every time they peek through the glass of my box. Their smiles give me comfort and I feel that my life out of this box is not far. I cannot wait to meet my family and finally have a name.

I know my mother Nisreen and my father Karwan are eagerly waiting to introduce me to my sister and the rest

of the family. They did not think I would make it this far, but things are looking rather promising.

My story would have been a normal one if I was born on my due date in any maternity hospital in my town but coming to life too early and too tiny put me at a risk that only a well-equipped maternity hospital could manage. I am so happy to be born in Erbil Maternity Teaching Hospital which has today the right equipment and the right doctors and nurses to care for small people like me."

#

WHO team was inspired by the story of little Meer, and during the visit to the hospital, were told that Meer is now weighing 1800 grams and is getting ready to leave the incubator in the aforementioned hospital and go meet his family. His days are no longer in danger after spending almost two months under the care of well-trained

healthcare professionals in a WHO-supported facility. Meer and premature babies like him had little chances of survival before the opening of this state-of-the-art neonatal service in Erbil.

The journey of Meer is a proof of the impact of investing in quality healthcare for premature infants. This is the reason why WHO and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) have partnered with Erbil Directorate of Health and Erbil Maternity Teaching Hospital to upgrade the neonatal services as well as the delivery room with outstanding impact on maternal and child survival and well-being. The 2nd tranche of the project will further improve the obstetric services and will provide Meer and other premature babies from Erbil and surrounding governorates with a healthy start in life.



Burn Center in Sulaymaniyah undergoing renovation of the adult department

Sulaymaniyah, 21 May 2023 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq, visited the Burn Center in Sulaymaniyah to inspect the ongoing renovation of the adult department as part of the 3rd tranche of WHO Iraq support to the hospital.

This life-saving center is being

upgraded thanks to the partnership between the Department of Health of Sulaymaniyah, WHO Iraq and their implementing partner Heevie and with financial support from the Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau of the U.S. State Department.



A joint action plan to respond to the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) outbreak in Iraq being developed

Baghdad, 31 May 2023 - The World Health Organization (WHO) today wrapped up a fruitful meeting with colleagues from the Iraq Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to develop a joint action plan to respond to the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever

(CCHF) outbreak in Iraq. It was agreed to further strengthen coordination and activate the #OneHealth approach in our quest to control the outbreak and safeguard the health of our communities.



Vaccines save children's lives in remote areas in Iraq



Basra, 28 May 2023 – Asma Ali, a 36-year-old woman is waiting to get her 3-month-old baby girl Rawan vaccinated at Al Shuaiba Primary Health Care Center. Accompanied by her mother-in-law, Fourat, Asma is keen on vaccinating her newborn baby girl.

“I always bring my children to get vaccinated on time,” said Asma with pride. “I want to protect them from all diseases and give them the best start in life.”

Due to poverty, social norms and traditions, Asma got married at an early age. She has six children, five girls and one boy.

“I dropped out of school at the age of 14,” recalled Asma. “I wanted to continue my education, but my parents insisted that I get married.”

Rawan Ali Abdullah, a 3-month-old baby girl is getting vaccinated. With funding from Korea, UNICEF is supporting Al Shuaibi Primary Health Care Center by installing solar panels to ensure that vaccines storage temperatures are maintained during electricity cuts.

Her two oldest daughters, Sujoor, 18 and Zmorod, 16 were also married at an early age. Each girl already has one child.

“My oldest daughters did not want to continue their education,” said Asma with grief. “My husband Ali and I had no choice but to marry them early.”

Asma’s husband Ali is a daily labourer. Securing jobs is a burden, making him face many challenges in making ends meet.

“My husband is out of a job now,” uttered Asma. “But, irrelevant of our situation, I am determined to have my three younger daughters and son continue their education.”

Clean energy to maintain vaccine storage

Established in 2006, Al Shuaiba Primary Health Care Center (PHC) serves seven impoverished communities in Basra. Fortunately, 20 out of the Center’s 35 staff members are women.

“I always encourage women to work at this clinic,” said Ms. Hadeel Murad, Manager of the PHC. “Among the

female staff is one physician, nurses, pharmacists and a dentist.”

The Center offers maternal and child health services, dental care, general medical care and pharmaceutical services to more than 24,000 vulnerable people in Basra.

“Most of our patients suffer from poverty,” said Ms. Murad. “They come to the clinic to receive free medical and dental care.”

On a monthly basis, the Center serves up to 900 patients, half are children. Though, like most areas in Iraq, the Center suffers from power outages presenting a major challenge for vaccine storage.

“At times, power outage lasts up to six hours,” said Ms. Murad.

During long hours of a power outage, the PHC Manager had no option but to resort to using the generator. Yet, the generator can function for a few hours, leaving the vaccine storage without electrical power for some hours.

“On a daily basis, we receive up to 20 children to get vaccinated,” said Ms. Murad. “I work hard to ensure that the vaccines administered to children are effective.”

To adhere to vaccine storage guidelines and to overcome the power outages, UNICEF, with funding from Korea, supported the clinic with solar panels and plans to refurbish the Center.

“These solar panels will help us to maintain the vaccine cold chain,” added Ms. Murad. “Through vaccines, we can prevent outbreaks and ensure that every child is protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.”

By Monique Awad, UNICEF Iraq

WHO and Ministry of Health launch Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS) results in Iraq

Baghdad, 7 June 2023— The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health in Iraq, launched today the results of the Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS) in Iraq, marking a significant milestone in the health digitalization of the country's health system.

HeRAMS offers comprehensive data that will revolutionize the decision-making process, drive effective and sustainable actions to improve health outcomes and foster a data-driven culture that prioritizes the use of health metrics and indicators.

The results of the system revealed the WHO and the Ministry of Health teams



managed to assess 5205 health facilities, leaving no village untouched. The tool provided comprehensive data and an accurate snapshot of the available resources within the health

system.

“This system will enable us to identify weaknesses, determine areas for improvement and allocate resources more accurately, efficiently and

WHO and Ministry of Health launch Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS) results in Iraq *(continued)*

effectively,” said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq. “Our journey does not end here. We already initiated work on the District Health Information System DHIS2, a tool that provides both aggregate and real-time data on disease surveillance and health programs and outcomes.”

The HeRAMS system provides an accurate picture of the availability of human resources, technical

requirements, and various health services in all health centers and hospitals throughout Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region and all Iraqi governorates. It also provides an accurate database that allows the fair distribution of resources in line with the needs of the population.

The health sector in Iraq is one of the first sectors to enter the digital club in the country, in line with global

advancements and in conformity with the goals set by the Iraqi government.

“Today, we embark on a significant journey towards improving healthcare in Iraq. Let us keep the momentum and continue to make progress towards building a strong health system that ensures universal health coverage and health for all in Iraq,” added Dr Zouiten.

WHO Representative in Iraq concludes a three-day visit to the southern governorates in Iraq

Basra, 05 June 2023 – Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq: “Just concluded a three-day visit to the southern governorates in Iraq, where I met government officials, health authorities, physicians and health workers, as well as resilient communities and patients to address the alarming increase in CCHF cases. My key message was: we can only contain the outbreak if we effectively coordinate action between human and animal health within the #OneHealth approach.”



Over 500,000 children reached with lifesaving vaccines by Ministry of Health, supported by UNICEF and WHO

Baghdad, 8 June 2023 – Over 500,000 most vulnerable children, including almost 50,000 children who are under-immunized or missed out completely on their vaccines, were vaccinated in the second round of Iraq’s first-ever multi-antigen campaign led by the Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from UNICEF, WHO and partners.

In the 10-day-long campaign, a total of 1,303,587 doses of vaccines were used to vaccinate 523,584 children, including 332,023 against measles, one of the most-contagious diseases, by 3,834 health workers. Additionally, more than a million caregivers, including fathers, were reached with messages to raise awareness about the importance of vaccines and to build their trust and demand for vaccine. The campaign was in-part financially supported by the UNICEF partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies as well as by the Centers for Disease Control.

“Vaccines are the world’s safest and most effective strategy to protect children from life-threatening diseases,” said Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

“UNICEF remains committed to supporting the MoH to ensure that every child in Iraq is reached with vaccines.”

As part of the campaign, WHO provided support for operational costs, enabling vaccinators to reach the targeted districts, including remote areas, and ensured efficient logistics for reaching the designated vaccination sites. The daily mobilization of thousands of vaccinators to these sites played a crucial role in the campaign’s success.

“This campaign was a great success in ensuring that no child is left behind in Iraq,” said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq. “I reaffirm WHO’s commitment to collaborate with the MoH, UNICEF and all partners to further strengthen the immunization programme and contribute to the advancement towards Universal Health Coverage.”

Globally, a total of 67 million children missed out on vaccinations between 2019 and 2021, with vaccination coverage levels decreasing in 112 countries. Yet in Iraq and through its intensified integrated immunization

outreach services have reached 90 per cent of children aged under 5 with the third dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DTP) and the first dose of measles vaccines, the highest coverage in two decades. This multi-antigen campaign aimed at reaching those children who had still missed out on these and other vaccines, with the hope of minimizing the resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases and advancing coverage to 95 per cent.

Immunization remains one of the most effective public health interventions, saving children from vaccine-preventable diseases, and enabling them to grow up healthy and reach their full potential. UNICEF and WHO are working tirelessly to make sure that every child, regardless of who they are and where they are, has access to the vaccines they need to not only survive but thrive.



UNICEF, in collaboration with Empowerment Organization, initiated a Menstrual Hygiene Management awareness campaign

Baghdad, 08 June 2023 - Funded by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), UNICEF, in collaboration with Empowerment Organization, has initiated a Menstrual Hygiene Management awareness campaign and discussed a year-long action plan to improve menstrual hygiene management within schools and universities in Iraq.



World Blood Donor Day commemorated in Iraq

Baghdad, 14 June 2023 - On World Blood Donor Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq thanks USAID - US Agency for International Development for their support to WHO in Iraq, ensuring access to safe supplies of blood and blood products. Their support has been key in equipping and supplying the national blood bank in Erbil, enabling them to maintain blood transfusion practices.



Tikrit Teaching Hospital now serves as the primary medical institution in Salah al-Din

Tikrit, 15 June 2023 - Swedish Ambassador to Iraq, Her Excellency Ms. Jessica Svärdröm, today visited Tikrit Teaching Hospital, one of UNDP's flagship projects in Salah al-Din.

After four years of extensive rehabilitation by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization and support from several partners including Embassy of Sweden in Baghdad, Tikrit Teaching Hospital now serves as the primary medical institution in Salah al-Din, serving 2 million people. As the largest hospital in the governorate with a 400-bed capacity, it offers a wide range of health services and provides training to medical students.

Ambassador Svärdröm was welcomed and toured by Mr. Khaled Burhan, Acting Director General of the Salah al-Din Department of Health, and Dr. Nawfal Khazal, manager of the Tikrit Teaching Hospital.

The Government of Sweden contributed

US\$ 1.694 million to Tikrit Teaching Hospital's rehabilitation. It funded the renovation of the new doctors' accommodation building, installation of

medical and laboratory equipment in the Blood Bank and Emergency Unit, and provision of furniture for the old doctors' accommodation building.



Third Global consultation on the health of refugees and migrants

Rabat, Morocco, 15 June 2023 - The World Health Organization (WHO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) held the Third

Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants from 13-15 June 2023. Hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco in Rabat, the Third Global Consultation serves as a meaningful and sustained platform for multi-

sectoral dialogue on refugee and migration health.

Building upon previous forums and commitments, including the WHO Global Action Plan on Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants 2019-

Third Global consultation on the health of refugees and migrants (continued)

2023, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and its first revision process, the International Migration Review Forum, and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the Third Global Consultation assessed the progress and good practices in promoting the health and well-being of refugee and migrant populations, considered emerging and persistent challenges, fostered implementation of key priorities, and built further political commitment on the way forward. Its purpose is to inform policy decisions and the implementation of appropriate interventions to improve, protect and preserve the health and well-being of refugees and migrants, as well as host communities.

Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq said: “The recent displacement crises and the subsequent public health consequences in Iraq have proved that public health cannot be achieved without considering

the health of refugees and migrants. I'm pleased to take part in the 3rd Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants in Rabat to promote action for the health of vulnerable populations.”



Emergency response mission for foot and mouth disease in Iraq



Baghdad, 17 June 2023 - A joint meeting was held between the Ministry of Agriculture represented by the Technical Undersecretary of the Minister and the Veterinary Department, with the participation of FAO experts (Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health EMC) in collaboration with EuFMD, and the FAO / Iraq Office, was held on June 15, 2023, at the office of the Technical Undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture / Ministry of Agriculture. With the aim of discussing the results of the visit of FAO experts specialized in providing advisory support to confront FMD SAT2 and epidemics that may affect livestock for the period from 11 to 15 June 2023.

The team summarized field visits to various regions in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, and to the central diagnostic laboratories in Baghdad and Erbil. They also reviewed department's

foot-and-mouth disease control Programmes and provided valuable observations and suggestions for an implementation plan for the FMD control system and animal diseases in general.

Dr. Mithaq Al-Khafaji, Technical Undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the rapid response of the FAO and the FAO team of experts, and confirmed the Ministry's commitment to implementing their valuable observations. He also explained the reasons that led to the outbreak of the disease in Iraq and the measures by the Ministry of Agriculture to control the disease and limit its spread, as well as to protect breeders and farmers by setting vaccination dates for animals and issuing veterinary certificates. In addition, a platform has been established that includes all hospitals

and veterinary clinics to share and disseminate information and reports on the number of animals and their movements, and to identify foci of injury.

In turn, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, stressed the need to form a joint committee to be called Iraqi FMD Task Force that includes experts in animal disease control from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources in the Kurdistan Region. The FMD task force would act as a technical advisory group to provide recommendations to decision-makers in Baghdad and Erbil. The FAO office in Iraq will develop the necessary recommendations to improve animal disease control programs and harmonies Global and local regulations for the protection of livestock in Iraq.

At the end of the meeting, several proposals and recommendations were concluded, most notably the joint cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and the FAO Organization by intensifying the training of veterinary staff in a qualitative and targeted manner through training programs to increase competencies and technical expertise, while building a system for monitoring and controlling livestock diseases, with the support of the proposal of the Representative of FAO in Iraq to form a committee specialized in communicating and unifying information between the Center and the Kurdistan Region, with the participation of the FAO, so that accurate information and data on animal diseases can be sent.

Prime Minister of Iraq launches National Population Policy with support of UNFPA



Baghdad, 23 May 2023 — The Iraqi Prime Minister, His Excellency Mohammed Shiaa Al-Sudani officially launched Iraq's National Population Policy in Baghdad on 17 May. The occasion coincided with the annual conference of the Arab League's Council for Population and Development, which was hosted by the Government of Iraq in Baghdad, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The Prime Minister, while acknowledging UNFPA as a trusted partner and appreciating its support in preparing the Policy, urged government institutions to prioritise requirements outlined in the Policy when formulating relevant development policies. He emphasised that contrary to misconceptions that the National Population Policy contains measures to reduce birth rates or limit population growth, the Policy promotes measures that will lead to a demographic bonus for Iraq and urged that these measures should be rooted in economic, educational, and training plans. He informed that experts and specialists caution that this demographic gift may become a curse if proper attention is not paid to current population changes and challenges.

Representing the United Nations family in Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaccai, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident



and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, observed that Iraq is currently experiencing a remarkable surge in the number of young people in its demographic structure, that present a unique opportunity. He emphasised that this opportunity can only be realised when Iraq Government invests in education, health, and employment programs for the youth right now to harness their productivity in the medium term and increase the positive economic impact leading to Iraq's achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

The National Population Policy presents a significant milestone for Iraq, providing guiding principles that will shape the country's approach to population-related matters and connecting current demographic realities with sustainable national development plans.

Here is the full text of DSRSG/RC/HC Isaccai's remarks:

"Your Excellency Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, Mr Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani

Your Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning, Dr Muhammad Ali Tamim

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

Today, I have the honor to be here to speak on behalf of the United Nations family, at the official opening of the Arab Council for Population and Development Conference and the launching of Iraq's National Population Policy.

Iraq's population, currently estimated at 43 million, is growing at a rate considered among the fastest in the world, mainly driven by high birth rates. This growth rate enlists valid concerns of high consumption, its impact on the environment, and challenges of budgeting for infrastructure, health, education, and

pension programmes.

That said, focusing exclusively on Iraq's population growth rates misses the point, and could lead to counter-productive measures and the erosion of human rights. Ensuring that individuals, in particular women, have access to family planning services, can facilitate a drop in fertility and help to accelerate economic and social development.

Excellencies, Iraq is also currently experiencing a remarkable surge in the number of young people, which presents a unique opportunity. By investing in education, health, and employment opportunities for the youth, Iraq could harness their productivity on the medium term and significantly increase a positive economic impact and pave the way for a more prosperous future.

A conducive policy and legislative environment that promotes women's rights and opportunities for young people is crucial for Iraq's population program and development. I therefore want to congratulate the Government for launching the National Population Policy that will guide different sectors on best ways of investing in human capital.

Over the past decade, the UN has been actively engaging in addressing population issues in Iraq within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our work has focused on various aspects of population dynamics, including reproductive health, gender equality, youth empowerment, and migration. We have been striving to improve access to quality healthcare services, particularly in underserved areas, and to promote family planning initiatives and reduce maternal and child mortality rates. The UN has also supported programs aimed at empowering women and girls and combating gender-based violence. We also worked to harness the potential of Iraq's youth by providing education, vocational training, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, it has played a crucial role in addressing the challenges posed by internal displacement and migration, providing assistance, and supporting the reintegration of displaced populations. Finally, the UN in Iraq stands ready to continue supporting governmental efforts to achieve our shared vision of a more prosperous and stable Iraq.

I wish you a fruitful conference.

Thank you."

The Duchess of Edinburgh visits Iraq



Baghdad, 23 May 2023 - The Duchess of Edinburgh visited Iraq at the request of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, in support of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), and to continue Her Royal Highness's work to champion the survivors of conflict related sexual violence.

The Duchess has spent two days in Baghdad, where Her Royal Highness

heard about the challenges facing Iraqi women and girls, and the ongoing work to protect and promote their rights.

Her Royal Highness attended a session of the annual CSSF Women's Voices First Conference, where she delivered an address on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. At the conference, The Duchess also met with local Women's Rights organisations and beneficiaries supported by the

programmes.

While in Baghdad, The Duchess of Edinburgh was received by the President of Iraq, Abdul Latif Rashid and the First Lady, and Her Royal Highness shared a message of greeting from His Majesty The King. The Duchess was also received by Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al Sudani.

During her visit, The Duchess of Edinburgh visited the UNFPA-supported family planning centre in Baghdad to learn about services offered by the centre. She heard about the importance of family planning and praised the centre's efforts in empowering women and couples.

Her Royal Highness also visited IOM Iraq's community centre in Duhok and met with women survivors to show her solidarity and commitment to #WomenPeaceSecurity.

Aimed at improving mental health, restoring agency and providing a safe space, IOM projects in Iraq are tailored to the specific needs of survivors and to help them build resilience and develop positive coping mechanisms.

UNFPA host British diplomats at the family planning and women community centers

Erbil, 13 June 2023 – UNFPA was thrilled to welcome British Consulate General in Erbil to experience the incredible effects of family planning and women community centers supported by UNFPA in Duhok. During the visit, the consul general of the UK had the chance to talk to women about reproductive health and family planning.

Healthcare providers and women visiting the center of excellence in Duhok shared their experiences of using voluntary family planning methods and their impact on families and communities.



Environment

Iraq delegation visits Croatia: knowledge sharing on transboundary water resources management

Baghdad, 27 April 2023 - Last week, an official delegation from Iraq visited the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) in Croatia to gain insights into the successful example of joint management of transboundary water resources. The Iraqi delegation composed of representatives of multiple key ministries, namely the Ministry of Water Resources, headed by H.E the Minister Aun Dhyaib Abdullah,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Environment.

The International Sava River Basin Commission with its permanent secretariat in Croatia presents an excellent example of cooperation among Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia in planning, sharing data and information, sustainable utilization, protection, and management of shared water resources.

Historically, the Sava River, once the largest national river, transformed into an international river following geopolitical changes in the 1990s. This shift led to fragmented management of water resources reduced economic activities, and mismanagement of essential systems like data exchange, monitoring, and early warning systems. The basin countries accepted the challenge and managed to conclude the

Iraq delegation visits Croatia: knowledge sharing on transboundary water resources management *(continued)*

Agreement on the Sava River Basin, the unique international agreement, which integrated all aspects of the water resources management, and established the joint International Sava River Basin Commission for its implementation.

With Canada's financial support, coupled with technical assistance from UNDP, the visit aimed to learn from the ISRBC's experience, with the view of implementing a similar approach by Iraq and its riparian countries in the Tigris-Euphrates river basin.

During their two-day visit, the Iraqi delegation engaged in a series of meetings, presentations, and site visits. Some of the key takeaways from the visit include:

Integrated water resources management: The Sava River Basin demonstrated the importance of considering its hydrological systems as indivisible units, encompassing the ecosystems, biodiversity, and social, and economic processes. This holistic approach applied in planning and management provided valuable insights for Iraq's water management efforts.

Harmonizing different water uses: The Sava River Basin experience highlighted that different water uses by



riparian states can be harmonized with the existence of strong political will. By promoting the economic benefits of the river, such as navigation, riparian countries may be more inclined to cooperate.

Involving indigenous people: Including local communities in water resource management can lead to more sustainable solutions and increased awareness of the importance of integrated water resources management.

Although each basin has its unique circumstances and conditions, the visit to the International Sava River Basin Commission provided the Iraqi delegation with valuable insights into

successful transboundary water management. The lessons learned from the Sava River Basin experience could inspire the development of similar agreements and cooperative mechanisms for Iraq's water resource management.

Overall, the visit to Croatia marked the political and technical commitment of Iraq towards transboundary cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and data with riparian countries of the Tigris-Euphrates river basin. UNDP is committed to continue supporting Iraq to pave the way for more effective national and transboundary water resources management.

The United Nations in Iraq is committed to offering advice and technical support to enhance water management and ensure equitable access to water for all Iraqis



Baghdad, 06 May 2023 - Speaking at the Baghdad 3rd International Water Conference today, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq,

Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, emphasized the importance of transparent and collaborative efforts to tackle Iraq's water challenges. The United Nations in Iraq is committed to offering advice and technical support to

enhance water management and ensure equitable access to water for all Iraqis.

Here is the text of his opening remarks: "Excellencies,

Distinguished guests, good morning.

Today, I have the honor of speaking at the 3rd Baghdad International Water Conference, at the invitation of H.E. Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, Prime Minister of Iraq, and H.E. Aoun Diab, Minister of Water Resources.

I would like to begin by highlighting some positive developments related to the water agenda that have taken place in recent months, thanks to the joint efforts of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations.

Specifically, I would like to congratulate Iraq for being the pioneer in the region to accede to the UN Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. This accession will open new opportunities to enhance

The United Nations in Iraq is committed to offering advice and technical support to enhance water management ... (continued)

transboundary water cooperation, while strengthening national water policies and practices, and enhancing intersectoral cooperation and stakeholder participation.

From our side at the United Nations, we have established a Water Task Force comprising water experts from different international organizations and think tanks to provide technical assistance and advice to the Government of Iraq on water issues. Our advocacy and engagement on water challenges in Iraq have increased significantly, reflecting our commitment to supporting Iraq in addressing its looming water crisis.

- At the national level, there is a need to:
- Initiate a national dialogue on water and around SDG6 on Clean Water and Sanitation leading to development of a national Water Roadmap.
- Make water resources management as a national priority, while allocating sufficient funds towards research, analysis, innovation, and transfer of efficient technologies for integrated water resources management.
- Invest in national capacity building, water infrastructure including dams, irrigation systems, and wastewater treatment plants, to maximize water usage.

- Promote water conservation measures: such as repairing leaky pipes, introduce water-saving technologies, and enforce regulations on water usage.
- Revive traditional Rainwater harvesting practices such as building catchment systems, to collect and store rainwater for future use.
- Establish water monitoring systems for river and ground water, and take regulatory, technological, and behavioral measures to prevent water pollution, while also investing in urban water recycling.
- Combat desertification through integrated and adaptive land, water, and forest management.
- Launch education and awareness campaigns to promote responsible water usage and conservation.

At the regional level there is a need to:

- Strengthen regional cooperation to develop equitable and eco-friendly water use policies, while developing a negotiated strategy encouraging riparian countries to sign river-basin-management agreements based on a win-win approach.
- Conduct regional water assessment of the economic,

environmental, regional integration and political benefits costs of non-cooperation on water resources.

- Actively leverage relevant global legal instruments on transboundary water.

To effectively address Iraq's water challenges, we must work jointly and transparently. The cross-cutting nature of water means that challenges must be addressed through a whole of government and whole of society approach, and approach that is inclusive and engages the Iraqi people, that is those most directly affected by the water situation.

On our side at the United Nations, we will continue to actively engage with our government counterparts, through the Water Task Force and the Inter-agency working group on climate and environment.

Let me close by saying that all technical solutions to the water problems are within our reach; what we need is effective policies, investments, incentive mechanisms, regulations, and enforcement actions.

The United Nations stands ready to support. I wish you all a fruitful conference.

Thank you."

DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai: "The implementation of the Water Convention offers new opportunities in boosting Iraq's domestic water management and governance frameworks"

Baghdad, 07 May 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, attended the session of the United Nations Economic Committee of Europe (UNECE) and the Economic and Social Committee of West Asia (ESCWA) at the Baghdad International Water Conference.

Here is the text of his remarks: "Excellencies,

Distinguished guests, good morning.

Let me begin by thanking ESCWA and UNECE colleagues for inviting me to speak at this important session on Iraq's accession to the UN Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and

International Lakes, Associated Next Steps, and the importance of SDG indicator 6.5.2 for measuring and driving transboundary water cooperation in the region.

The March 2023 UN Water Conference in New York emphasized the importance of cooperation, especially at transboundary level as a prerequisite for ensuring sustainable development, regional integration, building lasting peace and promoting cooperation in other areas.

The conference also emphasized the importance of promoting the exchange of information, experiences, and good practices.

It also called for the establishment of cooperation agreements where they do not exist as well as strengthening basin

organizations on the principles of international law and the UN Water Conventions.

The conference further called on member states to accede and implement the two conventions as key instruments to accelerate cooperation. Meanwhile, as I also mentioned in my opening remarks yesterday, I would like to commend Iraq for acceding to the UN Water Convention.

The implementation of the Convention offers new opportunities in boosting Iraq's domestic water management and governance frameworks, as well as a solid basis for strengthening cooperation with Iraq's riparian countries.

We as the UN family (UN Iraq, UNECE, ESCWA) are very proud to

DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai: “The implementation of the Water Convention offers new opportunities ... (continued)

have been part of this outstanding achievements by facilitating the needed steps for Iraq’s accession to the convention and by supporting the Iraqi Government with continuous legal, technical and policy advice.

Iraq must now actively use the Convention and its tools.

A prerequisite for this will be the availability of national capacity to advance implementation of the Convention.

It is therefore extremely promising that Iraq has established an Inter-ministerial Committee for the Implementation of the Water Convention, which gathers all the main stakeholders concerned with water management.

I encourage the Committee to lead and guide their efforts at national and transboundary level.

Facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of environment, water, and the adverse impacts of climate change is also enshrined in the SC Resolution 2631 UNAMI mandate.

Hence, the UN stands ready to support Iraq’s efforts in the implementation of the Convention, and identification of priorities, both for national and transboundary water management, and



an associated plan for its implementation.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, There is an urgent need to jointly promote national and regional projects related to water and climate adaptation measures, while using the Convention’s advantages and tools to work towards regional cooperation and integration.

As mentioned by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani yesterday, the country was engaged for too long in conflicts which distracted the country’s attention from the important water issue.

Now it is the time to build on the Convention and focus attention and

resources on water issues which are vital for the country’s socio-economic development and building sustainable peace.

Iraq, being the pioneer in the region to accede to the Convention is also a promising development for the whole region.

I encourage other countries to follow Iraq and join this important international framework.

Finally, I am looking forward to fruitful discussions and to tomorrow’s 1st inter-ministerial workshop on the implementation of the Convention.

Thank you.”

UN entities at the Baghdad International Water Conference

Baghdad, 06 May 2023 – Delegated by Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Mr. QU Dongyu, FAO representative in Iraq, **Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan** headed a delegation from FAO Iraq and HQ experts at the Baghdad 3rd International Water Conference held today.



During this session, in his opening speech Dr Salah El Hajj mentioned the severe consequences of water scarcity on food security, farmers' livelihoods, the national economy, national security, and the environment. He highlighted FAO Iraq's direct involvement in the conference and the organization's projects and interventions to tackle water scarcity in Iraq.

The 3rd Baghdad International Water

Conference stressed the importance of water management in Iraq. To promote water conservation #ForEveryChild, with funding from Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), UNICEF is undertaking rainwater harvesting in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Iraq, **Dr Ahmed Zouiten**, was honoured to join a high-level panel discussion along with ministers of Water resources, agriculture and environment during the Baghdad 3rd International Water Conference. Dr. Zouiten conveyed UN’s congratulations to Iraq for its accession to the Water Convention and stressed that no Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved without special attention to water security in Iraq and

the world.

At the 3rd Baghdad Water Conference, the World Food Programme (WFP) facilitated a session focused on integrating climate information in Iraq. This effort can serve as a robust foundation for implementing proactive measures and timely response strategies to mitigate the effects of climate shocks.



Ally Raza Qureshi, Representative for WFP Iraq: "Climate information systems are critical in climate change programming and for helping farmers adapt to climate change. We are working with our counterparts in Government of Iraq to strengthen the climate information systems so anticipatory action framework can be established".

The 1st inter-ministerial Committee meeting for implementation of the Water Convention held in Baghdad



Baghdad, 08 May 2023 - The 1st inter-ministerial Committee meeting chaired by Iraq Minister of Water Resources for implementation of the Water Convention with participation of the United Nations in Iraq and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention and Protocol on Water and Health secretariat and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) marks an important milestone for Iraq.

At the Inter-ministerial Committee meeting on the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Resources, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, said, "The Convention provides an opportunity for boosting Iraq's domestic water management and governance frameworks, as well as a solid basis for strengthening cooperation with Iraq's riparian countries". He stressed, "an inter-ministerial committee for the implementation of the Convention is of utmost importance to address the

water issues effectively, holistically, and in an inclusive manner."

Here is the text of his remarks:

"Excellencies, Distinguished guests, and colleagues,
Good morning.

Let me begin by thanking H.E. Aoun Diab, Minister of Water Resources, and his entire team for following-up on Iraq's accession to the UN Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes by forming this Inter-ministerial Committee for the implementation of the Convention and inviting and organizing for this inaugural meeting. The Convention provides an opportunity for boosting Iraq's domestic water management and governance frameworks, as well as a solid basis for strengthening cooperation with Iraq's riparian countries.

I would like to strongly encourage Iraq to benefit of the accession and implementation of the Convention to address its pressing water problems.

Water is a cross-cutting issue; hence I would like to echo what my Colleague Francesca, Chief of the Transboundary

Cooperation Section from UNECE, said yesterday, that an inter-ministerial committee structure for the implementation of the Convention is of utmost importance to address the water issues effectively, holistically, and in an inclusive manner.

From our side at the United Nations, we have established a Water Task Force comprising water experts from different international organizations and think tanks to provide technical assistance and advice to the Government on water issues. our advocacy and engagement on water challenges in Iraq have increased significantly, reflecting our commitment to supporting the country in addressing its looming water crisis.

To effectively address Iraq's water challenges, we must work jointly and transparently. The water challenges must be addressed through a whole of government and whole of society approach, and approach that is inclusive and engages the Iraqi people.

On our side at the United Nations, we will continue to actively engage with our government counterparts.

Let me close by saying that the Implementation of the Convention, the work of the Water Task Force and of international community must feed into an overall Government-led strategy to address the water issue. Furthermore, we need follow-up of meetings with defined workplans and milestones, and the Government needs to lead the process and develop ownership.

The United Nations stands ready to support. I wish you all fruitful deliberations."

Iraq steps up cooperation to address domestic and transboundary water challenges

Baghdad, 15 May 2023 - The Third Baghdad International Water Conference titled "Water Scarcity, the Mesopotamian Marshes, Shatt al-Arab Environment" (6-7 May 2023), organized by the Ministry of Water Resources of Iraq and the Authority of Dams and Water Resources, gathered country representatives and other concerned stakeholders from the region, together with UN entities, to address these pressing questions and challenges.

This comes in the wake of a long-lasting drought, and as desertification and the challenges of providing clean and safe water to Iraq's rising

population threaten livelihoods and socio-economic development in the country and beyond.

The shared Euphrates and Tigris rivers are the most crucial surface water sources for 43.5 million Iraqis, as well as for Iran (88 million people), Syria (21 million people) and Türkiye (85 million people). However, in recent years, low precipitation and increasing temperatures have led to critically low water levels. As a downstream country, transboundary water cooperation with its riparian neighbours is therefore becoming increasingly important for Iraq and a matter of national and regional stability.

Iraq's accession to the UN Water Convention brings new opportunities for the country and the wider region

Against this background, the recent accession by Iraq to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its implications for Iraq and the region was an important subject of debate at the Conference. The international community highly praised Iraq as the first Party to Convention in the MENA region. The Conference also concluded with an invitation to other riparian countries in the Tigris and Euphrates river basins

Iraq steps up cooperation to address domestic and transboundary water challenges *(continued)*

to join the two UN Water Conventions. Ghulam Isaczai, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and Resident Coordinator to Iraq, emphasized that "this accession will open new opportunities to enhance transboundary water cooperation while strengthening national water policies and practices and enhancing intersectoral cooperation and stakeholder participation".

The Water Convention's provisions for action at the national level can help strengthen the currently fragmented water governance in Iraq and support the development of a long-term, sustainable and fair cooperation framework based on UN standards and the rules of international law. The Convention also provides Iraq with an effective inter-sectoral vehicle to exchange experiences and assistance on many issues of relevance, such as adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

"Iraq has shown determination to harness the benefits of accession by establishing an Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Water Convention. The Committee can play a key role in guiding future action in the country, in

line with the rules and principles of the Water Convention", said Francesca Bernardini, Chief of the Transboundary Cooperation Section at UNECE, which provides secretariat services to the Water Convention.

The benefits of Iraq's accession will be felt beyond Iraq. "Based on the experience of Water Convention Parties, I am convinced that Iraq's accession will not only be beneficial for the country but for the whole region. I hope other countries will follow Iraq's example and accede to the Water Convention. I encourage you to use the Convention to strengthen cooperation, development, and stability in the region. The Convention's community of Parties is available to support your

efforts." said Harry Liiv, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention and Special Envoy for Transboundary Waters of Estonia.

On 8 May, to build on the momentum, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Implementation of the Water Convention, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr Aun Thiad, Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Iraq, met with representatives of the Water Convention and of the UN Water Task Force in Iraq (UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNECE, UNESCWA and the Geneva Water Hub) to discuss next steps in the implementation of the Water Convention and coordinated support to Iraq's water action.

By UN News.



WFP and Iraq develop a mangrove nursery in Basra to foster sustainable development and combat the climate crisis



Basra, 22 May 2023 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), in partnership with the local government of Basra, Iraq's Ministry of Environment, and the University of Basra's Marine Science Centre started a mangrove nursery in the tidal flats region with the capacity to produce up to one million mangrove seedlings annually.

The initiative aims to preserve a

mangrove ecosystem that enhances the region's biodiversity, sequesters carbon, and mitigates the risks of climatic shocks while also alleviating poverty by creating sustainable sources of income for coastal and fisherfolk communities.

"Through a collaborative effort with WFP and the international community, we are working towards transforming this area into an environmental exemplar through the planting of

mangrove trees," His Excellency Asaad Al-Eidani, the Governor of Basra said during an event there to launch the nursery. "When people with a genuine interest in improving our environment come together, remarkable achievements are made for Basra."

WFP and its partners have set an initial target of planting one million mangrove samplings per production cycle. This aligns closely with the Government of Iraq's commitment to plant five million trees in response to the climate crisis, as demonstrated during the Iraq Climate Conference.

"We affirm the Government of Iraq's dedication to the Paris Climate Agreement and the Iraqi national contributions to climate change, which serve as the guiding principles for climate action in Iraq," said His Excellency Nazar Mohammed Saaid Ameedi, Iraq's Minister of Environment. "We are eager to continue collaborating with the United Nations, diplomatic missions, and international agencies to enhance the resilience of affected sectors."

Mangrove restoration offers an effective

WFP and Iraq develop a mangrove nursery in Basra ... (continued)

and affordable nature-based solution to combat the climate crisis, providing a return of US\$4 for every US\$1 invested.

“Addressing the impacts of climate change poses a significant challenge for Iraq. WFP has demonstrated great commitment in finding solutions, and the reintroduction of mangroves is one such solution. I commend our partner for their exceptional efforts,” said Mr. Volker Oel, Director for Middle East; South-Eastern/Eastern Europe and Latin America at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. “Germany stands ready to continue supporting Iraq and its people alongside WFP. I am pleased to announce that we have allocated an additional allocation of €11 million (US\$12 million) from this year’s budget for WFP’s work in the country.”

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, highlighting the adverse effects of climate change on Iraq, recognized the efforts of all those who have made the nursery project a reality, including the volunteers. “Looking around us today – surrounded by the people who are leading the charge against climate change, reaffirming the success that is born from our collaboration – I believe we can also feel hopeful about what lies ahead,” she said.

Mangroves serve as habitats and nurseries for numerous fish species, safeguard crops and human settlements against storm surges and erosion, and filter pollutants that could contaminate food sources.

“Introducing mangroves in the southern region of Iraq is a significant step towards combating the effects of the climate crisis and enhancing food security,” said Ally-Raza Qureshi, WFP Representative and Country Director in Iraq. “While planting mangrove trees might not be the first solution that comes to mind when considering food security, it is a crucial piece of the puzzle.”

Here is the full text of SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert’s speech:

“Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be part of this event today, alongside His Excellency, the Governor of Basra, as well as His Excellency, the Minister of Environment.

The launch of this mangrove nursery shows, once again, that Iraq’s leaders are taking environmental challenges seriously. And frankly, this is no less than what is needed.

By the end of 2022, 68,000 people in

central and southern Iraq had been driven from their homes by drought. Alongside the impact on the agricultural sector, which is making food insecurity a reality for too many people, sandstorms and other extreme weather events, fueled by desertification, are - by now - part and parcel of the new normal.

Though, as I said at the Basra Climate Conference organized by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in March, we must avoid being drawn into a crescendo of doom. Fear can breed paralysis – which is the last thing we need. And so, I think this new nursery, supported by the World Food Programme in collaboration with key government and academic stakeholders, provides an excellent opening for a renewed focus on opportunities.

“Mitigation” and “adaptation” – we use these terms when we talk about climate change, but what do they actually mean?

Well, behind them lie real change; behind them lie concrete chances for improvement in the daily lives of people – particularly those who are most vulnerable.

What would this change look like? Of course, it could translate into heightened resilience, making the impact of the challenges I just mentioned less severe.

Or, and perhaps even better, it could mean the creation of new growth and opportunities. For example, if the Government can access the voluntary carbon credit market to finance some of its climate change programmes, this would free up resources for improvements in other areas. Or, indeed, a new, green economy, which includes investment in renewable energy, can, in and of itself, generate employment and spur economic growth. Either way, mitigation and adaptation are not negatives. Quite the opposite. When done strategically, they add up to a net gain.

And, partnerships that pool the resources and skills of different entities – federal and local government bodies,

the UN and other international partners, businesses and NGOs – are the way forward. So yes, I very much hope to see a scale up of such collaboration as Iraq’s Government makes its ambitious climate plans a reality, particularly in this decade of action on the Sustainable Development Goals and in the run-up to COP28 in the United Arab Emirates in November.

Now - in speaking of such partnerships, let me turn back to the reason we are all here today.

This new mangrove nursery should produce 1 million seedlings per year. That will mean, we hope, the planting of 5 million mangrove trees by 2028.

These trees will help in sequestering carbon, promoting marine diversity and – again, speaking about new opportunities – boosting ecotourism and food security.

Within this context, let me acknowledge the role of Basra University, as well as the Ministry of Environment, which, with WFP through funding from the Government of Germany, have made this project a reality.

And, if you allow me, I would also like to take a moment to highlight the efforts of so many vibrant, active groups and communities. Just take, for example, the volunteers who will be planting the mangrove trees today. In giving their time and energy, these young people are playing a direct role in protecting the future of generations to come.

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, there is no denying it: climate change is one of the biggest global challenges. And, here in Iraq, people are already feeling the effects of living under its shadow.

But, looking around us today – surrounded by the people who are leading the charge against climate change, reaffirming the success that is born from our collaboration – I believe we can also feel hopeful about what lies ahead.

Thank you.”



World Food Programme is planting 5,000 trees in Erbil

Erbil, 15 May 2023 - With modern technology, the World Food Programme (WFP) is planting 5,000 trees in Erbil. A big step forward for our environment and sustainability efforts. Thanks to the Groasis Waterboxx for conserving water and preventing waste/evaporation. This initiative is part of the "Building Resilience to Strengthen Food Security in Iraq" project, conducted by Rwanga Foundation in partnership with the World Food Programme and funded by

the German government Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ).

WFP also supported the Sarchnar Nursery in increasing its capacity by 1,000%. This supported the food security situation of 130 families. Forests play a significant role in achieving food security and WFP is expanding its afforestation projects.



DSRSG Cordone participates in a panel on climate change and the role of civil society organized by the Hikma National Movement

Baghdad, 5 June 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Claudio Cordone, participated in a panel discussion on climate change and the role of civil society organized by the Hikma National Movement. He emphasized the importance of joint action by the government, non-governmental and international organizations in implementing adaptation and mitigation measure and highlighted the UN technical and diplomatic role in support of Iraq.



World Environment Day: Time for Bold Action on Climate in Iraq

By Giorgi GIGAURI, Chief of Mission, IOM Iraq

Baghdad, 05 June 2023 - Last year, the second hottest temperature worldwide was recorded in Basra, Iraq: a sweltering 52.6°C (126.68°F). 2022 was a particularly bad year for climate-induced displacement in the country, with a tenfold observed increase in number of people displaced compared to 2021; and as environmental changes only continue to intensify, the rate of displacement is likely to continue to increase.

This World Environment Day, we are sounding the alarm: Iraq is in urgent need of assistance to respond to the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility. Thousands have already been displaced— one in ten in the past six years – across the country's southern and central governorates, and effects are also being felt in all other parts of the country.

Data from IOM's climate-related programming is shedding light on the complex interplay between climate change and migration dynamics. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall patterns have led to increased water scarcity, desertification and land degradation. This jeopardizes Iraqi lives, livelihoods and ways of life. As

a result, many have been – and many more will be – forced to abandon their homes.

In areas of Qal'at Saleh district, Missan Governorate, this is already a reality for over half the population. Ten locations assessed in Thi Qar Governorate have been fully abandoned. As clean drinking water dwindles, soil salinifies and rivers and marshes dry up, issues accessing safe, sufficient water emerge as the top predictor of environmental migration in Iraq.

In response to these challenges, IOM has been working closely with national and local partners to address the adverse impact of climate change since 2018. IOM's water infrastructure projects have connected over 1,000,000 people to safe and accessible water for drinking and agriculture; our support to sustainability-oriented small and medium agricultural enterprises has created over 1,600 jobs; and our business start-up and development packages have helped 2,200 small-holder farmers better adapt to climate change.

However, the magnitude of the climate crisis necessitates broader and more concerted efforts. As the Government of Iraq implements its strategy for climate action, collaboration between the international community, government partners, civil society, private sector and the country's diversity of communities is



absolutely imperative. Investments in climate-smart infrastructure; equitable land and water management systems and policies; sustainable and diversified livelihood opportunities; as well as early warning systems and disaster preparedness are crucial for reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience at both the local and national levels.

This World Environment Day, let us remember that the earth sustains us all, and we are its stewards. We must all play our part. Not doing so not only puts thousands of lives at risk, but it also threatens the progress and development already achieved by countries like Iraq, that are emerging from periods of immense violence and destruction. The best time to act was yesterday, but the second-best time is now. Let's get to work.

United Nations in Iraq commemorate World Environment Day



Baghdad, 05 June 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai: "On #WorldEnvironmentDay, let's join hands to cherish and preserve our

beautiful planet. Let's pledge to embrace eco-friendly habits and take immediate action to safeguard our environment. Let's reduce, reuse, and recycle to defeat the menace of plastic pollution. Together, we can create a greener, cleaner, and healthier world for generations to come! The United Nations in Iraq will continue to support the Government of Iraq in its National Environmental Pollution Reduction Strategy and Action Plan to protect Iraq's environment for a sustainable future".

Dr Ahmed Zouiten, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Iraq: "Iraq urgently needs climate action like never before. On World



Environment Day, I convey my message from the marshes in southern Iraq, where the impact of climate change on health and livelihoods is alarming. It's time for immediate and decisive action on climate".

UNDP in Iraq promotes sustainable solutions

Erbil, 06 June 2023 - The consumption of plastic in Iraq - and the rest of the world - is a serious problem. In Erbil, more than 1,500 tons of solid waste is generated daily and sent to landfills or burned in the open. Most of the waste comes from packaged goods, especially water bottles and plastic bags. Microplastics not only pollute the environment, but their particles also enter the human body, especially when the plastic is heated, which can lead to health problems.

UNDP Iraq introduced Eco-Vital, with financial support from the European Union, to distribute paper bags to

bakeries in Erbil to present this alternative to bakers and consumers and raise people's awareness of good environmental practices. Eco-Vital and its partners, who produce paper bags,

have contacted bakeries in Erbil to learn more about the reasons for choosing plastic, even though people in Kurdistan traditionally buy their bread in cloth or paper bags.



In southern Iraq, mangroves help restore an ecosystem hit by harsh weather



Basra, 05 June 2023 - By the end of 2022, drought had forced 68,000 people – including Hakim and his family of

eight – from their homes in central and southern Iraq.

The scorching sun heats up bustling

Basra. Outside the city, in the contrasting calm of the tidal flats, Hakim untangles his fishing net with the help of his brother, Abed Al Hasan. The men, both in their fifties, grew up around the marshes of southern Iraq, a vibrant ecosystem of wetlands that are currently beset by the toxic combined effects of the climate crisis and years of conflict.

"I've never had to swallow a single pill of medicine my entire life," Hakim says. He speaks of a time when the marshes were his haven of fresh air and water, and a reliable source of food and income.

However, in 2003, Hakim made the difficult decision to leave the marshlands and move to the tidal flats region in Basra to continue doing what he knows best: fishing.

But he now finds it harder to find

In southern Iraq, mangroves help restore an ecosystem... (continued)



enough fish to support his family, and he is forced to sell what little he catches at low prices that people might afford.

Iraq, which is experiencing worsening drought seasons, is among the top five countries most affected by the climate crisis around the world and is the 39th most water-stressed country globally. The Tigris-Euphrates River Basin – a river system shared between Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Kuwait – is facing prolonged dry periods, worsened by water diversions and dam construction upstream.

By the end of last year, drought had forced 68,000 people – including Hakim and his family of eight – from their homes in central and southern Iraq.

Compounded by rising food prices, dry water streams and salinity, the scarcity of fish has affected access to food in Iraq, even for families such as Hakim's, who live by the sea. Basra, a region known for its love of fish, has been feeling the impact. "Fishing here at one point will be a profession of the past,"

Hakim says, gazing out at the waters.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is stepping in, collaborating with the government of Basra, Iraq's Ministry of Environment, and the University of Basra's Marine Science Centre to do what it can to reverse this trend.

WFP has established a mangrove nursery in the tidal flats region, with the capacity to produce a million mangrove seedlings annually.

Mangroves are ideal for such an environment. They thrive on salty water and play a crucial role by serving as habitats for a wide array of fish species. They also act as a protective shield for crops and human settlements against the damaging forces of storm surges and erosion. Additionally, these ecosystems serve as natural filters, effectively removing pollutants that could contaminate vital food sources.

"Planting mangroves means a better environment, a better climate and, eventually, a better life," says Hakim.

WFP and its partners have set an

initial target of planting one million mangrove samplings per production cycle, aligning with the Government of Iraq's commitment to planting 5 million trees by 2028 (in response to the climate crisis, as announced at the Iraq Climate Conference).

By constructing the mangrove nursery and engaging with local fishers, like Hakim and his family, WFP is empowering them to become custodians of their environment and working towards a future of sustainable food security.

WFP is also supporting fishers with training sessions that serve as a platform to acquire new techniques, refine existing practices, and gain a deeper understanding of sustainable fishing methods. These involve selective fishing, according to the season, and minimizing waste through proper fish handling and storage techniques.

As the first seeds of mangroves take root, Hakim says that he envisions a thriving ecosystem that will attract an abundance of fish and shrimp, boosting his income and improving the quality of life for his family and community.

Hakim's children are not just fishers. They are also guardians of traditions passed down through generations. "I love fishing because it reminds me of who I am and guides me to what my children might become. When you look at the open sea, the possibilities are limitless," he says.

This intervention was made possible through generous funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

By Edmond Khoury, WFP Iraq

Canadian Ambassador to Iraq visits UNESCO's worksites in Mosul

Mosul, 03 May 2023 - UNESCO welcomes the visit of Canadian Ambassador, Greg Galligan, to its

worksites in Mosul. He witnessed firsthand the progress that is taking place within #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul

and expressed Canada's prouddness in supporting the work of UNESCO in Iraq.



Members of the Steering Committee are delighted with the remarkable progress achieved so far on the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project

Baghdad, 09 May 2023 – UNESCO is thrilled to celebrate the successful conclusion of the Joint Steering Committee meeting held on May 08, 2023! Members of the Committee, co-chaired by the Ministry of Culture and the EU, alongside UNESCO's other Iraqi and UN partners, are delighted with the remarkable progress achieved so far on the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project. It's exceeding our set objectives and paving the way for a brighter future for the people of Iraq. UNESCO is grateful to the EU for their generous funding of this project, as part of the larger #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul initiative. Together, we're making a real impact!



Iraqi Prime Minister visits Al-Nouri Mosque

Mosul, 12 May 2023 - UNESCO welcomed the visit of Iraqi Prime Minister, Mohammed S. Al-Sudani, to Al-Nouri Mosque witnessing firsthand the progress that is taking place within the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul implemented by UNESCO in partnership with Iraq and the United Arab Emirates . The Prime Minister expressed his satisfaction with the work done. Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Prime Minister.



UNESCO is thrilled to announce the completion of the magnificent Palatial House of Suleiman Al-Sayegh in the Old City of Mosul

Mosul, 21 May 2023 - Celebrating another Milestone in Mosul! UNESCO is thrilled to announce the completion of the magnificent Palatial House of Suleiman Al-Sayegh in the heart of the Old City of Mosul. Joined by His Excellency Mr. Ville Varjola, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Khairaldeen Ahmad Naser, Director of SBAH in Nineveh, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Chief of Culture Programme in Iraq, and the project team, we marked this momentous occasion with immense joy and pride. Thanks to the efforts of UNESCO and with the generous financial support from the European Union, this iconic building has been meticulously restored to its former glory. The Palatial House stands as a testament to the rich heritage and cultural legacy of Mosul, reflecting the city's vibrant history and architectural splendor.



European diplomats visit UNESCO worksites in Mosul



Mosul, 21 May 2023 - UNESCO warmly welcomed Mr. Ville Varjola, the Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, along with a distinguished delegation of diplomatic representatives from various European countries. Their visit aimed to witness and celebrate the incredible progress achieved at the Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Tahera Church project sites. These monumental sites hold profound historical and cultural significance not

only for Mosul but also for the entire region. Within the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul Initiative in partnership with the UAE, we are witnessing a truly remarkable transformation taking place. Together, we are breathing new life into these sacred spaces, symbolizing unity, and promoting peaceful coexistence. We are dedicated to preserving, restoring, and reviving Mosul's spirit, and we are excited to

share updates on this inspiring journey with you. Stay tuned for more information on the preservation, restoration, and the revival of Mosul's spirit.

High level European delegation also had the pleasure of meeting the resilient families who have returned to their cherished historic houses. Thanks to UNESCO's dedicated rehabilitation efforts, supported by the generous funding from the European Union, these homes have been given a new lease on life.

Witnessing this revival and the resilience of the local community has been truly inspiring. The restoration of these houses by Mosuli hands, not only brings back the charm of the Old City but also restores hope and confidence in its people. This collaborative effort between the European Union, UNESCO, and the Government of Iraq showcases the power of cooperation and solidarity. Together, we are creating a brighter future for communities affected by conflict and helping preserve their cultural heritage for generations to come, while creating thousands of local jobs.

Launch of the first-ever European Film Festival in Iraq

Mosul, 22 May 2023 - Launch of the first-ever European Film Festival in Iraq, right here at Mosul University! This incredible event organized by the EU showcased a diverse selection of European films. Seven captivating short films, made by talented young students from the Fine Arts Institute of Mosul, were also screened on this occasion in the presence of the students. These short movies were produced within UNESCO's project "A

film School in Mosul", in partnership with the Institute of Fine Arts' Theater Department in Mosul and the National Theatre of Gent, thanks to the generous financial support from the European Union, which helped to train and empower these young promising artists for 8 months in all domains of film production and to produce these short movies. The event is a celebration of creativity, cultural exchange, and the power of film to

promote freedom of artistic expressions.



Through vocational training Wael acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to the restoration of historical houses in the Old City of Basra

Basra, 31 May 2023 – True success is the result of unwavering determination. Take a moment to discover the remarkable journey of Wael Ayad. His story is truly inspirational, showcasing the power of will and the ability to conquer challenges through participation in the vocational training program offered by UNESCO under the project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities," funded by the European Union. Through this program, Wael acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to

the restoration of historical houses in the Old City of Basra. Despite the obstacles he encountered, Wael triumphed over his disability by harnessing his indomitable will and leveraging the training he received. His story serves as a powerful testament to the incredible achievements that can be accomplished when one possesses unwavering determination and receives adequate support. Wael Ayad's journey is a beacon of hope, inspiring us to pursue success in the face of adversity, and reminding us of the remarkable

potential within individuals to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.



"Mosul Heritage Day" festival is being held for the second year

Mosul, 25 June 2023 - On the anniversary of the Al-Hadba Minaret destruction, the "Mosul Heritage Day" festival is being held for the second year.

The festival features a range of cultural and heritage activities in the vicinity of the minaret, which is currently undergoing reconstruction by UNESCO. Its primary objective is to emphasize the significance of preserving heritage and celebrate the cultural diversity of the city.

The event encompasses traditional music performances, archaeological tours, and exhibitions that showcase local arts and crafts. Organized by the Bytna Institute for Culture and Arts in collaboration with Al-Noor University College, the festival expresses gratitude

to our partners in the United Arab Emirates and the European Union for their generous funding towards the

restoration of Mosul's monuments and historic houses as part of the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" Initiative.



Restoration of the magnificent complex and the guesthouse (Diwakhana) in the World Heritage Site of Erbil-Citadel is now completed

Erbil, 26 June 2023 - Exciting News! UNESCO is thrilled to announce that after years of dedicated work, restoration of the magnificent complex and the guesthouse (Diwakhana) in the World Heritage Site of Erbil-Citadel is now completed! Join us in celebrating this incredible achievement. This project was funded by EU Madad Fund.



Three prominent historical Shanasheel palaces inaugurated in Basra

Basra, 26 June 2023 - UNESCO, Ministry of Culture/State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and the Basra Governorate, officially inaugurated the three prominent historical Shanasheel palaces - the Palace of Culture and Arts, the Writers Union, the Plastic Artists Association, located in the Old City of Basra, reaching a significant millstone in the successful implementation of the project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities", generously funded by the European Union.

The opening event was celebrated in the presence of the national and local representatives along with the beneficiaries and the local community. It highlighted the very fruitful cooperation and partnerships that have emerged from this successful endeavor, fostering local expertise, and bolstering the safeguarding and promotion of

Iraqi cultural heritage, while providing skill and jobs for hundreds of young Basrawis during the restoration works. UNESCO remains steadfast in its commitment to preserving Iraq's cultural heritage and works closely with its partners to ensure that it is passed on to future generations in

accordance with heritage preservation standards. The second phase of the project is currently underway and includes the rehabilitation of nine additional historic shanasheel style houses in the Al-Basha area (Al-Basha district), south of Jisr Nadran and the rehabilitation of the Al Ashar Canal.



UNESCO supports to the inventory of Yezidi community's intangible and tangible cultural heritage in Iraq



Baghdad, 30 June 2023 - UNESCO Office in Iraq organized a training workshop on the inventory of tangible and intangible cultural heritage related to Yezidi Mazars with the community participation and in partnership with Nadia's Initiative, and in close cooperation with both Nadia's Initiative and Lalish Cultural Center.

The workshop was co-facilitated by two members of the International

Facilitators Network of UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (Dr Annie Tohme Tabet and Mr. Jean Hajjar). Thirty-three selected participants, all Yezidi community members from Sinjar, Duhok, Bahshiqa-Behazane and Cheikhan, were trained to conduct the inventorying works.

The ten days workshop included 5 theoretical days, 4 days of practical

inventory exercises on the field and 1 day for the evaluation of the fieldwork exercise results and the closing ceremony.

Before delivering the graduation certificates to the participants, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Head of Culture Programme at UNESCO Iraq office, explained that "the workshop is a part of a comprehensive project with the Yezidi Community to support them with the inventory of Yezidi intangible and tangible cultural heritage and hence its preservation and transmission for future generations. He also added that the choice of Yezidi Mazars and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) elements attached to them makes it possible to have a coherent inventory documenting elements belonging to all ICH domains. The trainees will carry out the inventory on the field in the coming weeks. The result of the field work, in cooperation with Nadia's Initiative and Lalish Cultural Centre and with UNESCO's technical support, is expected to be completed by September 2023.

Education

Graduation ceremony for craftspeople and exhibition on UNESCO and ICCROM's Mosul Heritage Recovery Programme

Mosul, 07 May 2023 - UNESCO and ICCROM celebrated the graduation of the 79 craftspeople who successfully completed the second track on Building Crafts Revival and Upgrading of the Heritage Recovery Programme in Mosul project, based on a needs assessment to map the existing typology of crafts, the level of skills available in Mosul, the locations of craftspeople, their demographic, social and economic profiles, the impact of conflict on these crafts, and current challenges and needs. Thus, UNESCO and ICCROM focused on traditional and modern carpentry, blacksmithing, stone masonry, and alabaster work, and involved international experts to bring back essential know-how that could have been lost as the industry favoured less expensive techniques and materials.

The ceremony also featured a multimedia exhibition of photographs, videos, traditional building tools and materials designed to guide the visitor through the project's two tracks on heritage recovery for building

professionals and craftspeople.

The carpentry workshop took place over 51 days and covered personal safety, different types, sizes, shapes, and origins of wood, measurements, wood cutting, and basic joinery techniques, producing and repairing doors, windows and furniture using both modern and traditional techniques.

The 66-day alabaster workshop focused on building techniques, carving and sculpting. Supported by local and

international experts, trainees explored restoration using epoxy and various types of mortar.

Finally, the 59-day workshop on stone masonry, included plastering and construction of walls, arches, vaults, and domes, including theoretical discussions on the characteristics of Mosul limestone to the tools, cleaning and practical sessions working with stone itself.

The needs assessment revealed an urgent need to revive traditional



Graduation ceremony for craftspeople and ... (continued)

blacksmithing in Mosul, particularly the skills to produce hand-forged handrails and window protection without modern electric welding. As the same technique is present in other historic Arab cities, UNESCO and ICCROM involved a highly skilled master blacksmith from Cairo who undertook several missions to Mosul to conduct various assessments, a 15-day Training of Trainers, and a 52-day workshop for semi-skilled blacksmiths. "In this context, a partnership with ICCROM to design a capacity-building programme was self-evident. Both UNESCO and ICCROM firmly believe that integrating capacity development of cultural heritage practitioners and craftspeople into the wider planning

response allows to capitalize on range of local capacities and skills, but also contribute to the recovery of livelihoods," said Paolo Fontani, Director of UNESCO Iraq Office.

The UNESCO and ICCROM Heritage Recovery Programme in Mosul is a capacity-building project implemented in partnership with UNESCO, the Iraqi Government, the University of Mosul, the United Arab Emirates and the European Union within UNESCO's flagship Initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul".

In this framework, UNESCO and ICCROM also trained architects and civil engineers on the tools that are crucial for such a recovery process and how to apply them on case studies in

conditions very similar to what they may encounter in their future endeavours, as part of the first track on Professional development for building professionals.

"It is undeniable that this partnership was a success, and we thank all partners, donors and communities who allowed it to make it happen. Supporting such an inspiring group of young building professionals and craftspeople take part in the heritage recovery of Mosul is truly the only way such a process can be holistic, sustainable, and resilient," said Valerie Magar, ICCROM Programmes Unit Manager.

UNESCO has been working alongside a team from the Ministry of Education to create a new Competence-Based ICT curriculum

Baghdad, 08 May 2023 - UNESCO, in collaboration with the EU, is partnering with the Ministries of Education to enhance the employability of graduates from Vocational schools. The key to improving employability lies in ensuring that these schools develop the skills demanded by the labor market. In order to assist the schools in achieving this objective, UNESCO has been working alongside a team from the Ministry of Education to create a new Competence-Based ICT curriculum, along with supporting learning and teaching materials. The Ministry of Education team has successfully developed 17 modules of materials, which are now ready for piloting and implementation in Vocational Schools starting from the next academic year.

To equip teachers from the Vocational Schools with the necessary skills to implement the new curriculum, a workshop was conducted from the 7th to the 12th of May. This is crucial since the curriculum is focused on competence-based education, prioritizing the acquisition of workplace skills rather than academic knowledge. This innovative approach emphasizes

the assessment of practical skills instead of traditional knowledge tests. The new ICT curriculum, developed by Iraqi experts under the guidance of UNESCO, is fully prepared for implementation in the upcoming academic year. This marks another significant step toward making Vocational Education more relevant to the needs of Iraqi society and



Baneen's experience in school

Basra, 08 May 2023 - Baneen, 12, is a Grade 6 student at Al Mustakbal Al Baher Primary School in Basra. She was struggling in school, and her grades were slipping, especially in math.

"I faced difficulties in class," recalled Baneen. "I found myself falling behind."

As Baneen could not keep up with her classmates, she felt lost and restless.

With funding from the European Union, UNICEF and UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education to roll out the education management information system (EMIS) in Basra.

The EMIS in Basra has been

implemented since 2022. Schools in Basra completed their training in September of last year and started uploading students' data.

To Baneen's fortune, her school was one of the schools that benefitted from this programme.

Al Mustakbal Al Baher Primary School received laptops, and a modem for Internet connection. Teachers benefited from EMIS training as well.

The rollout of the EMIS at Al Mustakbal Al Baher Primary School enabled the school principal to identify gaps and make informed decisions.

"The EMIS helped us monitor the overall school's performance and

identify students who need specific support like Baneen," said Ms. Sondus Taaobi, School Principal.

"I asked Grade 6 teachers to give more attention to Baneen in class, especially in math," added Ms. Taaobi.

As Baneen was receiving more support in the classroom, she started engaging more with her teachers as well as with her peers. The impact of the EMIS did not only advance Baneen's school performance but also boosted her confidence.

Baneen's grades kept on improving, making her very happy and satisfied.

"I am more confident in class, and I am progressing very well," said Baneen.

Baneen's experience in school *(continued)*



"Now, math has become my favourite subject in class."

"I no longer worry about my math grades, and instead I can fully enjoy recess with my schoolmates," added Baneen.

Baneen's life was transformed to the point that she started taking leadership roles at school.

"Now, I participate in many extracurricular activities.," said Baneen with a smile.

Baneen was recently elected to head the student health committee in school.

"Having my schoolmates' vote of confidence made me dream of becoming a dentist in the future," said Baneen

with pride. "I really want to take care of people's teeth and help them maintain a beautiful smile."

EMIS is now being implemented in eight governorates in Iraq. It aims at collecting up-to-date and reliable school data contributing to an inclusive and quality education for all girls and boys.

"I am so grateful to my teachers and school principal," said Baneen. "I could not have done it without their support and encouragement."

By Arwa Akram, UNICEF

The Focus Group discussed, reviewed and improved the facilitation guide for the "Critical Thinking, Media and Information Literacy" programme



Mosul, 11 May 2023 - Under the "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for Peace in Ninewa" project, supported by the Government of Japan and being implemented by UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific

Research and the Northern Technical University, UNESCO successfully organized a Focus Group Discussion session with elite administrative staff and lecturers from the Northern Technical University. The FGD session aimed at discussing, reviewing and

improving the facilitation guide for the "Critical Thinking, Media and Information Literacy" programme, in the framework of preventing hate speech, violent extremist discourse and enhancing resilience for peace.

Additionally, the FGD tackled the importance of strengthening student's critical thinking skills, helping them to engage critically with social media, become agents for peace and promotion of non-violence discourse inside and outside the campus.

UNESCO will use this guide, throughout the coming months, to train a cohort of the Northern Technical University staff who will transform the acquired knowledge and skills to the students through their daily interaction.

Cost of inaction: education deprivation in Iraq and the potential of social protection to reverse it

Baghdad, 15 May 2023 - The ILO and Bait Al Hikma held a roundtable discussion on the findings of an ILO working paper which identifies the economic impact of the education gap in Iraq and presents an estimate of the national economic losses in terms of potential cash flow from the labour market that would have been generated if Iraqi youth had received education at the same level as their peers in other countries.

ILO recently published a report "Cost of Inaction: Education Deprivation in Iraq and the Potential of Social Protection to Reverse it". 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.

Under a European Union funded programme to reform social protection, the ILO is providing technical assistance to the government of Iraq, in efforts to strengthen the adequacy, coverage and sustainability of the social protection system.

This paper forms part of a series of working papers produced under the programme – often jointly - by the ILO country team in Iraq which aim to support Government decision-making pertaining to social protection reform. These papers are feeding into important policy discussions on the priorities and direction of reform. This includes the dialogue platform established by the ILO and the Ministry of Planning that brings together central thought leaders, academics, decision-makers and development partners to discuss and debate key issues and priorities relating to social and labour policy in Iraq.

UNESCO Iraq Office joined the launch of Iraq National Education Strategy 2022 – 2031



Baghdad, 16 May 2023 - UNESCO Iraq Office joined the launch of Iraq National Education Strategy 2022 – 2031 under the auspices of Iraqi Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani.

UNESCO led the technical support in preparing the strategy with support of World Bank and UNICEF Iraq. The strategy provides vision and direction for Iraq's education system, tackle the

learning crisis, and ensure inclusive learning opportunities, playing a vital role in advancing SDG4.

"It's been an honor and privilege to have joined the launch of the Iraq National Education Strategy 2022 – 2031, alongside with World Bank, UNICEF and National and International partners. Under the auspices of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, this strategy sets a visionary path for Iraq's education system, addressing the learning crisis and fostering inclusive learning opportunities. By aligning with SDG4, it paves the way for a brighter future for Iraqi students. Together, we will empower generations to come with knowledge, skills, and opportunities for a prosperous Iraq," said Santosh Khatri, Chief of Education, UNESCO Iraq Office.

UNESCO in partnership with the Northern Technical University launches quality assurance and leadership training, funded by the Japanese Government

Baghdad, 18 May 2023 - The Northern Technical University, in collaboration with UNESCO and funded by the Japanese government, has initiated the first phase of training in quality assurance and leadership. This initiative is part of the "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for Peace in Ninewah" project, implemented by UNESCO in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The training program, attended by 25 staff members of the Northern Technical University, aims to enhance the implementation of the "Bologna Process" and meet national accreditation requirements. Key focus areas include the principles of quality management and improvement, continuous quality enhancement, change management, self-assessment cycles, and identifying challenges specific to the university.

Prof. Dr. Alia Abbas Ali Al-Attar, President of the Northern Technical University, emphasized the project's alignment with UNESCO's "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul" initiative, which aims to rebuild heritage and revitalize educational and cultural institutions in Mosul. She highlighted the significance of quality and comprehensive education for the future of young people in Iraq and the promotion of sustainable peace.

Prof. Dr. Omar Rafi Al-Omar, Assistant President of the Northern Technical University for Scientific Affairs, highlighted the project's integration with ongoing efforts to reform technical and vocational education and training in Iraq.



Leveraging international expertise from UNESCO, the initiative aims to benefit from best practices and lessons learned in this field.

Mr. Muhammad Abdul Rahman, the coordinator of the technical education component, explained that UNESCO's objective is to strengthen capacities in quality assurance, accreditation, and leadership. The project focuses on enhancing the quality of technical and vocational education and training at the Technical Institute of the Northern Technical University, setting standards of excellence at the national level, and improving the delivery of education through curriculum development and administrative enhancements.

Dr. Nabil Abdel-Razzaq, Director of the Quality Assurance Department at the Northern Technical University, expressed his belief that the training will significantly enhance participants' knowledge and understanding of quality standards and organizational

requirements. Attendees will be equipped with tools and guidelines for self-evaluation, data collection, and evidence gathering for accreditation processes at the university.

Japan's support for UNESCO's projects in Iraq has been instrumental. Previous collaborations include initiatives such as mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on education, creating youth employment opportunities in Mosul, and rehabilitating primary schools in conflict-affected areas.



UNESCO team delivers a lecture to architecture students at the University of Basra on the rehabilitation of heritage houses and the Al-Ashar Canal in Old Basra.

Basra, 18 May 2023 - As part of UNESCO's collaboration with higher education institutions, the UNESCO team recently delivered a lecture to architecture students at the University of Basra. The lecture focused on the rehabilitation of heritage houses and the Al-Ashar Canal in Old Basra. The aim of the lecture was to provide students with a valuable educational experience in the field of rehabilitating and preserving the cultural heritage of Basra, and more specifically, the Shenashel houses.

This visit is part of UNESCO's efforts to raise awareness through the "Reviving the Old Cities of Mosul and



Basra" project. The project, generously funded by the European Union, aims to restore and revitalize the historic cities

of Mosul and Basra, preserving their cultural heritage for future generations.

UNESCO supports TVET Coordination Group meeting in Baghdad

Baghdad, 31 May 2023 - The Government of Iraq has taken a significant step in enhancing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) by establishing the TVET Coordination Group. This group, operating under the Education Sector's Sub Committee, aims to coordinate the efforts of international partners involved in TVET, ensuring a coordinated approach towards achieving common goals.

The meeting was conducted in Baghdad on 30 May and attended by a variety of members who represented the related ministers (MoP, MoE, MoHESR and MoLSA) UN agencies, INGOs, donors and private sectors.

The meeting commenced with a presentation by Dr. Hamid Ahmed, focusing on the National Education Strategy for Iraq 2022-2031, with a specific emphasis on the TVET component. This was followed by a presentation from the Prime Minister's Advisory Commission (PMAC), which highlighted the achievements made under the Iraqi TVET strategy from 2014 to 2023. The first session

concluded with a presentation by Santosh Khatri, Chief of Education, who provided insights into the UNESCO Strategy for TVET (2022-2029).

The second session featured updates on the Riyada Initiative by the Prime Minister's Office, as well as an overview of key TVET programs by organizations such as UNESCO, COWATER, GIZ, ILO, ITC (SAVI) and TAWASOL.

UNESCO took the lead in facilitating a

session dedicated to discussing the implementation of the new TVET national strategy and the crucial role of agencies and partners in realizing its objectives.

The TVET Coordination Group, overseen by the Prime Minister's Advisory Commission and co-chaired by the Ministry of Planning and the European Union, benefits from UNESCO's support in managing its administrative functions as the group's secretariat.



Adolescents want to learn!

Baghdad, 31 May 2023 - Ahmed, 12, had to leave his home in 2014. After living in Erbil for two years, his family was sent to Hassansham IDP camp, Iraq. After several years out of school, he is too old to enroll again. His mother tried to sign him up in a special school for adolescents, but it did not work. After trying everything she could imagine, she gave up.

On May 17, 2023, Ahmed, 12, from Ramadi attends lessons inside an informal educational center supported by UNICEF with funding from the EU's humanitarian arm (ECHO) in Hassansham, Ninewa governorate, Iraq. He left his home in 2014, and after living in Erbil for two years, he was sent to this camp. He left school, and he is trying to come back, but he is

too old to enroll.

"My son is sad; his father was killed, and he's grown up with conflict," she explains. "His brother is also sad, there are many similar cases in the camp".

Ahmed goes to a non-formal education center in the camp that is supported by UNICEF with funding from the EU's humanitarian aid where he learns reading, writing and develops social

Adolescents want to learn! *(continued)*

skills. Now he's able to write a few sentences. He also practices sport at the center, and he loves football, like any other 12-year-old.

"I like the center, but coming here is not enough. I want to learn," he says softly.

UNICEF and the EU are working together to support the Government of Iraq in reaching children and adolescents with the aim to identify out-of-school children and modalities to for their return to school.

By Alix Reboul-Salze, UNICEF



The girl who wanted to disappear



Mosul, 31 May 2023 - Samah, 13, has been living in Hassansham IDP camp, Iraq, for the last six years. Even though

she looks much younger than her age, she could not enroll in school because she was too old for the school age limit.

"I don't have a future. After enrolling in the child-friendly center, I had the opportunity to learn to read and write," she says. Like most children in displacement, she wants to become a doctor, like her uncle who is studying outside the camp, fighting all odds.

Samah's family cannot go back to their area of origin because it's not safe for them. So they've been in the camp since 2018, living with extended family in a tent, hoping for better tomorrows.

Her grandmother also helps Samah with reading and writing every day. "There is a border to our dreams; we can't go very far", she says with a resigned smile.

"If I had superpowers, I would like to disappear," Samah whispers.

UNICEF and the EU's humanitarian aid are working with Government and partners to ensure that boys, girls, men and women in IDP camps and informal settlements are reached with education, child protection and GBV prevention and response services.

By Alix Reboul-Salze, UNICEF

Education for All, a Better Future!

Erbil, 04 June 2023 - Training of Trainers workshop was organized by UNHCR Iraq, Intersos Iraq, and Erbil Directorate of Education (DoE), aimed to equip the participants with skills to promote inclusion and integration of refugee children with disabilities and create safe learning environments in

the education system.

UNHCR Iraq and partners, hands in hands, continue supporting Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to implement the Refugee Education Integration Policy (#REIP) which increases the future opportunities for refugee children to succeed in life.



500 graduates from the WFP's vocational training program in Mosul recently received tool kits tailored to their career goals and specialization

Mosul, 09 June 2023 - 500 graduates from the World Food Programme (WFP)'s vocational training program in Mosul recently received tool kits tailored to their career goals and specialization. From electrical connections and carpentry to computer skills and sewing, these graduates are now equipped to support their livelihoods.



Dialogue about their obstacles and potential opportunities for education integration

Baghdad, 12 June 2023 - Education is a human right #ForEveryYouth! UNICEF recently held an exciting session in collaboration with Public Aid Organization (PAO) in Kawergosk camp. Syrian refugee parents and adolescent students engaged in a community dialogue about their obstacles and potential opportunities for education integration.



Students train on flood hazard mapping at the Erbil Polytechnic University (EPU)

Erbil, 12 June 2023 - Students train on mapping at the Erbil Polytechnic University (EPU).

The training is part of a partnership between IOM and the Erbil Polytechnic University (EPU) to collaborate on flood hazard mapping which is essential for the prevention and mitigation of future flood situations in land use planning and mitigation strategies, which helps save lives and reduce the economic impact of flooding. IOM and EPU signed a memorandum of understanding on 4 May 2023, and the training of the students, which is the first component of the partnership, commenced on 7 June.

Once the training sessions have been concluded, the participants will use the OpenStreetMap to put their newly acquired skills to work to digitize buildings and roads within areas



identified for disaster risk reduction and generate easy to read charts and maps that will enable IOM to swiftly assess the extent of the regions susceptible to hazards or flooding. This essential data will guide the creation of

robust early warning systems and methods, and support the implementation of evidence-based flood prevention and mitigation measures. This project is supported by EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid

A workshop on “Education and Peacebuilding in Curriculum Development” held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 13 June 2023 - UNESCO, together with the Ministry of Education, UNESCO Chair in Education for Peacebuilding and Human Rights at Ulster University organized a workshop on Education and Peacebuilding in Curriculum Development. The workshop discussed the role of Curricula in fostering peace in Iraq and strengthened the capacities of 16 experts (11 females) of the General Directorate of Curricula, Ministry of Education, to integrate the skills and knowledge in their daily work. This was the second workshop with the General Directorate for Curricula, organized within the framework of the “Gendered Approach

to Preventing Violent Extremism through Education in Iraq” project

supported by the Government of Canada.



UNESCO organized the “Education for Peace and Preventing Violent Extremism in Iraq” workshop

Baghdad, 15 June 2023 - In the framework of the “Gendered Approach to Preventing Violent Extremism through Education in Iraq” project supported by the Government of Canada, UNESCO Iraq Office and UNESCO Chair in Education for Peacebuilding and Human Rights at Ulster University, in coordination with the Office of National Security Advisor and the National Committee for Preventing Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, organized the “Education for Peace and Preventing Violent Extremism in Iraq” workshop. The workshop was attended by 35 members (12 females) of the National Committee and Sub Committees, from the staff of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Scientific Research, from all Iraq governorates and Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The workshop discussed the significant role of education in building learners’



defenses of peace and preventing the push and pull factors of violent extremism and emphasized that the planned interventions must support educators and learners to overcome their daily challenges and enable them to create a safe and supportive environment for students to develop,

reach their potentials and make them active agents of peace in their communities.

This is the first of a series of workshops planned to strengthen the capacities of the National Committee and subcommittees to Prevent Violent Extremism in Iraq.

380 women and men successfully complete vocational training programmes at the Mosul Vocational Training Centre in market relevant occupations

Mosul, 19 June 2023 - A graduation ceremony was held for 380 women and men who have successfully completed vocational training programmes at the Mosul Vocational Training Centre in market relevant occupations – implemented by ILO and AVSI Middle East #iraq, in partnership with the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs in Ninewa.

The occupations focused on greenhouse installation and farming, air conditioning installation and maintenance, painting, electrical installation, and solar system installation and maintenance.

Some of the graduates will be supported to find employment, while others will be able to access financial services that will help them set up their own small businesses.

The ILO, under Prospects ILO,

supported by Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq is supporting thousands of forcibly displaced and host

community members to improve their skills, employability and access to the labour market.



59 aspiring Basrawie youths successfully completed technical and vocational education and on-the-job training programs

Basra, 24 June 2023 - Congratulations to the young individuals of Basra who are actively engaged in the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" Project. Their

dedication ensures a smooth transition from education to the labor market while equipping them with essential entrepreneurial skills.

Numerous skilled young men and

women are directly contributing to the restoration of historic homes in Basra, instilling a sense of pride. We are delighted to announce the graduation of 59 aspiring Basrawie youths who have

59 aspiring Basrawie youths successfully completed technical and vocational education and on-the-job training programs *(continued)*

successfully completed technical and vocational education and on-the-job training programs.

These programs were conducted at the heritage sites within the old city of Basra, with UNESCO spearheading the rehabilitation efforts for nine historic Shanasheel houses in the Al-Basha and Al-Ashar Canal area. We extend our gratitude to the European Union for their generous financial support, enabling the second phase of this project to take place.



UNESCO in partnership with the MoHER, is implementing the second phase of quality management and leadership training for staff at North Technical University

Mosul, 25 June 2023 - UNESCO Iraq Office in partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and North Technical University in Mosul starts of Phase 2 of the Quality Assurance Training program as part of the "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for Peace in Ninewah" project. Thanks to the generous funding provided by the Japanese Government, 25 staff members involved in the Quality Assurance process at the Technical Institute Mosul are now undergoing intensive training to enhance their quality management and leadership skills. The training taking place at North Technical University in Mosul, includes applied learning, case studies, and the development of a comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan tailored to the institute's needs.

This phase follows the successful completion of Phase 1, which focuses on theoretical foundations. Phase 2 aims to provide hands-on learning experiences and equip participants

with practical knowledge that can be directly applied to their roles. By the end of the program, participants will have the ability to conduct self-evaluations, develop clear quality improvement plans, and gain a deeper understanding of the existing standards in place.

The "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for Peace in Ninewah"

project is aligned with UNESCO's mission to promote inclusive and quality education, cultural dialogue, and sustainable development. Through the Quality Assurance Training program, the project aims to empower staff members at North Technical University, paving the way for enhanced quality management and leadership within the institution.



Youth

Bike marathon organized in Sinjar

Sinjar, 18 June 2023 - UNFPA and the Ministry of Displacement and Migration joined hands to organize a remarkable bike marathon in Sinjar!

The marathon brought together more than 100 enthusiastic young girls and boys, breaking barriers and fostering peace and building strong communities through the power of sports!

Sports can unite people, celebrate the spirit of inclusivity, equality, and teamwork and transcend differences.



UNICEF participates at the “Contemporary Challenges and Future Prospects” conference

Baghdad, 14 May 2023 - “UNICEF is truly happy to hear the PM's commitment today, to strengthen work with youth and provide opportunities for their development. In UNICEF, we are committed to enhance the support to the Government of Iraq on the framework of the learning to earning agenda to ensure a brighter future for the youth of Iraq,” said UNICEF Representative in Iraq, Ms. Sheema SenGupta, during the “Contemporary Challenges and Future Prospects” conference, hosted by the Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia Al Sudani, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports with the participation of UNICEF and the Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr. Ahmed Al-Mubarqa. As the key UN partner of the

Government on Youth and Adolescent Development and Participation in Iraq, UNICEF, with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, continues to champion an robust agenda rooted in multiple national strategic initiatives, such as the Iraq Learning Passport, an innovative online platform focused on

skilling and employability, the National Girls Network, U Report Iraq and the National Youth Volunteering Platform, all aimed at enhancing active citizenship for all #young Iraqis. The above strategic flagships contribute to the operationalization of the National Youth Vision 2030 Agenda for Iraq.



Early moments matter

Baghdad, 16 May 2023 - We always need to remember that #EarlyMomentsMatter!

Today, UNICEF participated in a meeting with the leadership of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Ahmed Al Asadi, to review progress on implementing the National Strategy on Early Childhood Development in Iraq (ECD) 2022-2031.

“Today marks a great opportunity to bring together for the first-time government and non-governmental stakeholders leading children development and wellbeing, under the leadership of the Child Welfare Commission, covering different ages, services, and issues affecting children,” said UNICEF Representative in Iraq, Ms. Sheema Sen Gupta.

ECD strategy is crucial to ensure that all Iraqi children have equal opportunities to thrive and reach their

full potential as early childhood is a critical window of opportunity to shape

a child's development and build a foundation for their future.



Empowering Iraqi Youth for a brighter future!

Baghdad, 22 May 2023 - Empowering Iraqi Youth for a brighter future!

Representative of UNICEF in Iraq, Ms. Sheema SenGupta, and Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr. Ahmed Al Mubarqaa, discussed programmes to empower young people by developing their skills and ensuring their inclusion in the workplace.



IOM Iraq publishes new cookbook “Bil-afia - traditional recipes from Iraq”



Baghdad, 19 May 2023 - IOM new cookbook is a labor of love by IDPs from Hassan Sham U3 camp, where residents came together to learn cooking skills and participate in mental and psychosocial well-being sessions. Foreword by Giorgi Gigauri, Chief of Mission IOM Iraq: “As we enter the new year, we take this opportunity to celebrate our collective accomplishments from 2022 and make way for an exciting future. In this spirit, we present a cookbook of

traditional recipes from northern Iraq. The recipes are crafted and woven together by internally displaced persons (IDPs) at Hassan Sham U3 Camp in Ninewa Governorate. It is a labor of love and testament to the spirit of the people of Iraq. Baking, cooking and meal preparation activities with integrated psychosocial support are part of IOM’s MHPSS and Livelihood Integration (MLI) projects, implemented by the MHPSS programme.

In conflict and displacement affected contexts like Iraq, mental health needs tend to be greater and more complex. The exposure to traumatic events, financial insecurity and social isolation that often comes with the experience of displacement puts both the physical and mental health of IDPs at risk. This can have a negative effect on their day-to-day lives, including their ability to secure gainful employment and livelihoods.

By integrating psychosocial support and livelihoods activities, MLI projects provide participants with sustainable positive coping and stress management mechanisms. Peppered with testimonies from several MLI participants, the forthcoming pages showcase recipes for everything from dolma to basbousa to kunafa, each with their unique Iraqi flavor.

We hope that you will enjoy experimenting and cooking the recipes of this collection with your family, friends and loved ones. From our kitchens to yours, Bil Hanaai wal Shifaa and afyat bet.”

You can find the cookbook at <https://bit.ly/3XpaCe0>

Cooking with the Ambassador

Baghdad, 18 May 2023 - Last Tuesday, we all rolled up our sleeves and got to cooking some lahm b’ajin – the first recipe in a new IOM cookbook showcasing Iraqi recipes crafted by MLI* participants in Hassan Sham U3 camp for IDPs. Joined by H.E. Canadian Ambassador Gregory Galligan, we kicked off the day in the kitchen, where MLI participants showed us the ropes.

After eating our delicious creations, we toured around the camp, engaging with camp residents, meeting with camp leadership and checking out IOM’s various MHPSS activities.

This is what H.E. had to say: “Visiting the Hassan Sham IDP camp and witnessing the incredible resilience of the residents was a humbling experience. I am happy to have joined the camp residents in celebrating the launch of the Bil Afia cookbook, featuring traditional Iraqi and non-traditional recipes developed by camp residents who participated in the bakery workshops. Canada is proud to support IOM and the expansion of their psychosocial and livelihood programs. It was

inspiring to see how the kitchen and other vocational training areas have become places of friendship, support, and skill-building, benefiting women, men, and children. I was most impressed by the evident peer support, which contributes positively to the participants, their families, and the larger community. “

This MLI project was made possible by

the generosity of the Government of Canada.

*MLI stands for MHPSS and Livelihood Integration – IOM programming aimed at helping participants build/strengthen positive coping mechanisms and essential social, life and other soft skills to mitigate and manage work-related psychosocial challenges.



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - Congratulations Iraqi U-23 National Football Team! | Winners of the West Asian football championship.

UNAMI hosts Cihan University students, explains the work of the UN and hears their views



Erbil, 23 May 2023 - As part of outreach with different stakeholders to explain the work of the United Nations in Iraq, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq's (UNAMI) Regional Office in Erbil hosted a group of students from the International Relations Department of Cihan University (Erbil) on 22 May 2023.

The visit, organized by the UNAMI Public Information Office, aimed to provide the students with an overview of UNAMI's work in the Kurdistan Region and to hear their views and concerns.

The Head of the Erbil Regional Office, Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez, welcomed the students to the UN compound. They were also briefed by UNAMI Senior Human Rights Officer in the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Florian Razesberger, Electoral Affairs Officer, Mr. Aso AlKakee, Associate Public Information Officer, Celia Dadson, and UNMAS Communication Senior Officer Ms. Krman Abdalqadir. The speakers discussed UNAMI's mandate, activities,

and general UN-related topics on political affairs, human rights, public information and mine action.

The students – 17 males and 7 females - were accompanied by Mr. Mahmood Ismael, Head of the International Relations Department of Cihan University. During a tour of the UNAMI Erbil Regional Office compound, the students witnessed the work of UNAMI staff, both national and international, and interacted on various issues of interest.

In his remarks, Mr. Rodriguez said that UNAMI maintains good cooperation with the Kurdistan Region authorities and its institutions. He noted that the

Mission leadership frequently visits the Kurdistan Region and meet with senior officials, community leaders, civil society organizations and institutions.

In briefing the participants, the Mission's Political Affairs Office highlighted their engagement with political parties and actors including with representatives of minority communities; while the Human Rights Office referred to the series of seminars they have conducted on the fundamentals of human rights for the judicial and security institutions as well as NGOs. Other sections of the Mission also deliver trainings on gender and youth aspects and on media relations. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) briefed on their work, including the areas that have been cleared from explosive remnants of war across Iraq.

Mr. Rodriguez pointed out that such visits serve as a platform for positive interaction and building trust. Also, these outreach activities help not only to explain what UNAMI does, but also to learn from the public's input. He said that UNAMI is committed to working with the people of the Kurdistan



We're United as One UN!

Erbil, 21 June 2023 - Amidst our busy routines and countless technical agreements, partnerships, and memorandums, it's easy for us, the various UN agencies, programmes, and offices, to lose touch. But last Thursday, something incredible happened at Erbil's compound - the UNAMI Football Tournament brought us all together, fostering a sense of unity and belonging.

UN-Habitat proudly joined forces with ILO, forming an exceptional team ready to compete in this exhilarating event.

Our first match against the UNDP team was fiercely contested, and although the final result favored us, what truly mattered was the camaraderie and connections we forged

with our colleagues.

Above all, our shared commitment to the well-being of Iraq nation surpasses everything else. As UN-Habitat, our mandate revolves around advocating for public spaces and facilities that enable people of all ages to come together and enjoy moments of joy, just like the ones sports offer. Joining initiatives like the UNAMI Football Tournament was simply inevitable, and

we gave it our all.

And guess what? We emerged victorious!

It has been an absolute pleasure to share these remarkable moments and engage with our colleagues in a more lighthearted manner, all while tackling the challenges of our important work.

Together, we're not only making a difference but also creating memories that will last a lifetime.



Pedal up, Iraq!



Baghdad, 03 June 2023 - Every year, aside from his birthday, Ali looks forward to 3 June - World Bicycle Day. With COVID-19 restrictions blocking air travel in 2020, he channelled his passion for adventure to his mountain bike, helmet, and fluorescent green "Iraq"-adorned riding jersey.

Ali teamed up with a few of his friends and together they mapped out a weekly bike schedule to explore the beauty of their homeland. Every Monday is dedicated to riding around the neighbourhoods of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, while on the weekends the energetic team of 10 cyclists branches out to take in the inspiring historical sites and monuments across the Iraqi governorates.

"It's been a good few years for my cycling", Ali says with a big smile. He recounts how he started out just playfully riding around his neighbourhood in Baghdad and how his interests and commitment to cycling grew over time. Not to mention getting him in shape physically, Ali noticed

how strong and peaceful his mindset evolved. "The best part", he says, is that "the added health benefits of my cycling came at no extra cost".

Adopted in 2018 through a UN General Assembly resolution, World Bicycle Day recognises the versatility, reliability and simplicity of the bicycle which

make it a favourable and alternate means for promoting an achievable solution to reduce our carbon footprint. The bicycle has been in use since the early 1800s and choosing to invest in one as a green-clean means for transportation is indeed a healthy choice for our precious planet and for our body.

Come dust storms, rampant high summer temperatures, rainfall, or crisp winters, Ali hardly ever misses his ride routine. He does wish, however, that there are more dedicated bike lanes, such as the ones introduced recently at a renovated Baghdad street, to help bikers navigate through dense traffic; that cyclists are respected as equal commuters on the go; and that increased national awareness campaigns encouraging for climate action are implemented.

As Ali tightens his helmet, positions his trendy visor sunglasses, and begins to ride off with his team, he turns around and says: "Act now: Pedal up, Iraq - Ride a bike!"

Check the video produced by UNAMI P I O a t <https://youtu.be/UynhQFW6Q2Q>



International Day of Yoga 2023 marked at UN Integrated Compound

Baghdad, 20 June 2023 - A curtain raiser event for the International Day of Yoga 2023 was organized at the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in cooperation with the Embassy of India in Iraq. Numerous UNAMI staff members attended and enjoyed the event with yogic practices.

This year's 9th IDY is a special occasion for India - Iraq friendship, as both countries are celebrating the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations.

