

# UNAMI Herald

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## UN envoy highlights promising initiatives in Iraq

**New York, 10 October 2023** - The Government of Iraq has made “several important steps and promising initiatives” one year since its formation, but more efforts are required to address the populations needs, the Head of the UN Mission in the country, UNAMI, told the Security Council on Tuesday. Presenting the Mission's latest report, UN Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert updated ambassadors on key developments since her last briefing in May. She highlighted initiatives carried out under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, including the recently adopted federal budget, the launch of long-awaited reforms in the banking and finance sectors, and a new law on social security.

### No easy feat

“To cut a long story short: with last year’s gains in political stability and an ambitious federal budget in hand, Iraq is well positioned to seize the many opportunities in front of it,” she said, speaking via videoconference. However, she cautioned that “this is not an easy feat, let alone a given.” Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said corruption is still pervasive. Although highlighting admirable commitments made by the Government, “at the same time, it is clear that the intricate web of graft and vested interests, built up in Iraq over decades, will not be dismantled overnight.” Furthermore, Iraq’s economic structure is heavily reliant on oil, while the public sector is “so big that it is simply unsustainable.”

### Rapidly growing population

“All of this must be understood alongside Iraq’s rapidly growing population – with predictions that it could double over the next three to four decades,” she said. She warned that without structural reforms to guarantee job opportunities or advances in quality of life, “the embers of discontent could



flare up easily, again and again.”

The UN official pointed to other “threat multipliers” including climate change and water scarcity. She recalled that temperatures in Iraq again exceeded 50 degrees Celsius this past summer. Additionally, nearly 14,000 families were displaced by drought conditions across 10 governorates last June, according to the UN migration agency, IOM.

“Needless to say, if left unaddressed, this is only the beginning of a rather nightmarish situation. Hence, it is for good reasons that the Government has made the issue of water security one of its top priorities,” she said.

### Kurdistan election delays

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert also underscored the need to address exclusion, marginalization and stigmatization, saying that further progress on enabling people to return to their areas of origin, including Jurf al-Sakhr and Sinjar, remains critical. “A further topic that cannot be overlooked is the influence of non-state armed actors in certain areas, which not only undermines confidence in the state but also creates an environment of fear and anger,” she said.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert also addressed the situation in the

Kurdistan region in northern Iraq, where parliamentary elections have been repeatedly postponed. The vote was originally scheduled for October 2022, then moved to November of this year, and now further delayed to next February.

“To state the obvious, we expect all parties to ensure that this new election date will not again fall victim to internal political strife. With the current administration in a caretaker capacity, the Region’s democratic process must prevail. There is so much at stake,” she said.

By UN News.



## In this edition ...

### Secretary-General appoints Mr. Volker Perthes of Germany as Head, Independent Strategic Review of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq Mandated by Security Council resolution 2682 (2023)

**New York, 13 October 2023** - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced today the appointment of Volker Perthes of Germany as the Head of the Independent Strategic Review of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) mandated by Security Council resolution 2682 (2023).

Mr. Perthes brings to this position three decades of experience in academia, research, international relations and diplomacy, including with the United Nations. From 2021 to 2023, he served as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan and Head of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan. From 2015 to 2018, he served as Senior Adviser to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, including as Chairperson of the International Syria Support Group's Ceasefire Taskforce for Syria on behalf of the United Nations.

Mr. Perthes has also served as Chief Executive Officer and Director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) from 2005 to 2020, and as Researcher and Head of Department at SWP from 1992 to 2005. He began his academic career as Assistant Professor at the American University of Beirut from 1991 to 1993.

Mr. Perthes holds a Master's degree and a Doctorate in Political Science earned at the University of Duisburg in Germany. He is fluent in English, German and Arabic.

### DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai visits Jedda 1 Rehabilitation Center in Ninewa

**Ninewa, 29 August 2023** - Today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, visited the Jedda 1 Rehabilitation Center in Ninewa.

The DSRSG/RC/HC engaged in focused group discussions with residents who have returned from the al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria, service providers and center management operating under the Ministry of Migration and the Displaced (MoMD). *More on page 34.*

### Message from UN Iraq SRSR Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on United Nations Day

**Baghdad, 24 October 2023** - Celebrated annually on 24 October, United Nations Day reminds us all of the importance of peace and of coming together for the good of humanity. These aspirations are all too significant and appropriate here in the Middle East, as well as in the rest of the world.

With ongoing heartbreaking conflicts, coupled with divisions both within and across borders, the United Nations retains its unique role. It engages with different actors to end violence and resolve conflicts, while working – sometimes in the most difficult of conditions – to mitigate their adverse effects on vulnerable civilians, including by delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance.

In Iraq and elsewhere, the United Nations serves people of every sector of society, working with national institutions and civil society to advance the aspirations of all. Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations and has long contributed to its work. Collectively, we have a job to do: promoting peace, justice and sustainable development.

Even during the darkest of days, the principles and values of the United Nations can still account for hope of global unity and peace. We pay tribute to our colleagues across the world, many of whom work in challenging contexts. In doing so, we remember those who have lost their lives. And we recommit to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter which entered into force on this day in 1945.

### Da'esh and affiliates still a threat in conflict zones, UN counter-terrorism officials report

**New York, 25 August 2023** - Despite successful international counter-terrorism initiatives, the extremist group Da'esh and its affiliates continue to pose a serious threat in conflict zones and neighbouring countries, the UN Security Council heard on Friday.

*More on page 22.*

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

## SRSB Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: “With gains in political stability and an ambitious federal budget in hand, Iraq is well positioned to seize the many opportunities in front of it.”



**New York, 10 October 2023** – On its 9432nd meeting United Nations Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq.

Here is the text of the briefing (As Delivered) by 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, at this meeting:

“Mr. President, thank you very much, Distinguished members of the Security Council,

Today we are roughly one year on from the formation of Iraq’s current Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. Now, since its inception, several important steps and promising initiatives have emerged. To name but a few:

Long-awaited reforms in the banking and finance sectors are now underway. One example is the launch of an electronic platform for foreign currency sales, which demonstrates the Government’s commitment to both transparency and efficiency.

A new Iraq Fund for Development has been established. This, coupled with the change ushered in by the recently adopted federal budget, has the potential to spur private sector investment.

The passing of a new law on social security means that, for the first time, all Iraqi workers can benefit from public entitlements, such as health insurance, as well as maternity and unemployment benefits.

And, as most of you will know, a trailblazing initiative for regional infrastructure, known as the

Development Road Project, was launched some months ago.

Meanwhile, Iraq is taking further steps towards leveraging its own natural resources more effectively and responsibly, thereby aiming to reduce energy waste and shore up its energy independence.

Also, and importantly, to address the concerning issue of rapid drug proliferation, the Government has developed a National Strategy for the Prevention of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, among other measures.

Now, Mr. President, I already briefly mentioned the recently adopted federal budget.

It charts an ambitious course for the country until the end of 2025 and includes allocations with the potential to address critical needs, such as infrastructure development and reconstruction.

Notably, this budget represents the highest proportionate allocation to the delivery of social services yet – which (hopefully) will expand access to healthcare, education and a number of other essential public services.

To cut a long story short: with last year’s gains in political stability and an ambitious federal budget in hand, Iraq is well positioned to seize the many opportunities in front of it.

That said, and as we all know, the country’s complex and (at times) fast-evolving environment also means that this is not an easy feat, let alone a given.

Corruption is still pervasive. And combatting it, as the Prime Minister recently said, is something the Government “has been working on, is still working on and will continue to

work on”. He rightly added: “Without fighting corruption, we will not be able to implement our economic vision and development programs”.

And, true, the Government has made admirable commitments. From efforts to, for instance, increase transparency around custom revenue collection to pursuing the extradition of individuals implicated in the theft of federal resources. And a new campaign, called “Where did you get this?”, has seen the Federal Integrity Commission audit the financial records of electoral candidates.

At the same time, it is clear that the intricate web of graft and vested interests, built up in Iraq over decades, will not be dismantled overnight. Especially when those who stand to lose can draw from myriad financial, political and security resources – creating the community of collusion I have referred to in previous briefings.

Also, and as spelled out numerous times, Iraq’s economic structure is in a precarious place, heavily reliant on oil and a public sector so big that it is simply unsustainable.

And although steps taken so far surely signal positive momentum, further structural reforms are going to be critical. Otherwise, a thriving private sector with high levels of employment will remain elusive.

Now, all of this must be understood alongside Iraq’s rapidly growing population – with predictions that it could double over the next three to four decades.

Why am I saying this? Because with more Iraqis coming of age without corresponding job opportunities or advances in quality of life, it is not difficult to see where this trend may go: the embers of discontent could flare up easily – again and again.

Climate change and water scarcity are, of course, other obvious threat multipliers. This past summer, again, temperatures in Iraq exceeded 50 degrees Celsius. And last June, IOM recorded almost 14,000 families as internally displaced because of drought conditions across 10 of Iraq’s governorates.

Needless to say: if left unaddressed, this is only the beginning of a rather nightmarish situation. Hence, it is for good reasons that the Government has made the issue of water security one of its top priorities.

## SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: “With gains in political stability and an ambitious federal budget in hand, ... (continued)”

Another issue that should not be underestimated: feelings of exclusion, marginalization, and stigmatisation. Now, why does this matter for stability in Iraq? Because if these sentiments are left to simmer, among other spillover effects, people will (again) become vulnerable to extremist propaganda.

I am, of course, aware of the ongoing efforts by the Government to end displacement. But further progress on enabling people to return to their areas of origin, including Jurf al-Sakhr and Sinjar, remains critical.

Equally important is much-needed momentum to enact legislation on enforced disappearances, as well as the amendment to the Amnesty Law.

A further topic that cannot be overlooked is the influence of non-state armed actors in certain areas, which not only undermines confidence in the state but also creates an environment of fear and anger.

Mr. President.

The Government continues to proactively engage with countries throughout the region on issues related to energy, water, economic cooperation and security. Important, as regional partnerships and integration are obvious catalysts for stability in Iraq - and beyond.

Now, within this context, I wish to highlight the implementation of the Iraq-Iran security agreement. Great efforts have been made by Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, to secure its borders. And further work to sustain these achievements is ongoing.

All sides consider long-term security as essential, and we can only emphasize Iraq’s genuine commitment to the agreement.

Now, as I said on many occasions, this is the way to go about addressing security concerns: through dialogue, joint committees and the actual implementation of agreements – all, of course, in accordance with international law.

With this in mind, I wish to express hope that Iraq and Türkiye will also embark on a sustainable way forward. Türkiye’s security concerns are well understood. And, on that note, Mr. President, I wish to echo the Secretary-General’s condemnation of the recent terrorist attack in Ankara.

In saying this, constant cross-border attacks are a risky way to advance



interests - and one with numerous adverse effects. We therefore welcome ongoing efforts on the activation of bilateral committees between Iraq and Türkiye aimed at addressing border security concerns.

And, of course, Mr. President, I cannot talk about stability in the region without mentioning the unprecedented and horrendous developments in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which have already had a catastrophic human toll and could impact the entire region.

Now, still focusing on the region, Mr. President, I would also like to flag a recent decision of Iraq’s Federal Supreme Court regarding the 2012 agreement between Iraq and Kuwait regulating navigation in the Khor Abdullah waterway.

Taking into account the separation of powers, Iraq’s government has meanwhile made its commitment to the principles of international law, and its respect for bilateral agreements and UN resolutions, crystal clear.

Legitimate concerns have been expressed by Kuwait and the GCC. Given the priority attached by the Iraqi Government to dialogue as a means to finding solutions, as well as its commitment to maintaining positive relations with its neighbours, I hope and expect that cooperation and good neighbourliness will prevail. Bearing in mind the risks of miscalculation and escalation, it is essential to resolve this matter expeditiously. Also important is the continuation of talks to demarcate the rest of the maritime border.

Mr. President, with regards to Baghdad-Erbil relations: to discuss the Kurdistan Region’s financial

challenges, a high-level delegation from the Kurdistan Regional Government, headed by its Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, visited Baghdad on 14 September.

Soon after, Iraq’s Council of Ministers agreed to provide financial relief in the form of ‘loans’ for the next three months. This enables the KRG to pay, for the time being, the salaries of its public servants.

A positive development, and frankly speaking, it was overdue. That said, the agreement is temporary in nature and therefore not enough. Hence, more and urgent work lies ahead so as to avoid a new period of uncertainty for the Region’s public servants.

Now, I said this in past years and will repeat it now: civil servant salaries should be shielded from political disagreements. Like any other Iraqi civil servant, those working in the Kurdistan Region have families to look after and obligations to fulfil.

In August 2020, I highlighted in my briefing to the Council that the lack of specificity in Iraq’s 2005 Constitution continued to shape the debate between Baghdad and Erbil.

With the situation persisting today, what does this mean?

It means that 18 years have gone by without an agreement on the gradual enhancement of the federal system; 18 years without a sustainable framework for natural resource distribution or disputed territories; 18 years without laws delineating rights and obligations. Instead, we continue to witness constant ad hoc crisis management.

So, what I am essentially saying is that, 18 years on from the Constitution’s adoption, it is imperative to move to comprehensive

## SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: “With gains in political stability and an ambitious federal budget in hand... (continued)”

and solid solutions.

As for the Sinjar Agreement, Mr. President, I regret to inform you that no progress has been made. Sadly, instead, we continue to witness different power competitions in which non-state armed actors have the upper hand.

Recent events in Kirkuk, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries, are also of concern. While the situation has calmed down for now, the precariousness of this context cannot be overlooked.

As you know, in past years, UNAMI has facilitated dialogue sessions among the representatives of Kirkuk's components. And we are still convinced that an agreement can be reached. But for that to happen, it is imperative that the needs of people are prioritized over political gain.

Of course, the Provincial Council Elections on 18 December are of great importance as well. Especially because Kirkuk has not seen local elections since 2005.

Mr. President, something else. Previously you heard me say that the Kurdistan Region's parliamentary elections are long overdue.

Initially scheduled for October 2022, they were postponed to November this year, and recently further delayed to the 25th of February next year.

To state the obvious: we expect all parties to ensure that this new election date will not again fall victim to internal political strife. With the current administration in a caretaker capacity, the Region's democratic

process must prevail. There is so much at stake.

On a different note, Mr. President. As any other Member State, Iraq has committed – through its Constitution and international human rights treaties – to protect the fundamental rights of all its citizens, without discrimination. This point bears repeating in light of recent debates on the use of universally accepted terms. Turning to the issue of Al-Hol returnees: last month, a further 173 households returned to Iraq. In other words, Iraq continues to serve as an example for other states with nationals in Al-Hol.

Now, there is no denying it, challenges on the ground abound. The accessibility of core civil and identity documents, in particular their timely issuance, must be addressed as a matter of priority.

And, as Iraq grapples with the vast needs of returnees and host communities, the criticality of continued international support cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. President, zooming in on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property – including the national archives.

The adoption of innovative DNA technology by the Government of Kuwait has led to the identification of one more missing person. I extend my deepest condolences to the family involved.

I further welcome the long-anticipated handover by Iraq to Kuwait of 22 genetic profiles that

were discovered in March 2022 in Najaf. The regular exchange of genetic data is much needed to shed light on the fate of those still missing. And of course, we continue to engage the Government of Iraq on the retrieval of missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. Swift and decisive action is now needed.

Mr. President, in closing: I can only emphasize the importance of Iraq's upcoming Provincial Council elections. For many reasons, including the stepping up of service delivery; they represent a critical imperative for all Iraqis.

As a former politician I know how tempting it is to go all out in an election campaign, but things get ugly - and even risky - if campaigns turn into platforms whipping up rage or fear about others.

Therefore, all actors - be they at the national or regional level – are therefore called upon to play their part in maintaining stability in the run up to the December elections. And this should include efforts to counter mis- and dis-information.

With the Government now one full year into its tenure, driving forward the many good plans which Iraq has committed to remains a collective responsibility.

Mr. President, a final word, as I cannot conclude without acknowledging the devastating fire in al-Hamdaniya last month, which claimed the lives of over 100 people. We again convey our sincere condolences.

Thank you very much.”

### Electoral

## UNAMI continues governorate-level consultations in preparation for the forthcoming elections



Salah al-Din, 22 August 2023 - UNAMI held consultations today with local government officials, civil society activists and former provincial council members on women's participation and representation in political process as part of a series of governorate-level consultations throughout Iraq. The consultations discussed proposals to promote Iraqi women in decision-making positions and highlighted the contributions of women in politics.



## UNAMI Principal Electoral Adviser attends an IHEC-CSO information sharing session in Duhok

**Duhok, 27 August 2023** – The UNAMI Principal Electoral Adviser (PEA) and several UN electoral advisers attended an IHEC-organized workshop in Duhok with representatives of more than 40 civil society organizations (CSOs). IHEC provided updates on the ongoing voter registration, the distribution of voter cards and explained the next stages of the electoral process. The IHEC Duhok Manager and the PEA also addressed queries from CSOs on the topics of voter participation, IDPs, the use of biometric voter cards, election integrity and transparency of the electoral process. The PEA welcomed such initiatives to foster closer IHEC-CSO cooperation and affirmed UN continued



support to such efforts. IHEC consultative meetings in other simultaneously organized similar governorates across Iraq.

### Social Cohesion

## Moving the goalpost: promoting peace through girls' football

**Mosul, 23 August 2023** – Over 2 billion people around the world watched the Women's World Cup Final on Sunday, 20 August 2023. Tucked away on the Left Coast of the Tigris River in Mosul, Iraq, a group of teenage girls and their families scoured the internet to find the right streaming sites to also catch the game. The screening was fuzzy, but the vision was clear: one day, the Mosul Girls Football Club could also be on this field.

Rama (13), Zubaida (14) and Hadeel (15) have a shared story of displacement and loss – the name of their city, Mosul, was synonymous with death, destruction, and despair less than a decade ago. Many families, including theirs, have returned to Mosul after years of living in limbo, and are building a brighter future for their children. Bazaars, schools, community centres are reopening and being rebuilt – the city is shaking off the anguish and grief of the previous

years and the community is reviving its millennia-old culture and traditions. They are also welcoming new practices and embracing change.

“We are not boys,” says Rama, while getting ready for football practice at the Al Ammal football club in Mosul. “Generally, women and girls do not play sports in Mosul. It's not common. My mother was afraid that I would fall and get hurt. But eventually, she agreed. Now she is my biggest cheerleader.”

Many other girls on the team from the city report the same initial hesitation from their families and relatives, followed by cautious approval. Today, a majority of the girls have their entire community's unwavering support.

“Every time we have a match, people come to watch us play,” says Hadeel, who loves hiking and driving – and any other activity that challenges prevailing gender norms. “Our school principal posts regular updates about

our games on Facebook – who scored, who won, who played well. My father is always happy to see when I score and encourages me more.” The girls are local celebrities and an inspiration to their peers.

The football team started as a project implemented by the Sustainable Peace Foundation (SPF) of Mosul in 2021, led by Shahad Khaleel. Khaleel, 29, and her team worked with school teachers, community leaders and parents to advocate for the participation of girls in their project, Sports for Peace. SPF is one of 22 grassroots organizations supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq through the Wasl Civil Society Fund to design and implement community-level projects that address drivers of instability, displacement and violent extremism. The project is part of SPF's vision to provide a safe space for young girls and boys to participate in team sports in efforts to challenge gender norms, increase youth engagement and community resilience, with an overarching goal to prevent violent extremism and associated risks. “The most important lesson is teamwork,” says Zubaida between games. “When we first started playing in teams, we weren't sure how to work together and it created some tension. Football gave us the common ground to resolve some issues and helped us be stronger as a team. Now we dominate the field.” Fifteen teams consisting of ten girls each, along with 20 women



## Moving the goalpost: promoting peace through girls' football *(continued)*

coaches, have come together over their shared passion for football in the last ten months. Together, they train, compete, and inspire other young women and girls to participate in sports.

Over 60 per cent of Iraq's population of 43.5 million are under the age of 25. Many have seen their country go through cycles of extreme violence, conflict and instability, and yet play a limited role in the national peace and reconciliation efforts. Without the active engagement and participation of the youth themselves, efforts to alleviate and mitigate factors making them vulnerable to violent extremism will be incomplete.

"Especially for young women and girls," adds Khaleel. "It is erroneously believed that the women and girls are not influenced by violent extremism or were coerced into committing acts of violence. We now know that Daesh was able to consolidate their reign of terror, in Mosul and beyond, by exploiting marginalized women and

girls, their poor financial conditions and lack of equal opportunities."

Through team building and idea exchange, Sports for Peace aims to provide a common platform for the next generation of girls in Mosul to challenge norms, defy societal expectations and advocate for peaceful coexistence. The project has been extended for another six months and will continue working with over 150 girls in ten teams across Mosul. Similar initiatives have been supported by IOM's Wasl Civil Society Fund in Fallujah and Halabja, where local organizations bring together members of disparate communities for field trips to heritage sites, to play in tournaments and foster dialog on social cohesion.

"Iraqi youth are passionate and motivated to build a better future for their communities," says Giorgi Gigauri, Chief of Mission, IOM Iraq. "The Mosul Girls Football Club embodies the determination and courage of the next generation of Iraq

– and we need to invest in and encourage these efforts, especially when they bring people together to work towards a brighter tomorrow."

Back at the Al Ammal football club, the match is in full swing: Zubaida scored a penalty kick in the second half; Hadeel and Rama are cheering on with the crowd.

"I will be a professional football player in ten years," says Rama confidently, "because nothing is impossible. Inshallah, I will play for my country."

With typically Gen Z candor, Hadeel concludes, "In the end, you only live once. So, we must use this time to have fun, and keep ourselves busy with interesting and exciting activities." Scoring goals, winning the tournaments, challenging perceptions about women in sports and preventing violent extremism – all very interesting and exciting.

By Deepika Nath and Daniah Al-Sadoon, IOM Iraq

## UNESCO, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Northern Technical University, organize the Youth4Peace Campaign

**Ninewa, 12 October 2023** - Under the "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for Peace in Ninewa" project, supported by the Government of Japan, UNESCO in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Northern Technical University organized the Youth4Peace campaign aiming at fostering youth skills and capacities in peacebuilding and nurturing peaceful discourse online and offline, challenge the divisive and violent narratives and hate discourse, that is being promoted online, strengthening peaceful coexistence and social cohesion and promoting a culture of tolerance in Ninewa and Iraq as a whole.. Additionally, the campaign included a multitude of educational, art and sport activities pursuing the enhancement of community resilience, peaceful coexistence, promoting diversity and respect of others.

The campaign has successfully reached more than 750 students (54% females) from the Northern Technical University through capacity strengthening workshops by experts and orientations sessions by the trained master trainers from the Northern

Technical University. Among the targeted students, 47 student leaders/representatives of student's volunteer committees, from different areas, were provided with the skills and knowledge required to be agents for peace in their communities inside and outside the University campus. Furthermore, the ongoing social media campaign have reached over 5,000 learners with peace messages.

### Background

Decades of enduring conflicts, culminating in the ISIS occupation of a significant region encompassing Mosul,

have left Iraq hindered by enduring internal tensions and divisions. In the digital age, these divisions have discovered new outlets for expression as political and religious groups leverage social media platforms to amplify their messages, transforming the scars of conflict into digital manifestations like hate speech, propaganda, and divisive narratives. This online dissemination of hostility mirrors the offline discord, perpetuating division. To combat these pressing issues and cultivate community resilience and peaceful



## UNESCO, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Northern Technical University, organize the Youth4Peace Campaign (continued)

coexistence, the active engagement of young people is crucial. Despite facing unprecedented challenges stemming from global crises and the profound impact of Mosul and Iraq's conflict, the mobilization of young individuals for peace and social justice remains steadfast and pivotal for Iraq's peaceful progress, even in the face of pandemic-induced barriers.

Accordingly, the Youth4Peace campaign came as a response to these issues. It was organized in the framework of the "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for Peace in Ninewa" project which combine two key components - Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Technical Vocational Training and Education (TVET) - with the aim of fostering community resilience to violent extremism drivers, in particular among young people.

### The campaign

The campaign, which has been started earlier on social media, was organized for three days aiming at strengthening the students' skills and knowledge making them agents for peace. Through focusing on Critical Thinking, Media and Information Literacy, the young people will be able to critically engage with media content to identify what is good and bad, and with that preventing hate speech, intolerance and Violent Extremism discourse that are being spread and promoted online. Additionally, the campaign included a multitude of educational, art and sport activities pursuing the enhancement of community resilience, peaceful coexistence, and promoting diversity and respect of others.

The campaign has reached more than 750 students (60% females) from the Northern Technical University through capacity strengthening workshops by peacebuilding experts and orientations sessions by the trained master trainers

from the faculty members of the Northern Technical University. Among the targeted students, there were 47 student leaders/ representatives of student's volunteer committees, from different areas, who were provided with the skills and knowledge required to build their own defenses for peace and make them peace agents in their communities inside and outside the University campus. Furthermore, the ongoing social media campaign have reached over 5,000 learners with peace messages.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Alia Abbas Al Attar, President of the Northern Technical University (NTU), emphasized on the role that the youth played in the past years especially after liberation and their potential for the future to build sustainable peace, reiterating on the NTU commitment towards that, thanking the donor, Government of Japan, UNESCO and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for making this happen. Ms. HunKyung Park, TVET project officer, UNESCO Office for Iraq, echoed the importance of youth engagement saying, "Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by young people in the past years owing to multiple global crises and the tremendous impact of the conflict in Mosul and Iraq, UNESCO believes that the mobilization of young people for peace, social justice and other urgent actions remains unfaltering and critical to the peaceful development of Iraq", encouraging the students to participate and give inputs and recommendations as key partners in the campaign and beyond.

Spanning over three days, the face-to-face campaign, included the following activities:

1. In presence of the 47 student leaders, around 30 NTU staff and other partners and experts, the first day of

the campaign started with presentation UNESCO's programme for PVE and Peacebuilding, including other multisectoral projects, with specific focus on presenting the "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for peace in Ninewa" project, before presenting and agreeing on the Youth4Peace campaign programme with the students and faculty members.

2. Following that, two presentations of the role of institutions in strengthening peace and the role of Youth in media and making the public opinion for peacebuilding. This session was followed by a plenary session bringing experts, stakeholders and influencers from Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, UNESCO chair in Preventing Violent Extremism and Fostering a Culture of Peace, NTU and Mosul Heritage foundation to discuss the role of youth and institutions with the students.

3. In addition to the mentioned discussions, UNESCO project managers and the student leaders had an open discussion with the student leaders on their ideas, insights and recommendations for future possible collaboration and interventions. These multisectoral inputs and recommendations were presented by the student leaders to the audience on day 3. They involved PVE and peacebuilding initiatives, response to climate change, mental health support at schools, TVET, cybersecurity, Culture (heritage and tourism), access to education and other similar fields.

4. The key faculty members of NTU who were trained earlier by UNESCO, had a refresher session on Critical Thinking, Media and Information Literacy, orienting them on the key messages to convey to their students and the best way to do that. Accordingly, on the second day of the campaign, the NTU staff were able to reach around 700 students inside the classrooms and halls of the NTU, with the key messages of the training and provided them with awareness raising brochures.

5. During the second day, the student leaders had a full day hands-on training session on Critical Thinking, Media and Information Literacy. The session embraced presentations and other interactive activities in which students worked in groups.

6. Symbolizing the peaceful coexistence and promoting diversity and respecting the other, the student leaders' teams



## UNESCO, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Northern Technical University, organize the Youth4Peace Campaign (continued)



enjoyed sport activities, playing football and volleyball over the first two days.

“We came from different districts and subdistricts bringing with us our different ideologies, traditions, religious backgrounds, values and ways of living, to stay together in one place to discuss very important things and in the same time enjoy our time, no one asked from which background the other came from, we just started melting together and understanding the different communities that are living together in Ninewa, we shared our personal stories and provided advises to each other. I was happy that we could support one of our colleagues who was suffering from some psychological issues. It is absolutely one of the most successful activities we participated in and we are ready to support future similar activities voluntarily”, Thamir Ahmed

Yousif, student leader, NTU

7. The third concluding day of the campaign started with a moment of silence to honor the souls of the people deceased in Baghdeeda fire incident on 26 September 2023. The day involved different presentations by UNESCO, NTU and the students leaders. The days was capped by the signature of cooperation agreements between NTU and some private sector companies, which UNESCO supported, aiming at enhancing youth employability and strengthening their role in building sustainable peace.

8.

### Conclusion:

The Youth4Peace campaign was concluded with Drama performance by group of students, led by Dr. Suleik Al Khabaz from the Institute of Fine Arts, Department of Drama Arts, on “Mosul:

from death and destruction to peace and prosperity” and also a music performance by Om Al Rabeayen Heritage band who presented very nice traditional songs from Mosul which were highly enjoyed by the participants.

What is next?

- The student leaders will conduct some awareness raising sessions conveying what they learnt to other students inside the University and providing them with brochures.

- UNESCO has created the “Youth4Peace community” group on social media (as in figure1), including the key NTU staff and students who will continue sharing experience and discussing future activities that will be done independently by them with technical backstopping from UNESCO.
- The social media campaign, which has reached more than 5,000 learners (as in figure2), will continue with more messages for peace to reach wider learners.

Embassy of Japan in Iraq

- UNESCO and other representatives who participated in the campaign, including the UNESCO chair for Preventing Violent Extremism and Fostering a Culture of Peace, University of Mosul, National Committee for Preventing Violent Extremism and Christian Endowment, will continue working with the student leaders at the earlier opportunity towards more cooperation and support.

## Fostering peace through media - UNDP equips journalists with skills to promote social cohesion

**Baghdad, 16 October 2023** - A cross section of the journalists in the social cohesion training hosted by UNDP in Erbil, Iraq. The specialized training was intended to strengthen the capacity of professional journalists in building social cohesion and sustainable peacebuilding in Northern Iraq.

Across the globe, media wields the power to shape community conversations and influence perceptions. With this influence, it emerges as a vital means for the promotion of peace and social cohesion in diverse communities.

Recognizing this, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has taken a crucial step to strengthen capacities and knowledge on social cohesion among journalists in Northern

Iraq.

A group of 30 dedicated media professionals from various media houses across five governorates, recently completed specialized training in building social cohesion provided by UNDP. This marks the third instalment of such initiatives by the organization, with the previous two targeting media students and citizen journalists with substantial social media followings.

“The main purpose of these trainings is to engage the media in conversations on peacebuilding. We also provide guidance on how to peacefully navigate issues of hate speech, preventing violent extremism, and building social cohesion through their platforms.” Aysar Saleem, the UNDP field coordinator for Kirkuk and Ninewa

stated.

For Aseel Al-Rubaie, one of the trainees from one of the media houses in Kirkuk, the training was a great refresher. “As a producer for an arts and culture show, social cohesion is a big part of my work – my work showcases the daily life and history of all our people and it is important that they are all well represented,” she said. In addition, the training has been an opportunity to network and learn from colleagues from different Governorates how they are building social cohesion through their work. “In fact, this has been a cohesion-building exercise for us as media people as well, despite our different backgrounds, we had very fruitful discussions in our groups sharing our different yet enriching perspectives,” she added.

## Fostering peace through media - UNDP equips journalists with skills to promote social cohesion *(continued)*

For Asim Omar Muhammad Saeed, the training will help him in reporting on subjects related to terrorism, ISIS, and affected communities. "My reporting will focus on solving problems and restoring ties between the various groups in the communities," he said.

Both trainees called on UNDP to take the training further afield to include more journalists based within the local communities so that they can also understand the importance of inclusive reporting that builds cohesion in communities.

UNDP's goal is to continue empowering various media groups through such training so that they can use their distinct role to shape conversations and influence perceptions to promote social

cohesion.

UNDP's Integrated Social Cohesion Programme supports efforts towards peaceful and more cohesive societies in

Iraq. Its work on capacity building for journalists is made possible with the generous contributions of the Government of Denmark.



## Empowering the community builders: UNDP trains civil society partners in conflict sensitivity



**Erbil, 19 October 2023** - As part of its continued efforts to ensure that peacebuilding work builds communities without creating more conflict, UNDP recently hosted a training workshop to empower its Civil Society partners with tools to address conflict sensitivity.

Held in Erbil, Iraq, the training drew over 30 representatives from Community Based Organisations (CBOs) that are currently engaged with UNDP on peacebuilding projects or have partnered in the past.

At the core of the training lay a paramount objective - to introduce the concepts of conflict sensitivity and the imperative principle of "do no harm" in the context of supporting local communities.

"This training is vital because our partners work at the grassroots level, directly engaging with the partners with the communities. Without adequate preparation, their well-meaning efforts could unintentionally cause some conflict," Mr. Domle Khidher, a professional trainer who led the different sessions shared.

The training focused on the key pillars of conflict sensitivity including do no harm, analysing conflict, involvement of women and youth.

The training delved into the essential pillars of conflict sensitivity, including the principles of "do no harm," conflict analysis, and the active involvement of women and youth.

"My main take away from this training

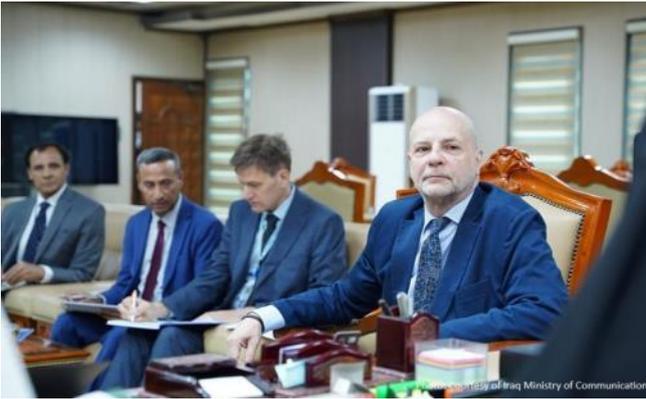
is the understanding that commonalities are permanent, while divisions are temporary and we can overcome them by finding solutions and studying the causes and roots of the problem as we carry out our work," Asia Salam of Al Ilham Organisation in Diyala Governorate said after training. Asia also urged UNDP to extend its reach to more young people, particularly those within volunteer teams that provide crucial support to numerous CBOs.

Dr. Thaer Abdul-Jabbar, representing Solidarity Organisations in Anbar Governorate, was happy to master the basic rules for community engagement, particularly those that are essential for ensuring that no harm is inadvertently inflicted.

The training was timely, providing the CBOs with invaluable insights into the evolving context of the country as it transitions from a humanitarian-focused approach towards sustainable peace and development. This knowledge will equip them with the tools to navigate their diverse communities with ease.

With this training, UNDP hopes to avoid any negative consequences in its work and partnerships within the diverse communities of Iraq.

UNDP's Integrated Social Cohesion Programme supports efforts towards peaceful and more cohesive societies in Iraq. Its work on capacity building for journalists is made possible with the generous contributions of the Government of Denmark.



**Baghdad, 11 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office (HRO) met in Baghdad with the **Minister of Communications, Dr. Hiam Al-Yasiri**, and other Iraqi officials. The discussion focused on the Government initiative of developing a strategy to counter hate speech in Iraq. The DSRSG commended the initiative, shared an overview of relevant UN standards, and agreed with Dr. Al-Yasiri on further cooperation.



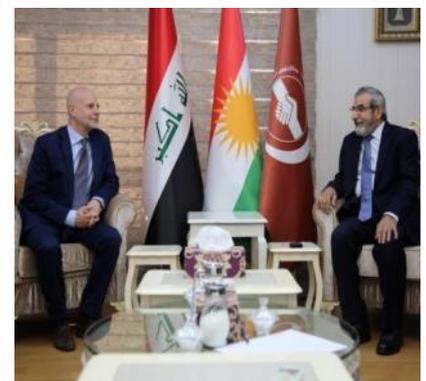
**Erbil, 18 September 2023** - The Special Representatives of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, participated today in a meeting in Erbil of the Iraqi National Security Advisor, **Mr. Qassem al-Araji**, and the Kurdistan Regional Government's Minister of Interior, **Mr. Rêber Ahmed**. Discussions focused on border security and issues of common concern.



**Baghdad, 18 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, with the political, electoral and human rights team of UNAMI, met with representatives of civil society organizations including **Ali al-Mikdam**. Discussions focused on the latest political and security developments, the upcoming elections as well as human rights issues, specifically the challenges facing journalists and civil society organizations.



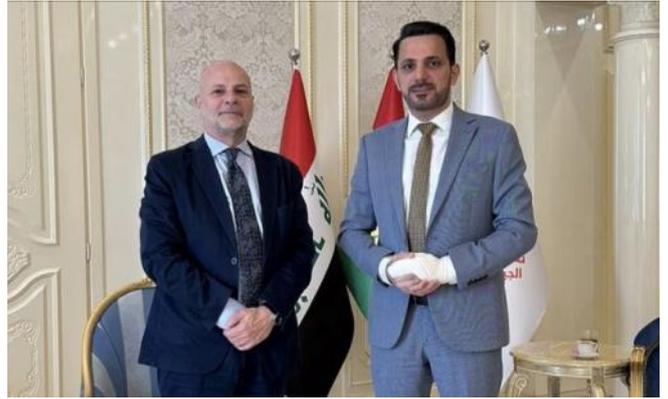
**Sulaimaniyah, 19 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, visited the **Red Museum (Amna Suraka)** in Sulaimaniyah accompanied by its Director, **Ako Gharib**. DSRSG Cordone noted the "important task of preserving the evidence and memory of the atrocities of Saddam and Daesh."



**Sulaymaniyah, 20 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, met separately with **Dr. Haval Abubakir**, the Governor of Sulaymaniyah, PUK Politburo Rapporteur **Mr. Raafat Abdulla** and the Secretary-General of the Kurdistan Islamic Union, **Mr. Salahaddin Mohammed Bahaaddin**. They discussed elections, political developments in the Kurdistan Region, regional issues, and UNAMI's role.



**Sulaymaniyah, 20 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Good discussion on elections, women's role and human rights with media and other civil society representatives in Sulaymaniyah".



**Sulaymaniyah, 21 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, met today with **Shaswar Abdalwahid Qadir**, New Generation Movement (NGM) leader, before leaving Sulaimaniyah. Discussed the forthcoming elections, the overall situation in the Kurdistan Region and UNAMI's role, specifically in assisting the electoral process.



**Halabja, 21 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Visiting Halabja. Meeting with **Governor Azad Tofiq** and **Deputy Shahin Raza** and visiting the memorial. Important to preserve the memory of past atrocities while looking towards the future".



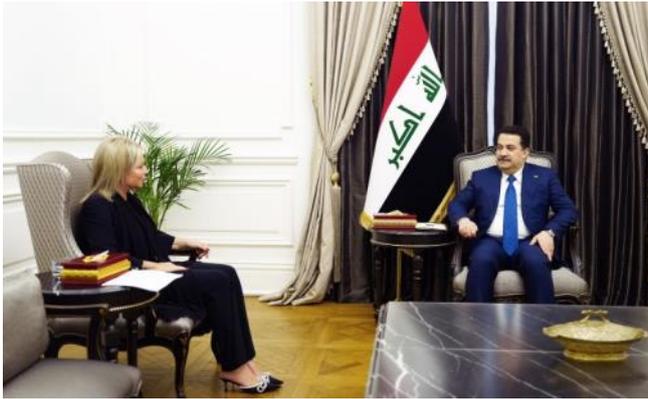
**New York, 22 September 2023** - The Secretary-General met with H.E. **Mr. Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq. The Secretary-General and the Prime Minister exchanged views on the political situation in Iraq and issues of interest and concern in the region. They also discussed cooperation between the United Nations and the country. The Secretary-General reaffirmed that the United Nations remains fully committed to supporting the Government and people of Iraq.

UN Photo.



**Erbil, 30 September 2023** - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met in Erbil today with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, **Mr. Masrour Barzani**. They discussed the political situation, underscoring the need to hold Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections on time.

Photo courtesy of KRG.



**Baghdad, 4 October 2023** – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. **Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with **Prime Minister Mr. Mohammed S. Al-Sudani**.

Photo courtesy of the PM Media Office.



**Erbil, 11 October 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, today participated in the Middle East Research Institute (MERI) Forum 2023 panel session on Sinjar Agreement: Progress and Barriers. In his intervention, the DSRSG underlined the importance of implementing the Sinjar agreement as well as undertaking other steps on reparations and accountability to encourage returns and coexistence among all communities.



**Erbil, 17 October 2023** - Today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, met with Kurdistan Region Minister of Interior, **Mr. Rêber Ahmed**. They discussed a wide range of topics, focusing on Durable Solutions, IDPs, coordination and the upcoming UN Cooperation Framework.



**Erbil, 19 October 2023** - Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, met with Kurdistan Region Government Minister of Interior, **Rêber Ahmed**. They discussed the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement and regional developments.



**Cairo, Egypt, 21 October 2023** - Prime Minister **Mohammed S. Al-Sudani** meets **Secretary-General of the United Nations** on the sidelines of Cairo Summit for Peace.

UN Photo.



**Baghdad, 24 October 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, met today with **Dr Yossra Mohsen**, Director General, Women Empowerment Directorate, and Chair of the Supreme Committee to Support Women's Participation in the Governorate Council Elections, along with other committee members. They discussed efforts to strengthen cooperation with the Supreme Committee and the Independent High Electoral Commission, as well as the High Judicial Council and civil society, on promoting women's participation in the elections. DSRSG Cordone reiterated the United Nations readiness to support activities and measures to empower women participation and address protection concerns in the run up to the elections. This is in line with UNAMI's mandate and UN Security Council resolution 1325.



**Baghdad, 25 October 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. **Claudio Cordone**, met today with **civil society representatives** in Baghdad. Among other topics, the discussions focused on the protection of women's rights and civic space, promoting of women's participation in the Governorates Council elections, and collaboration to enhance implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on the advancement of women.



**Baghdad, 26 October 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. **Claudio Cordone**, met in Baghdad with the Acting Head of the International Organizations and Conferences Department, **Dr. Fadel Al-Rahim**, at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They exchanged views on a number of issues of common interest, including UNAMI's support to political dialogue and forthcoming elections as well as regional developments.

Photo courtesy of Iraqi MoFA.



**Kuwait City, 28 October 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**, was received in Kuwait City by His Excellency **Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Kuwait.

Photo courtesy of MoFA Kuwait.



**Baghdad, 30 October 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**, met in Baghdad with **Ambassador Muhammad Hussein Muhammad Bahr al-Ulum**, Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They discussed the cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations, and the developments in Iraq and the region.

Photo courtesy of Iraqi MoFA.



**Baghdad, 30 October 2023** - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. **Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, had a constructive meeting today with H.E. **Ahmed Al-Mubarqaa**, Minister of Youth and Sport. Emphasizing the power of youth in shaping Iraq's future. Key discussions: Push for youth-led climate action up to COP28 and beyond. Advocacy for youth volunteerism.



**Erbil, 2 November 2023** — The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, Ms. **Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met in Erbil with **Mr. Réber Ahmed**, Kurdistan Regional Government's Minister of Interior. They discussed political and security developments.

Photo courtesy of KRG MoI.

## UNAMI on X

**Baghdad, 19 September 2023** - UNAMI condemns attack on Arbat airport in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, which caused a number of casualties. Attacks repeatedly violating Iraqi sovereignty must stop. Security concerns must be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy - not strikes.

**Baghdad, 27 September 2023** - Shocked and pained by the horrible loss of life and injuries in the fire in Ninewa's Hamdaniya. An immense tragedy. Our sincere condolences to the families who lost loved ones. We wish the injured a speedy recovery.

## UNITAD on X

**Baghdad, 27 September 2023** – “Our heartfelt condolences to those who have lost loved ones and to the people and government of Iraq.”

## UNESCO on X

**Baghdad 28 September 2023** – “We are deeply saddened by the devastating loss of life and injuries in the Hamdaniya fire in Nineveh. UNESCO expresses its sincere condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones. We extend our best wishes for a swift recovery to those who were injured.”

## Women Empowerment

### DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq Isaczai visits a Women's Protection Centre supported by UNFPA

**Baghdad, 18 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, visited a Women's Protection Centre supported by UNFPA Iraq and funded by the Government of France. "Inspired by the chats with survivors and the Centre Management team's dedication. Proud to witness our ongoing commitment to supporting the vulnerable and those in need."



### Empowering Iraqi women for economic independence: UNDP's initiatives in livelihood development by capacity building

**Baghdad, 15 October 2023** - Located in the west of Iraq's Anbar governorate, the city of Haditha, 260 km west of the capital city of Baghdad, is characterized by fertile agricultural land, natural beauty, and freshwater springs. This is where Sakinah, 28, lives with her four brothers. She works as an administration and reports officer at the mayor's office and is an active member of the local Women's Forum. She also leads the Women's Empowerment Committee, where she

also holds an administrative role. Ever since she was a little girl, Sakinah was always striving to learn new things. Growing up with mostly brothers, she always had a competitive spirit. When the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) offered a training course in computer literacy, she was one of the first to participate. Through the training, she learned to format devices, install programs, troubleshoot common computer problems, and learned to fix them. In

addition to this, she became proficient in MS Office programs like Word and Excel.

"I always strive to develop my abilities in various fields, so that I can keep up with life and development."

Prior to the training programme, Sakinah was not technologically inclined. But after the training programme ended, Sakinah walked out of the training center, head held high, proudly holding her certificate and her laptop, as proof of her newfound

## Empowering Iraqi women for economic independence ...(continued)

computer literacy skillset.

“As I walked out of the centre, I felt a sense of accomplishment and hope come over me. I looked around at the city I grew up in and I saw it in a different light. I saw the possibility of learning this new technology as a means to further develop myself and my city. The fields seemed greener, the springs more vibrant and the people friendlier. The world opened up all of a sudden and at that moment, everything seemed possible,” she said.

Acquiring this new skill empowered Sakinah to give back to her community, leveraging the potential of using technology for development, and securing for herself a role in making it happen in her community. Her computer skills have had a positive impact on her life and work. She is now able to produce presentations and analyze data in Excel, she is also now able to organize events to train other women on how to use computers and programs. She is a passionate advocate for computer literacy, encouraging other women in her community to



embrace technology.

“I am passionate about sharing my knowledge and empowering other women, I believe that what I have learned, I must pass onto the next woman,” said Sakinah.

“My experience has inspired me to become an advocate for computer literacy. I want other women to embrace learning and taking advantage of technology to make their lives and work better. It is an important skill that can open up new opportunities and help people achieve their full potential,” Sakinah says.

UNDP is committed to empowering women and Iraqi civil servants through computer literacy. Through the computer training course that UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization offers, since 2021 more than 15,703 staff of the different sectoral directorates in Iraq have developed the skills they need to thrive in the digital age. And as the stabilization programme segways into transformative and sustainable development, Sakinah and other women like her will again be one of the first ones leading the charge.

## Human Rights

### UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq

**Baghdad, September-October 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.

**Erbil, 23 August 2023** - Today, the UNAMI Human Rights Office in collaboration with the Resident Coordinator office in Baghdad held a workshop in Erbil on the impact of climate change on human rights, in particular in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The workshop was attended by 24 participants (9 males and 15 females) including journalists, activists, and civil society organizations.

Participants discussed the impact of climate change on their enjoyment of the right to healthy environment, and the actions they are taking to address these challenges, in particular in response to increased temperatures. Participants also discussed the importance of increasing green spaces and preserving land for agricultural use as part of efforts to combat climate change.



**Baghdad, 26 August 2023** - The UNAMI Human Rights Office and the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum trained 20 journalists (16 women and four men) on the inclusion of human rights principles and norms in journalistic reporting.



## UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq *(continued)*



**Baghdad, 29 August 2023** - UNAMI Human Rights Office organized an event on diversity as a tool for the promotion and protection of human rights, with a particular focus on minority rights. The workshop was held in Baghdad and brought together 26 representatives (14 males and 12 females, including a PWD) from diverse ethno-religious components, the Prime Minister's Adviser on Component Affairs, representatives from the

Religious Endowments and civil society organizations.

The workshop is the last in a series of three, and forms part of the Human Rights 75 Initiative celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Participants discussed the historical background to the adoption of the UDHR, its key provisions relating to minority rights, and its importance for the promotion and protection of human

rights in Iraq. The event included a panel discussion focused on the topic – “Diversity as a tool to promote universality and indivisibility of human rights”. Participants also proposed strategies for strengthening collaboration among all stakeholders on the promotion and protection of minority rights in Iraq using the UDHR.

In his opening remarks, the Prime Minister's Adviser on Component Affairs, Mr Nawaf Bahaa, reiterated the commitment of the Government of Iraq to the promotion and protection of minority rights in Iraq.

The representative of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), Mr. Quis Hussein, highlighted some of the challenges facing minorities, explaining that the Commission is working to support the government to achieve human rights for all Iraqis.

Discussions focused on concrete measures and recommendations to strengthen the promotion and protection of minority rights in Iraq.

**Baquba, 10 September 2023** – Today, UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a training for Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) in Diyala on human rights reporting. The training was conducted as part of UNAMI's efforts to support its partners through capacity-building activities. Eleven IHCHR staff members from Diyala took part in this training which included practical exercises on how to improve human rights reporting.



**Tikrit, 13 September 2023** – UNAMI HRO organized a training for Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) in Tikrit on human rights reporting. The training was conducted as part of UNAMI's efforts to support its partners through capacity-building activities. Ten IHCHR staff members from Tikrit took part in this training which included practical exercises on how to improve human rights reporting.



**Baghdad, 23 September 2023** - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI organized a two-day training in Baghdad for 15 representatives from civil society organizations, local journalists, and human rights defenders coming from Baghdad, Babil, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiya, Wasit and Anbar governments. Training

sessions covered next to critical skills for human rights monitoring and reporting also means of advocacy, including engagement with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. Moreover, participants discussed the challenges of protecting human rights defenders in cyber space.



## UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq (continued)

**Baghdad, 20 September 2023** - The UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) conducted over the past 10 days a series of trainings on human rights reporting for the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) in the governorates of Kirkuk, Diyala and Salah al-Din, as part of UNAMI's efforts to support its partners through capacity-building activities.

The trainings - held in Diyala on 10 September, Salah al-Din on 13 September and in Kirkuk on 20 September - covered the different aspects of the human rights report-drafting process and its fundamental role in the human rights monitoring cycle. HRO provided participants with insights and practical information on the drafting of human rights reports, from methodological considerations, information gathering and verification, to quality control. Participants were given practical exercises to apply the information received and to collectively discuss each group's input. Concrete examples pertaining to IHCHR's work



and previously encountered challenges were discussed in order to adequately link the training's content to IHCHR's day-to-day responsibilities.

Ten IHCHR staff benefitted from the training in Kirkuk today, bringing the total to 31 IHCHR staff members who have participated in the trainings in the three governorates in September. Participants in the Kirkuk training stressed the importance of quality human rights reporting and the

significant role played by IHCHR in this regard. One participant stated: "The knowledge acquired in this training will definitely be put to use in upcoming IHCHR reports."

The event contributed to the realisation in Iraq of Sustainable Development Goal #16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

**Mosul, 25 September 2023** - UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable with 28 representatives from civil society, including human rights defenders as well as journalists and lawyers. Next to issues of freedom of expression and the ability for civil society organizations to operate freely, participants discussed concrete measures and recommendations to strengthen the promotion and protection of civic space in Mosul.



**Baghdad, 30 September 2023** - The Human Rights Office of UNAMI and INSM Network شبكة أنسم completed a joint two-day training on Digital Security and Digital Rights held at the premises of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) headquarters in Baghdad city.

The training brought together 24 participants (13 women and 11 men) who included civil society representatives, human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, lawyers, and staff members of the IHCHR.

The training provided guidance on how to maneuver safely through cyberspace, with a focus on improving digital security for human rights defenders and enhancing their knowledge on digital rights, as well as the practical tools to strengthen their safety in the digital environment, including ethics of communication, data storage and protection from hacking.



Congratulating the participants upon the completion of the training on 30 September, Mr Dimiter Chalev, the Chief of the Human Rights Office of UNAMI, said, "The main objective of the training was to enhance the participants' knowledge and skills related to online protection and the expansion of the online civic space."

This training was the first in a series of similar trainings scheduled to take place this year in Karbala, Kirkuk, Nasiriyah and Erbil and is the third phase of an ongoing initiative which began in 2021. So far, a total of 327 participants have received these trainings on digital security and digital rights in both federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

## UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq *(continued)*

**Baghdad, 01 October 2023** - The UNAMI Human Rights Office and the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum trained 20 journalists (12 women and 8 men) on the inclusion of human rights principles and norms in journalistic reporting. This is the fourth training held in Iraq this year of a series of similar trainings under the Global Drive for Media Freedom and the Safety of Journalists initiative that is funded by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).



**Karbala, 07 October 2023** – UNAMI’s Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO) and INSM Network organized a training on “Digital Security and Digital Rights” for 29 participants (21 men and 8 women) including human rights defenders, activists, journalists, bloggers, and lawyers. The training provided the participants with practical tools on how to safely maneuver through cyberspace,

strengthen their access to the right to freedom of expression and enhance protection against hate speech in the digital environment. The event, which was held at the premises of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), was the second in a series of five similar joint trainings to be held in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



**Thi-Qar, 21 October 2023** - UNAMI’s Human Rights Office and INSM Network organized a training on “Digital Security and Digital Rights” for 20 participants (12 men and 8 women) including human rights defenders, activists, journalists, bloggers, lawyers, and staff of the IHCHR. The training provided the participants with practical tools on how to safely

maneuver through cyberspace, strengthen their access to the right to freedom of expression and enhance protection against hate speech in the digital environment. The event was the third in a series of five similar joint trainings to be held across Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.



**Kirkuk, 23 October 2023** – The UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a training for staff members of the Ministry of Interior’s Family Protection Units (FPU) from Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Diyala on working with survivors of domestic violence. The training was conducted as part of UNAMI’s efforts to provide

support its partners through capacity-building activities. Seven FPU investigators and assistants benefitted from this training which included discussions on recommendations and best practices on interviewing victims who were subjected to traumatic experiences.



**Erbil, 27 October 2023** – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a three-day workshop on the “The Right to Education.” This event brought together a diverse group of educators and education advocates from Sinjar, Telafar, Bashiqa, Hamdaniah, Barila, Akre, Shekhan, Duhok, Kirkuk, and Erbil. Twenty-five participants (10 women and 15 men), reflecting the diversity of Iraqi society including Christian, Yazidi, Kakai, Turkman, Shabak, Zoroastrian, Arabs, Kurds, attended the workshop. The workshop forms part of UNAMI’s efforts to promote equal and inclusive right to education for Iraq’s diverse societal components.

The workshop provided space to unpack key legal and theoretical frameworks and to highlight critical issues, challenges, and impediments while generating practical policy recommendations to address these concerns. The participants discussed the need for inclusive

representation in the curriculum to ensure the right to equitable education for all groups. Noting the importance of working together, the participants agreed to create a critical network to promote the right to education for all societal components.



## UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq *(continued)*



**Baghdad, 28 October 2023** - TARKIB Art Organization, supported by UNAMI Human Right Office and other international partners, including the Berlin Institute for Spatial Experiments, the Embassy of The

Netherlands, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture held the sixth edition of “Baghdad Walk”. The “Baghdad Walk” took place in a number of streets and landscapes of Baghdad involving a group of

exhibition and outdoor walk. The event aims to promote cultural awareness and creative activism through visual arts. This year, fifteen emerging Iraqi artists exhibited artworks using a diverse array of artistic media around the central theme of “What human rights and climate change mean to us?” The artworks that formed part of the Baghdad Walk addressed a range of human rights themes explicitly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals and offered a compelling perspective on the interpretations of the younger generation of artists on the multifaceted social, political, and environmental challenges facing Iraq. Human rights issues examined through the artworks included child labour, the water crisis, honor killing, climate-induced migration, injustice, and mental health and wellbeing.



**Duhok, 30 October 2023** - UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a workshop in Duhok on climate change and its impact on human rights. The workshop was attended by 25 participants including journalists, volunteers, activists, and representatives of civil society organizations. Participants discussed the relationship between human rights and climate change and proposed actions to address environmental concerns in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Moreover, the issue on how climate change can impact on peace and security was also discussed during the workshop.



**Kirkuk, 30 October 2023** – The UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion on the rights of children of families with perceived links to ISIL, with a particular focus on the right to education. Participants included representatives of the Kirkuk local government, the judiciary, non-governmental organizations, tribal figures and Muslim scholars from Kirkuk. The participants discussed challenges, recommendations and best practice's to ensure the best interest of those children.



**Sulaymaniyah, 31 October 2023** - UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a workshop in Sulaymaniyah on NGOs engagement with the United Nations mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights. The workshop was attended by 28 participants including journalists, activists, and representatives

of civil society organizations. The participants discussed the avenues for NGOs to get familiar with the UN human rights mechanisms. Moreover, the relevance of building networks and the engagement in the national processes related to these UN mechanisms was also discussed during the workshop.



# The Yazidi Genocide Memorial opened in Solagh

Sinjar, 18 October 2023 - Today's opening of the Yazidi Genocide Memorial was attended by government officials, Nadia Murad, religious leaders and members of the Yazidi community in Solagh, Sinjar.

Immortalizing the lives lost to the genocide, the memorial offers a place for collective remembrance. IOM Iraq is proud to realize this vision with Nadia's Initiative and USAID Iraq.

Gone, but never forgotten.

Nobel Laureate Nadia Murad dedicates the Yazidi Genocide Memorial to the resilience of the community, many of whom are still waiting for their loved



ones to return. We hear you, we stand with you and we

will continue to work to make those returns a reality.

## DSRSG Cordone: “We commit again to work together to end this cycle of violence and to ensure that the community is given the opportunity to heal and live in security and with dignity.”

Solagh, 18 October 2023 – Today, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, attended the opening ceremonies of the Yazidi Genocide Memorial in Solagh, Sinjar.

Here is the text of his remarks at this event:

“Distinguished guests, On behalf of the United Nations family in Iraq, let me begin by offering our deepest condolences to the survivors and the families of the victims of the Yazidi Genocide, and express our deep solidarity with them.

The loss of all those lives, and the atrocities committed in the name of a sick and vicious ideology, will forever mark our memories. The effects of those atrocities continue to impact the lives of the survivors and move the conscience of everyone in the world.

Time and again, the Yazidi community has endured systemic violence and attempts to erase its existence. Generation after generation, Yazidis have carried the scars of war, persecution, displacement and exclusion. Their trauma and grief are

immeasurable. Today then is day of remembrance and reflection. By opening this memorial site, we want to remember the victims and the survivors. We have not forgotten, and we will not forget.

But remembrance must also be a call to action.

Today therefore we commit again to work together to end this cycle of violence and to ensure that the community is given the opportunity to heal and live in security and with dignity.

I therefore call on this occasion for an expeditious implementation of the Sinjar Agreement of 2020, so that Sinjar can finally benefit from a functioning administration, a local police force, and the reconstruction projects that people deserve.

Administrative stability and security will also allow more displaced people to return, so that displaced camps can be finally closed.

We need to redouble our efforts to establish the fate of the Yazidis who are still missing, free anyone who is still held captive, and support those with children born of rape.

In addition, we also need to expedite reparations for the victims under the relevant laws. Reparations are key to recognizing the harm done to survivors and assisting them in rebuilding their lives.

And we should be determined in ensuring the accountability of those responsible for the crimes committed against the Yazidis, and the other communities. Fair trials are important to ensure real justice, and also to avoid blaming a whole community for the action of individuals from that community.

Finally, we need to work together to promote knowledge and mutual understanding among all communities. This is a critical step to guarantee that such atrocities are not repeated.

Distinguished guests, I commend the work done so far by the political authorities in Baghdad and Erbil, and urge further cooperation placing the interests of the survivors above politics.

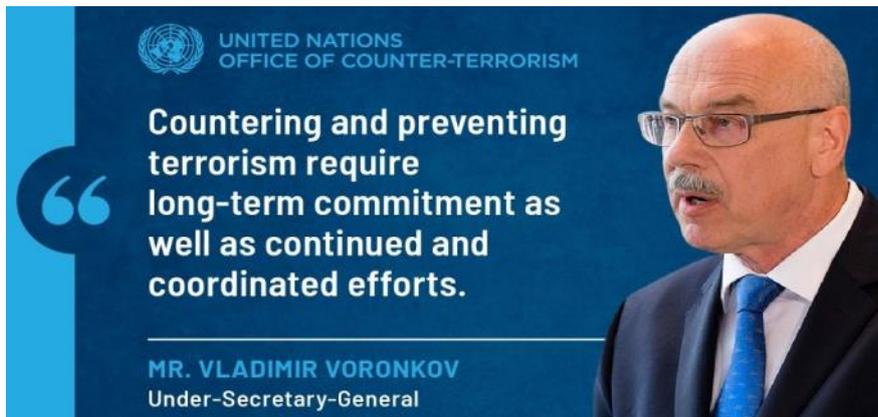
The international community as a whole stands with you in these efforts. The UN through UNAMI, the UN humanitarian and development agencies, and UNITAD, continues to support Iraqi efforts to respond to the need of the survivors and to ensure that what we are remembering here today will never be repeated.

In the end, what is at stake is the future of the Yazidis in Iraq, and the future of Iraq as a country where diversity is celebrated as a source of richness rather than threat.

Once again, I offer sincerest condolences, solidarity, and commitment to action. Thank you.”



## Da'esh and affiliates still a threat in conflict zones, UN counter-terrorism officials report



**New York, 25 August 2023** - Despite successful international counter-terrorism initiatives, the extremist group Da'esh and its affiliates continue to pose a serious threat in conflict zones and neighbouring countries, the UN Security Council heard on Friday.

Ambassadors were briefed by two senior UN counter-terrorism officials who presented the Secretary-General's latest report on the group, also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which showed that the threat in non-conflict areas remains low.

"This analytical distinction can obscure what is the complex, context-specific and dynamic nature of how these groups operate and evolve and their impact on international peace and security," said Vladimir Voronkov, head of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office (UNOCT).

He stressed that countering and preventing terrorism require long-term commitment as well as continued and coordinated efforts.

### Expansion and attacks in Africa

Mr. Voronkov said the continued expansion of Da'esh and affiliates in parts of Africa, as well as the increasing level of violence and threat, remain deeply concerning.

The Da'esh affiliate in the Sahel region "is becoming increasingly autonomous" and stepping up attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

"The confrontations between this group and an Al-Qaida affiliate in the region, coupled with the uncertain situation after the coup d'état in Niger, present a complex and multi-faceted challenge," he added.

Conflict and instability in Sudan have also renewed attention on the presence and activity of Da'esh and other terrorist groups there.

Attacks have also increased in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(DRC), where some 500 people have been killed in terrorist violence in the volatile eastern region of the country.

### Challenges in Afghanistan

Meanwhile, the situation in Afghanistan is growing increasingly complex, as fears of weapons and ammunition falling in the hands of terrorists are now materializing.

"Their-country operational capabilities of Da'esh's so-called Khorasan province, sanctioned as ISIL-K, has reportedly increased, with the group becoming more sophisticated in its attacks against the Taliban and international targets," he said.

"Moreover, the presence and activity of some 20 different terrorist groups in the country, combined with the repressive measures put in place by the Taliban de facto authorities, the absence of sustainable development and a dire humanitarian situation, pose significant challenges for the region and beyond."

### Counter-terrorism successes

Mr. Voronkov also pointed to successful counter-terrorism initiatives by the international community, such as progress in targeting Da'esh finances.

Cash reserves estimated at \$25 million to \$50 million "are now significantly less and diminishing", according to the UN report, which also noted "sustained attrition" to the group's leadership, including the killing of its chief earlier this year in Syria.

"As a result of counter-terrorism efforts, Da'esh has moved to adopt less hierarchical and more networked, decentralised structures, following Al-Qaida's footsteps, with increased operational autonomy by its affiliated groups," said Mr. Voronkov.

### Upcoming summit in Nigeria

He underscored that international law "remains the bedrock" for successful counter-terrorism efforts.

Initiatives must be "firmly grounded in political strategies for resolving the conflicts that fuel terrorism the most", he said, while "more complementarity" between security responses and preventive measures is also needed. He also looked to a counter-terrorism summit in Nigeria next year, organized by his office and the Government, as an opportunity to both increase international support and address the situation on the continent.

### Repatriations from Syria camps

Natalia Gherman, Executive Director of Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the secretariat for the Council's own Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), addressed four key trends in the report. Among them were continued efforts by Governments to repatriate their nationals from camps in northeast Syria hosting thousands of people, mainly women and children, with alleged ties to terrorist groups.

"At the same time, we must also recall the responsibility of Member States to bring terrorists to justice, and to demonstrate international cooperation in efforts to do so," she said.

As the Da'esh presence in parts of Africa continues to evolve, Ms. Gherman highlighted the need for the UN to support countries on the continent.

### Accountability and justice

Her final point noted that the UN has stepped up efforts to hold Da'esh accountable for its crimes.

For example, CTED partnered with UN experts on the rule of law to explore criminal justice avenues for sexual and gender-based violence committed by terrorist groups.

"Drawing from practitioners' experiences in the field and the perspectives of civil society, it was clear that only through accountability and justice can we begin to address the fear and devastation that terrorism inflicts on individuals, communities, and nations," she said.

By UN News.



## Victims' Voices, Silencing Terrorism: Khairy El-Jabouri

*\*Disclaimer: This story contains graphic references due to the telling of victims' experiences. Readers' discretion is advised.*

**Baghdad, 09 September 2023** - "In 2014, we were raided by a large force of ISIS, and my brothers and I were arrested and taken to an unknown destination. I escaped miraculously, but my brothers are missing to this day. We do not know whether they have been executed or remain missing. This has had a profound impact on both me and my family," Khairy El-Jabouri, 33-years-old, told UNODC.

On his path to overcome and rebuild his life, Khairy participated in the psychosocial support sessions provided within the UNODC project "Supporting victims of terrorism within the criminal justice framework, including psychological support" in Iraq, which was implemented in partnership with the Lebanese Association for Victims of Terrorism (AVT-L) and funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. "The programme served as a turning point that helped us to move forward from a place of vulnerability to a position where we could engage with our community, speak out and confront challenges more effectively," he noted.

We strongly urge organizations to provide support for our regions because families of missing persons do not have

resources to resort to. These organizations should provide psychological support, safe spaces for children, and assistance with rebuilding homes that have been destroyed," Khairy voiced his message to the international and national support networks who work to assist victims of terrorism.

This story, which represents the third in a five-part series, marks the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism which takes place on 21 August. This series is originally featured as part of the UNODC "Victims' Voices, Silencing Terrorism" campaign, which was conducted in June 2023 through a combination of social media outreach and on-the-ground presence in Baghdad, Iraq. The campaign reached 23 million people in Iraq and the Middle East and North Africa region and was conducted in collaboration with Iraqi authorities, the UN

Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Association of Victims of Terrorism in Lebanon (AVT-L) and funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The campaign 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 highlighted the importance of understanding who is a victim of terrorism, what are victims' needs, the role of the community, and the achievements of the project.



## OSRSG-SVC on X

**New York, 9 October 2023** - UN Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC): "We commend the Government of Iraq's progress in implementing the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors and call for its scope to be expanded to include children born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), and to enact legislation that renders all children eligible for birth registration and documentation."

## Disabilities

### The spirit of the Youth Day lingers on with enthusiasm

**Mosul, 24 August 2023** - The spirit of the Youth Day lingers on with enthusiasm, illuminated by the boundless potential of Iraqi youth.

In Mosul, adolescents with disabilities came together for a day filled with arts and sports showcasing their impressive handicrafts, sports skills, and photography talents.

Amidst the joy, the creativity and imagination of these remarkable individuals shone brightly. These merged abilities and life skills illuminate a path towards empowerment, change, and a flourishing future for Iraq. The event was supported by IOM Iraq.



## On Youth Day UNFPA Iraq celebrates creativity of young girls with disability

**Mosul, 24 August 2023** - UNFPA continues to celebrate Youth Day with enthusiasm! Iraqi youth are brimming with potential. Don't miss the exhibition by persons with disabilities addressing Climate Change challenges in Mosul. Marveled at the skill and creativity of young girls with disability as they proudly present their intricate handicrafts. These talents, combined with essential life skills, are shaping a brighter future. With thanks to the Government of Finland.



## WHO Iraq on World Sign Language Day

**Baghdad, 23 September 2023** – World Sign Languages Day, a day to celebrate the diversity and richness of this global language. WHO Iraq is proud to share with you some important health messages in sign language, to raise awareness and promote the health and well-being of the deaf community in the whole world. Watch this video and learn more about hygiene and how you can protect yourself and others from diseases. <https://twitter.com/i/status/1705605078797652120>



## A day of celebration and inclusion

**Mosul, 08 October 2023** - Mosul comes alive with the spirit of inclusivity:  
 -captivating theatrical performances  
 -an inspiring marathon  
 -a vibrant bazaar.

IOM Iraq welcomed 94 persons with disabilities to a day of celebration and inclusion.



## Freedom of Expression

## UNESCO and the Journalists Syndicate in Nineveh discuss ways to strengthen cooperation

**Nineveh, 20 September 2023** - UNESCO Iraq's Public Information Officer, Husamaldeen El-Zubi, met with the Head of the Journalists Syndicate in Nineveh, Nawfal Al-Rawi, to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation.



## UNESCO Iraq Office, in collaboration with media and publication courts' judges, celebrates the International Day for Universal Access to Information



**Baghdad, 04 October 2023** - UNESCO Iraq Office, in collaboration with media and publication courts' judges, celebrated the International Day for Universal Access to Information and the tenth anniversary of the Judges for Freedom of Expression initiative.

As part of UNESCO's Multi-Donors Program aimed at promoting freedom of expression and journalist safety, the Communications and Information sector organized an intensive training course for judges across all appellate regions of media and publication courts. The course focused on international standards related to freedom of expression and journalist safety. UNESCO experts engaged with Iraqi judges, discussing the crucial roles of Iraqi courts in enhancing journalists' safety mechanisms and providing courts with the necessary judicial tools to keep up with global developments in freedom of expression, both online and offline.

This initiative was a direct response to the High Judicial Council's request for UNESCO's assistance in strengthening

national judicial capacities in the areas of artificial intelligence and justice that uphold freedom of expression. Furthermore, technical teams will be established in appellate regions to examine and validate digital evidence, ensuring justice in this sector.

UNESCO, through its experts, is actively developing a guidance manual for judges of media and publication courts as well as journalists. This manual will provide practical insights into the application of international standards for freedom of expression, whether in online or offline contexts. The training sessions included

presentations on the European experience from institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights, the European Digital Safety Committee, and the European Charter for Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.

UNESCO is actively building collaborative relationships and sharing expertise with regulatory and judicial bodies in the communications and information fields in the Netherlands and Belgium. Additionally, efforts are being made to establish local national representations and offices in collaboration with global digital platforms and internet companies, organizing and enhancing the information and communications sector.

This training initiative was held in conjunction with two significant events: the International Day for Universal Access to Information and the tenth anniversary of the Judges for Freedom of Expression initiative, which now includes 35,000 specialized judges worldwide.



## Ensuring online freedom of expression while combating digital crimes

**Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 9 October 2023** - UNESCO is in talks with the Dutch Commission to Combat Hate Speech, Violence, and Disinformation to support the Iraqi judiciary. The goal is to enhance Iraqi media and publishing courts using advanced technologies to combat online disinformation and hate speech. Additionally, the Information and Communications Sector convened in the Netherlands to discuss collaboration on regulating internet platforms in Iraq. This initiative, in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior's Baghdad platform, is part of the Breaking the Silence project funded



by the Dutch Embassy in Iraq. The focus is on ensuring online freedom of

expression while combating digital crimes.



**Baghdad, 28 August 2023** - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was pleased to welcome H.E. Dr. Maximilian Rasch, Chargé d'Affaires of the German Embassy Baghdad, at UNITAD office. They discussed ongoing mutual cooperation, while Special Adviser Ritscher thanked Germany for the continued support to the Team and investigations into ISIL financial crimes and structures.



**Baghdad, 30 August 2023** - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was pleased to meet H.E. Alina L. Romanowski, United States Ambassador to Iraq. They discussed mutual cooperation in pursuit of accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq. Special Adviser Ritscher thanked USA for its continued support to UNITAD's mandate and its core investigations including ISIL crimes against Sunni and Christian communities in Iraq.

## In pursuit of justice: investigating ISIL's crimes against Iraq's Christians

**Erbil, 01 September 2023** - As a part of its continued cooperation and engagement with the impacted Iraqi communities, the United Nations Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) organized a conference in Erbil for Christian community leaders.

The conference gathered over 30 Christian community leaders with UNITAD's dedicated units investigating ISIL crimes against the Christian community, including the destruction of Christian religious sites. Also joining were representatives of the international community, including the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Hungary and the European Union.

Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher commended the Christian community leaders, saying that: "Your togetherness and your resilience are inspirational, not just to the Christian community in Iraq, but also to us at UNITAD." He further added that: "ISIL's ideology thrived on violence, sparing neither the people of Iraq nor their diverse cultures and beliefs...As we work in pursuit of justice for all victims and survivors, those who suffered from ISIL's atrocities, we keep in heart and mind one of UNITAD's core principles: there is no hierarchy in victims."

Special Adviser Ritscher highlighted that the Team's investigations have strengthened findings on crimes: "including the destruction of Christian cultural heritage in Mosul and the Ninawa plains, where ISIL perpetrators targeted churches, monasteries, cemeteries, manuscripts, Christian symbols and artwork in barbaric attacks, rooted in hate and inhumanity." Special Adviser Ritscher also addressed progress that was made in the development of individual case files for ISIL members in

relation to crimes committed in Hamdaniyah, including a high-level ISIL member associated with the Diwan of Spoils, mentioning that: "The identities of these ISIL members are corroborated by testimonial evidence, ISIL internal documents and case files provided by the Iraqi judiciary."

He further reiterated his gratitude for the close partnership with the Team's counterparts in the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government, and extended his thanks to the US and France for the generous funding to UNITAD's investigations into ISIL crimes against the Christian community and the destruction of cultural heritage.

H.E. Mr. Safeen Dizayee, Head of Department of Foreign Relations at KRI and H.E. Dr. Dindar Zebari, KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy took part in the opening segment, stressing the KRG's and the collective dedication in seeking justice for the victims of ISIL crimes.

At their end, H.E. Mr. Mark Stroh, U.S. Consul General, and H.E. French Acting Consul General, Mr. Rodolphe Richard both reiterated their countries' support to UNITAD's investigations, including

investigations of crimes against the Christian community and other minorities in Iraq, and ISIL's destruction of religious and cultural heritage.

During the conference, UNITAD lead investigators offered a detailed update on the progress of the Team's investigations into ISIL international crimes against the Christian community in Iraq, while experts presented on modern tools and methodologies used in investigating international crimes which are used to enhance UNITAD's core investigations.

The participating Christian leaders shared their insights and recommendations for the Investigative Team on how best to further enhance cooperation, gathering of evidence, and soliciting witness accounts. They all stressed the importance of recognizing and documenting the international crimes committed by ISIL against the Christian community in Iraq, to enable holding ISIL perpetrators accountable in court of law.

Building on this conference, UNITAD's investigators will be able to lead further engagements with the Christian community thanks to the openness and cooperation exhibited by the participating Christian leaders.



## International experts discuss with Iraqi Parliamentarians and legal experts interplay between International and Domestic Criminal Law

**Baghdad 12 September 2023** - The United Nations Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) in cooperation with the Parliamentary Development Institute organized the first seminar of the Joint Working Group on pathways to accountability for ISIL's international crimes, titled *Sources and Principles of International Criminal Law: Interplay between International and Domestic Criminal Law*.

The seminar, held under the auspices of H.E. Mr. Mohsen Al-Mandalawi, First Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives, brought together more than 40 members of parliamentary committees, Iraqi lawmakers, and experts. The seminar discussed core topics in the area of International Criminal Law (ICL) and its linkage to national legislation. On behalf of Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher, Mr. Anees Ahmed, Chief of Office of Evidence Management, delivered opening remarks, thanking the esteemed First Deputy Speaker Mr. Al Madalawi, the Parliamentary Development Institute and participating members of parliament for hosting the seminar at the premises of the Iraqi Parliament. He highlighted that prosecuting ISIL criminals for their heinous international crimes committed in Iraq is of high importance to the victims of ISIL and their bereaved families seeking truth and accountability to the highest of standards. He also noted the efforts done by the Iraqi authorities, including the legislators, in advancing legal frameworks and accountability processes.

He also reassured that, in the spirit of mutual cooperation, UNITAD remains ready, willing and eager to provide any requested technical support as Iraq progresses towards enacting the proper legal framework on international crimes, paving the way for holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for their international crimes before Iraqi courts.

Mr. Rebwar Hadi AbdulRahman, Chairman of the Legal Committee at the Council of Representative said: "The Iraqi Council of Representatives, within its constitutional duties, works to legislate laws that are compatible



with international agreements and treaties to ensure that [ISIL] perpetrators of crimes against humanity and genocide do not escape [justice]." He further indicated that: "The presence of the investigation team (UNITAD) will provide technical support, including capacity building, to the legislative authority through international experts in the field of international humanitarian law which leads to a legislation or amendment to the national legislation that preserves the rights of victims." In addition, Mr. Saad Faiyadh Mozan, Head of the Parliamentary Development Institute, as well as other parliamentarians took part in the opening sessions.

UNITAD facilitated the participation of two international experts, who shared presentations and insights with all participants. On his part, Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, Judicial Affairs Officer and Islamic Law Expert at the United Nations Department of Peace Operations, discussed sources of ICL, distinction between treaty law and customary international law, international treaties ratified by Iraq, domestication of ICL, distinction between ordinary crimes and international crimes, and why prosecution on charges of terrorism is not enough.

At his end, Professor Claus Kress, Professor of International Law and Criminal Law, Chair for German and international criminal law, and Director of the Institute of International Peace and Security Law at the University of Cologne, discussed general principles of ICL, principle of legality, retroactive

application of ICL, examples of the application of ICL to past events, and the rule of law principle.

Furthermore, participating parliamentarians engaged in discussions on issues pertinent to ISIL international crimes committed in Iraq, stressing that victims are at the heart of any joint efforts towards justice. They also indicated the need for further support in this field.

This seminar comes as a part of UNITAD's growing engagement with national institutions and support to the work of the Joint Working Group through capacity building, leveraging international expertise, and broadening knowledge within Iraq about the range of options available to advance accountability.

Launched in March of 2023, the Joint Working Group has supported drafting a legislation that incorporates international crimes' charges for ISIL perpetrators in Iraq. It is comprised of representatives of the judiciary, alongside legal experts from the Prime Minister's office and the National Permanent Committee for International Humanitarian Law, as well as the Iraqi State Council, hosted by the Supreme Judicial Council.





**Baghdad, 14 September 2023** - Mr. Anees Ahmed, Chief of Office of Evidence Management was pleased to receive H.E. Judge Ali Hussein Jaffat, first Judge of Al-Karkh Investigation Court and designated liaison judge between UNITAD and the Iraqi Judiciary. Mr. Ahmed discussed with Judge Jaffat ongoing mutual cooperation and shared information on UNITAD's work and planned activities. He also thanked H.E. President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Dr. Faiq Zidan, for his continued support to UNITAD, including the designation of Judge Jaffat.



**Baghdad, 22 September 2023** - Mr. Anees Ahmed, Chief of Office of Evidence Management was pleased to receive a delegation from the Netherlands Police, headed by Ms. Jannine van den Berg, Deputy Commissioner and Head of International Cooperation. Mr. Ahmed briefed Ms. Berg on the work of UNITAD in investigating ISIL international crimes against all communities in Iraq, and its endeavors to support holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for such crimes.



**Baghdad, 25 September 2023** - On behalf of Special Adviser Christian Ritscher, Ms. Defne Akça, Chief of Office of Field Investigations, alongside Mr. Anees Ahmed, Chief of Office of Evidence Management, were pleased to receive H.E. Luis Ivaldo, Ambassador of Brazil to Iraq, at UNITAD HQ in Baghdad.

Ms. Akça and Mr. Ahmed briefed Ambassador Ivaldo on UNITAD's work to promote accountability for ISIL international crimes against all communities in Iraq. Ambassador Ivaldo also visited UNITAD's forensic lab and was introduced to UNITAD's forensic operations in line with the highest international standards.



**Baghdad, 26 September 2023** - Mr. David Healy, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Iraq and Head of Political Section, visited UNITAD HQ in Baghdad where he was received by Ms. Defne Akça, Chief of Office of Field Investigations. Discussions involved continued mutual cooperation through UNITAD's flagship digitization project, funded by EU. In partnership with the Iraqi judiciary, the project has successfully digitized over 10 million pages of ISIL related documents from the holdings of the Iraqi judiciary.



**Baghdad, 26 September 2023** - On behalf of Special Adviser Christian Ritscher, Ms. Defne Akça, Chief of Office of Field Investigations and Mr. Anees Ahmed, Chief of Office of Evidence Management, welcomed at UNITAD HQ, Dr. Dindar Zebari, KRG Coordinator for International Advocacy. Discussions involved ongoing mutual cooperation and UNITAD's endeavors in pursuit of accountability for ISIL international crimes. Dr. Zebari visited UNITAD's forensic lab, expressing his appreciation for the Team's use of technology to assist Iraq in these complex investigations.



**Baghdad, 03 October 2023** - In line with the national strategy for excavation of mass graves, Mass Graves Directorate in cooperation with Medico-Legal Directorate concluded the excavation of mass grave sites of ISIL victims in Garma, Anbar, supported by UNITAD. The excavated remains were transferred to MLD labs in Baghdad for identification, and return of remains to victims' families paving the way for their dignified burial. UNITAD is committed to continue this work in partnership with the Iraqi authorities to support mass grave excavations, to help uncover the breadth of ISIL crimes against all Iraqis, and provide a glimpse of solace to families who await to know the fate of their loved ones.



**Baghdad, 12 October 2023** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet today in Baghdad with H.E. Chair of the National Coordinating Committee, **Dr. Zaidan Khalaf Al-Atwani**, Advisor to H.E. Prime Minister of Iraq for Human Rights. They discussed continued cooperation between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq towards fulfilling UNITAD's mandate and related United Nations Security Council resolutions.



**Baghdad, 15 October 2023** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to welcome at UNITAD H.E. Mr. **Thomas Seiler**, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Iraq. Special Adviser Ritscher briefed on UNITAD's work and thanked the EU for its generous support to the Team's digitization of millions of ISIL related documents in Iraq, in partnership with the Iraqi judiciary.

## Special Adviser Ritscher meets delegation of the Victims of Iraq in Speicher-1700 NGO



**Baghdad, 20 October 2023** - "A crucial part of our work has always been our engagement with Iraqi victim and survivor communities who have suffered tremendously from ISIL atrocities." With these words, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher welcomed Mr. Nidal Arrar, Deputy Chairman of Victims of

Iraq in Speicher-1700 NGO, and the accompanying delegation at UNITAD headquarters in Baghdad.

Special Adviser Ritscher reaffirmed the Team's commitment to support accountability for the international crimes by ISIL perpetrators, including the heinous crimes committed against the predominantly Shia, unarmed cadets at Tikrit Air Academy (known as Camp Speicher) in June 2014. He also thanked the organisation and representatives of the victims' families for their continued support to UNITAD's work.

At their end, Mr. Arrar and the delegation commended UNITAD's work in cooperation with survivor communities and shared insights about the importance of shedding light on the Tikrit Air

Academy Massacre and inform the world about its scale and the plight of the families.

Discussions included venues of enhancing future cooperation between the Team and the "Victims of Iraq in Speicher-1700" NGO, and agreed steps to further support the Team's investigations.

In June 2022, UNITAD released a multimedia video analysis, produced in cooperation with SITU research, depicting the Tikrit Air Academy Massacre, shedding light on the scale of the crimes committed by ISIL against the unarmed cadets.

The video can be accessed on UNITAD's YouTube channel [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGcPIofbCF0)  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGcPIofbCF0>



**Baghdad, 23 October 2023** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was glad to inaugurate operations of the **E-Discovery Review team**, comprised of national specialists from communities impacted by ISIL crimes. This work is key to further enhance UNITAD's capabilities to categorize and refine data. UNITAD provided specialized training to this team of national specialists, 80% of which are women, enabling them to utilize technological solutions, to help ensure that evidentiary material is well-curated and archive ready in line with international standards.

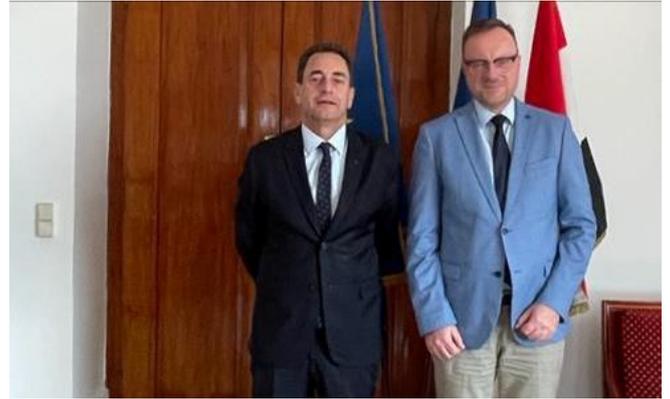


**Baghdad, 25 October 2023** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was delighted to welcome **Dr. Abbas Al Quraishi**, Head of the Iraqi Center for the Documentation of Extremist Crimes, and the accompanying delegation and UNITAD HQ in Baghdad, to update them on the Team's work and show them around its forensic lab. Special Adviser Ritscher elaborated on UNITAD's intensified investigations into ISIL's international crimes against the Shia community. This includes a working group on crimes against Shia Turkmen women, whose plight was particularly highlight by His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Al Sistani. Special Adviser Ritscher extends his thanks for the gifted publications by the Center, looking forward to continued mutual cooperation in promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes.



**Baghdad, 26 October 2023** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, **H.E. Fuad Hussein**, in Baghdad.

Special Adviser Ritscher discussed recent developments relating to the work of UNITAD, and its profound partnership with various Iraqi national institutions. SA Ritscher expressed UNITAD's commitment to working together with Iraq towards the meaningful fulfilment of the Team's mandate and pertinent UN Security Council resolutions, with full respect to the sovereignty of Iraq.



**Baghdad, 27 October 2023** - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet **H.E. Mr. Eric Chevalier**, Ambassador of France in Iraq to discuss recent developments concerning UNITAD's work, and the Team's ongoing cooperation with Iraqi authorities.

Special Adviser Ritscher also thanked France for its continued support to UNITAD, especially funding investigations into ISIL's destruction of Iraqi cultural heritage and its use of chemical weapons in Iraq.

## For the first time in Iraq: Medico-Legal Directorate Forensic DNA laboratory works to obtain ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation

**Baghdad, 26 October 2023** – The Iraqi Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD) Forensic DNA Laboratory in Baghdad, with support from the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), embarked on a two-year project "Pathway to ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation."

This project is expected to lead MLD's forensic DNA lab to be Iraq's first to obtain the ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation, furthering international recognition of MLD's remarkable endeavors. This accreditation is key for compliance with this international quality standard and crucial for criminal justice processes, which use the results obtained by forensic testing laboratories.

The project was inaugurated in September with a comprehensive evaluation (Gap Analysis) of all the laboratory elements that contribute to producing accurate and reliable data, performed by BODE Technology, a prominent specialized forensic DNA laboratory. Chosen by MLD forensic DNA lab and UNITAD's Forensic Science Unit, BODE provided analysis of MLD's forensic DNA lab and evaluated its preparedness for international accreditation. It also identified quality management gaps and addressed training needs for forensic experts. The Gap Analysis results will guide the MLD project's upcoming phases, supported by UNITAD.

Marking the inauguration of this project, Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher indicated that: "This initiative serves as a testament to the unwavering partnership between UNITAD and MLD, as we collectively endeavor to strengthen national capacities and support justice processes for ISIL international crimes in Iraq." He

added: "UNITAD's forensic experts will continue to provide full support to this process which will showcase the MLD lab's unparalleled competence, impartiality, and consistent operations that align with internationally recognized standards."

On his part, Dr. Zaid Ali Abbas, Director General of the Medico-Legal Directorate stated: "With this project, we embark on an important journey to strengthen our work in the field of forensics and to give certainty to the people of Iraq in our commitment to scientific excellence and community service. We welcome our intensive partnership with UNITAD to achieve accountability for crimes committed by Daesh and strengthen the capacity of the Medico-Legal Directorate to identify victims of these crimes."

In addition, Mike Cariola, CEO of BODE Technology affirmed the importance of the project, stating "The MLD, with UNITAD support, is committed to quality and through this assessment, a roadmap now exists to lead the MLD towards

international accreditation. We are proud to have participated and look forward to seeing them achieve their goals."

The project to achieve ISO/IEC 17025 is funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA/AC). It will offer MLD Forensic DNA Laboratory a chance to enhance result reliability, facilitate traceability of measurements and calibrations to optimum standards, establish technical competency of national staff, maintain a record of test equipment, ensure the accuracy of test results, validate and correct test and calibration methods and reduce unnecessary costs. The completion of this project will foster efforts towards accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq through further analysis of forensic evidence and ensuring the admissibility of this evidence before competent courts. It will also accelerate accurate processes of identification of exhumed remains of victims of ISIL's horrific crimes, offering some solace to their bereaved families.



## UNITAD remembers the Al-Bakr massacre

**Anbar, 28 October 2023** - In 2014, ISIL seized control of Anbar, mercilessly targeting Sunni tribes who refused to pledge allegiance, calling those Sunnis “apostates deserving to be executed.” This dark period claimed numerous innocent lives, including women and children. Today, we mark the solemn memory of Al-Bakr roundabout massacre which is an example of ISIL’s brutality against all those who refused its rule of terror.

During his visit to Anbar earlier this year, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met with Sunni survivors and community leaders, and stressed that the path to justice is long and challenging but one that UNITAD stands resolute and determined to pursue. He emphasized that our work in Anbar is only made possible through the cooperation with victim and survivor communities, as well as our national Iraqi counterparts.

UNITAD’s dedicated investigative unit covering ISIL crimes against the Sunni community has been actively supporting the excavation of mass graves, conducting interviews with witnesses and survivors, and preserving essential records through the digitization project with Al Anbar Criminal Court.

UNITAD has been investigating ISIL’s crimes against all affected communities in Iraq, stemming from its firm

principle that there is no hierarchy of victims.

Today, UNITAD reiterates its unyielding commitment to uncover the truth and ensure justice for all victims. While remembering the Al-Bakr massacre is essential, it’s through our persistent efforts to reveal the full extent of these crimes and hold those responsible accountable that we genuinely honor the victims and their grieving families.



## Pursuing justice and equality through technology

**Baghdad, 28 October 2023** - In a large well-equipped room sits a group of young Iraqis from a myriad of backgrounds. Each focused on the computer screen in front of them, painstakingly going through thousands of pieces of data a day, documents, photos and films that detail how ISIL ruled the large territories it controlled in Iraq. This arduous task is essential for analysis, preservation and exploitation of evidence related to ISIL crimes against all Iraqi communities, including minorities and vulnerable groups. It also feeds into the support to accountability processes for ISIL’s horrid crimes committed in Iraq.

Coming from the heart of the impacted communities, UNITAD’s E-Discovery Review team consists of a national group of young researchers who are eager to support justice and accountability efforts and gain advanced knowledge in the use of modern technology for evidence search and preservation. UNITAD experts provided the team with specialized training in the fundamentals of electronic discovery, focusing on machine-learning aided review, search, quality control checks and others. With these trainings, the researchers will categorize records and documents, improving the efficiency of data retrieval and evidence analysis that are conducted by UNITAD investigators. This work is critically needed to employ technology and best practices in dealing with millions of records including

documents left behind by ISIL’s bureaucratic rule over the territories it controlled in the period between 2014 – 2017, as well as UNITAD’s repository. Women constitute 80% of the E-Discovery team. Among them is a young woman (S.Q)[1] who passionately speaks about being a part of the dream team: “I was very eager to join the E-Discovery team as it is very personal to me.”

Originally from Mosul, S. feels the need for her and others from within the Iraqi community to support justice processes. “I volunteered before in the field of humanitarian relief efforts and found my passion in helping others. When this project was announced, I was working in an interior design office, but I immediately applied and wanted to work with the UN, and more specifically with UNITAD” she says. To her, the work she does as a part of the E-discovery team goes hand in hand with the efforts of the victims, and their families, or as she calls them: “the heroes who, through their first-hand witness accounts and the information and testimonies which they provided, help persecutors and authorities bring ISIL criminals to justice.”

Like her colleagues from various minority communities in Iraq, working with UNITAD provides S. with more than an income, it provides her with an opportunity to grow through unique training and a special life-time experience to Iraqi women and underrepresented minorities in leading



electronic discovery and investigatory processes and technology.

“The violent atrocities that ISIL committed against all Iraqi communities are well-documented and it is UNITAD’s duty to review this evidence to establish the full truth about the organization’s crimes and their legal qualification under international law.” said Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Mr. Christian Ritscher. “The E-Discovery Review team serves a crucial part of our mandate by developing the capacities of national specialists to deal with the sheer amount of evidence and data related to ISIL crimes. It is also important to improve the efficiency of our investigations and support Iraqi authorities with organized and robust evidence that is admissible in competent courts for prosecutions of ISIL international crimes in Iraq.” he adds.

ISIL was a very tech-savvy international terrorist organisation. The organisation fully employed

## Pursuing justice and equality through technology *(continued)*

technology to promote and spread their dominance and hate speech. Whether it was high-definition videos of prisoners being executed, or the several layers of cyber-security employed during their recruitment of followers, ISIL knew how to utilize technology. Yet, all these activities left a trail that UNITAD's highly qualified experts are well equipped to handle. The work being done by the E-Discovery team to digitize, categorize and preserve evidence, though complex and protracted, yields remarkable results and is an important pillar of UNITAD's operations, which support Iraqi national capacities.

This project offers a layer of synergy between the evidence in all its forms and the investigators. It ensures that searches focus on the value and impact of evidence and cuts down the time needed by investigators to sift through the thousands of pages of collected evidence. It is not surprising to see young women like S. and others on the team eager to work with this project as it offers them a chance to excel in a field which is largely male dominated. It also enables them to carry on the

voice of Iraqi women survivors of ISIL crimes, and have their experiences documented and employed in justice processes.

The job does come with difficulties, namely, the graphic nature of ISIL atrocities and crimes. Exposure to such content continuously has its toll on the team, but the perseverance of the national specialists doesn't wane. As S. describes her experience: "I had a difficult time seeing or reading anything about what children and women were subjected to, some of which my colleagues have been through first-hand. However, I am a mother and the thought of such atrocities recurring and impacting my children, or myself is too much to bear. This is why I believe in my work, and I have hope that through technology we can expedite accountability towards guaranteeing these acts are not repeated" she adds.

UNITAD's E-Discovery Review team operations were recently launched to build on the Team's efforts to preserve evidence in line with the highest international standards. It builds also on the long-standing partnerships that UNITAD has with Iraqi civil society

organisations within the communities impacted by ISIL atrocities, as well as the Team's successful harnessing technology efforts, which are yielding impressive results in the digitization project with the Iraqi judiciary. The E-Discovery team brings unique technical knowledge to Iraqi specialists to operate technology in high-level curation of the data, for long term (including post-UNITAD) reference.

The E-Discovery team, although just starting, is expected to lead positive change for the national specialists working on it, partners in civil society, and investigators. As Special Adviser Ritscher indicates: "This project demonstrates the supportive role that UNITAD plays in promoting accountability for ISIL crimes, while opening unique venues of engagement with the impacted Iraqi communities. We hope that our researchers will be able to continue working in the service of their own communities and all of Iraq, sustainably employing the skills they have learned for the benefit of justice in their country."

[1] Name not disclosed for privacy.

## UNITAD launches a Program of Cooperation with al-Alamain Institute for graduate studies

**Baghdad 30 October 2023** - The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) launched a Program of Cooperation with al-Alamain Institute for Graduate Studies, which was signed during a visit by Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Christian Ritscher to the Institute at Najaf on 29 October 2023.

Upon an invitation from al-Alamain Institute, Special Adviser Ritscher delivered a lecture to postgraduate Master's and Doctoral students at the center, who pursue their advanced studies in law, political sciences and communications. He provided an overview on the Investigative Team and its work in cooperation with Iraq. He was invited to briefly visit two ongoing classrooms and engaged in discussions with professors and students.

"This exemplary and practical work is a manifestation of our role as a Team of the United Nations designed to support national capacities, in line with its mandate to promote accountability for ISIL international crimes," said Special Adviser Ritscher during his lecture. "I look forward to seeing this enhanced cooperation happen through the implementation of this Program over the coming months."

The Program of cooperation, signed by Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and



Professor Dr. Zayd Adnan Muhsin, Dean of the Institute will facilitate and enhance the sharing of expertise between UNITAD's experts and the academic community at the postgraduate level in al-Alamain Center. This cooperation builds on UNITAD's commitment to support Iraqi national capacities in areas related to the Team's mandate, including by advancing the relevant academic and scholarly aspects for postgraduate students at the Institute.

"This visit happens following diligence efforts between al-Alamain Center for Graduate Studies and UNITAD over the past few months, and here we are picking the fruits of those efforts through the signing of this important cooperation program," said Dr. Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloom, General Supervisor of al-Alamain Institute for Postgraduate Studies. "We hope that this program will be an actual roadmap for the exchange of expertise between both parties and in interjecting

academic and field work."

The cooperation program will provide postgraduate students with various opportunities to engage with UNITAD experts, including through joint workshops and conferences. It will also enable UNITAD to benefit from the profound national legal expertise of the Institute.

Special Adviser Ritscher reiterated UNITAD's commitment to continue working closely with Iraqi authorities and supporting national capacities, in line with its mandate. He mentioned that "we will continue to engage with the Government of Iraq, and all concerned actors, to ensure that we fulfil the requirements of all relevant Security Council resolutions. Most importantly, we will continue to conduct our work, taking into account first and foremost the interests of Iraq, of Iraqi victims who want to see justice served, and also the need to ensure accountability against ISIL perpetrators globally."

## UNITAD hands over landmark Investigative Report to the Iraqi Judiciary on ISIL's chemical weapons crimes in Iraq



**Baghdad, 31 October 2023** - Today, Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) in Iraq, Mr. Christian Ritscher handed over a comprehensive report encompassing its investigative findings into the development and use of chemical weapons by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq to the Iraqi Judiciary.

The report is the result of three years of the tireless work of UNITAD's field investigative unit focusing on ISIL's development and use of chemical weapons in Iraq and the attack on the town of Taza Khurmatu on 8 March 2016 yielded a comprehensive legal

report that documents the Team's findings and was handed over to the President of the Supreme Judicial Council Dr. Faiq Zaidan.

"Today marks a pivotal milestone in UNITAD's path towards promoting accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq as we handover the findings of our investigation into one of ISIL's most heinous and vicious attacks on the Shia Turkmen in Taza Khurmatu to the Iraqi Judiciary," said Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher in a ceremony held at the Iraqi Supreme Judiciary Council. "We are confident that the Iraqi judiciary, which is UNITAD's natural partner, will make use of the fruits of

our labor to ensure ISIL perpetrators face justice and victims see justice served."

This ongoing information-sharing between UNITAD and the Iraqi judiciary comes in the context of solid partnership in the joint pursuit of justice for ISIL crimes. This report furnishes the investigation into one of ISIL's most horrid crimes that meant to inflict total destruction and annihilation on a minority group, the Shia Turkmen of Taza Khurmatu, using weapons of mass destruction.

Special Adviser Ritscher reiterated during the meeting that: "UNITAD's line of investigation into ISIL's development and use of chemical weapons is ground-breaking and sets the sediments for unprecedented judicial avenues and the Team will spare no effort to support bringing those responsible for such heinous crimes to justice."

As part of its mandate, UNITAD conducts structural investigations into ISIL crimes against all affected Iraqi communities, including the Shia Turkmen. Earlier this year, Special Adviser Ritscher visited the town of Taza Khurmatu, and met competent investigative judges working on ISIL crimes in the town, as well as several officials, community leaders and survivors. He was briefed on the long-term repercussions of this atrocious crime on Iraqi civilians in the area, and the survivors' quest for accountability and justice.

### Humanitarian

## DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq Isaczai visits Harsham IDP camp in Erbil and interacts with IDP families and camp management

**Erbil, 27 August 2023** - UN Iraq Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, visited Harsham IDP camp in Erbil and interacted with IDP families and camp management. After 9 years in the camp, challenges such as security, housing, livelihood opportunities, and compensation continue to hamper the return of more than 1200 IDPs to their areas of origin. #DurableSolutions is the only solution.



## DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai visits Jeddah 1 Rehabilitation Center in Ninewa

**Ninewa, 29 August 2023** – Today, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, visited the Jeddah 1 Rehabilitation Center in Ninewa.

The DSRSG/RC/HC engaged in focused group discussions with residents who have returned from the al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria, service providers and center management operating under the Ministry of Migration and the Displaced (MoMD).

The visit aimed to understand the challenges faced by the returnees and ascertain the effectiveness of the rehabilitation efforts conducted by UN entities and partners, including on issues relating to health, education, mental and psycho-social, and protection services, focusing on women. Mr. Isaczai noted that the majority of the issues raised could be addressed through the "One Plan for a New

Beginning," under the Global Framework recently agreed with the Supreme Committee for return of Iraqi nationals from al-Hol.

He stressed the need to enhance services and expedite reintegration, minimizing the duration of stay of the returnees in the center.

He further underscored Iraq's pivotal role in ensuring the safe and dignified repatriation of its citizens from al-Hol

camp and facilitating their return to their places of origin. He emphasized the necessity of durable solutions to ensure the continuity of services.

The DSRSG/RC/HC expressed gratitude to the service providers and center management for their support. He commended their efforts and those of UN entities, the Government of Iraq, and international partners in addressing the issues.



**Ramadi, 31 August 2023** - The Head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Iraq, Ms. Monique Maani, held a meeting with the Governor of Anbar, H.E. Dr. Ali Farhan Al Dulaimi at the governorate's office in Ramadi. OCHA briefed the Governor on the humanitarian-development transition while emphasizing the need for durable solutions for IDPs.



**Baghdad, 24 September 2023** - Today, the Government of Iraq, the United Nations and partners launched the **One-UN Plan "A New Beginning,"** capturing our collective vision for supporting North East Syria returnees. We prioritize targeted programmes and activities that support durable solutions and enhance reintegration for returnees.

## Japan funding helps provide critical legal support and assistance to displaced Iraqis and refugees in Iraq

**Baghdad, 04 October 2023** - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomes the Government of Japan's generous support, which helps provide civil documentation to Syrian refugees and Iraqis forcibly displaced by Da'esh violence in Iraq. Without such documentation, vulnerable individuals would be unable to access public services such as health and education, or livelihood opportunities to help them rebuild their lives.

Providing legal assistance to refugees who cannot secure their residency permits in Iraq and to Iraqis who cannot get their national IDs is crucial. Obtaining this documentation is the first step for them to be recognised in the country. It will help them move around safely – without fear of being arrested at security checkpoints – and allow them to receive medical care, register their children in school and apply for social security benefits.

The support of the Government of Japan allows UNHCR to provide thousands of refugees and internally displaced Iraqis with legal assistance. It also helps UNHCR and partners in delivering civil documents to the most vulnerable through mobile missions conducted across the country. From January to June 2023, UNHCR provided legal assistance for about 6,000 refugees and secured over 13,000 civil documents for internally displaced

## Japan funding helps provide critical legal support and assistance to displaced Iraqis and refugees in Iraq *(continued)*



Iraqis. Furthermore, UNHCR and partners supported 40 mobile civil documentation missions for internally displaced Iraqis who are unable to travel to their areas of origin to obtain civil documents.

However, there are still needs. UNHCR estimates that over 430,000 individuals are still missing at least one core civil document. The main barriers to accessing civil documentation include the high cost of obtaining or renewing these documents and the difficult procedures that it could entail, especially for those being suspected of

affiliations with extremist groups such as Da'esh or who are otherwise unable to legally prove their marriage, birth, or lineage in court.

"The partnership with Japan is truly exemplary as it focuses on interventions that are not so visible or easy to explain. But without their identity documents, these Iraqis and Syrian refugees would be completely left out of society and would be deprived of their basic rights. They would not be able to rent a home, enrol their kids in schools or get medical care for their elderly parents. By providing

these funds, Japan is making a difference in the daily lives of thousands of families and one that will last beyond the emergency," said Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze, UNHCR Representative to Iraq.

"I commend UNHCR for its efforts on the field," said Mr. Kenichi Masamoto, Charge d' Affaires ad interim, the Embassy of Japan in Iraq. "We understand that refugees and IDPs are supported by the distinguished work of UNHCR to obtain their civil documents again. We strongly believe that UNHCR's work on legal assistance and civil documentation is indispensable for those who have the misfortune to become refugees and IDPs to rebuild their lives, even if it is not really visible intervention."

Iraq has an internally displaced population of some 1.2 million, while five million have returned to their areas of origin. Iraq also hosts about 300,000 refugees – mostly Kurdish Syrians residing in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – for whom return prospects remain limited due to the volatile and dire humanitarian and human rights situation in northeast Syria, where they come from.

## UNAMI on X

**Baghdad, 25 October 2023** - "Today's Durable Solutions Workshop is a key step toward implementing the National Plan for IDPs in Iraq," Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai, said today, adding "Durable solutions can only be found if we work together in addressing all root causes of displacement. We will continue to work alongside partners hand in hand to enable IDPs to change their lives for the better and protect the most vulnerable".



## Stabilization and Development

## UNDP Arab States: Empowering youth in the Arab region to be part of the green transition

**Baghdad, 12 August 2023** - Youth development in the Arab region has received considerable attention over the past decade. The Arab States region is home to more than 113 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 — making up to 25 percent of the Arab region's population, the largest youth group ever.

The large presence of youth in Arab countries is critical to the region's economic, social, and cultural development. Youth have proven to be a catalyst for change in societies as they are eager to learn and play an



## UNDP Arab States: Empowering youth in the Arab region to be part of the green transition *(continued)*

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On #YouthDay, learn more about the countries in the Arab region that are supporting youth to use their green skills for a more sustainable future.

### Iraq

Iraq's innovation mission where they presented on the importance of AI in cultivating green skills among youth in Iraq.

Artificial intelligence (AI) can play a significant role in cultivating green skills among Iraqi youth, enabling them to contribute to sustainable development and tackle environmental challenges.

This is where UNDP Iraq, through its UNDP Accelerator Lab, took the initiative to merge AI with green skills, offering Iraqi youth a transformative opportunity to emerge as eco-tech innovators. By mastering AI tools tailored for environmental analysis, these young minds were equipped with the knowledge on how to embark on a revolution to address waste reduction, optimize energy, advance farming practices, and ensure ecosystem monitoring. This vision was achieved by hosting a first-of-its-kind initiative in Iraq called the 'Innovation Mission Competition,' providing Iraqi youth with the necessary AI skills to craft

sustainable solutions.

In the Innovation Mission Competition, a variety of creative solutions emerged. Two standout examples are the Haqlna and Rihanna projects, that vividly showcased the impact of AI and Green skills in this context.

### The Haqlna Project

Mohammed Jamal, a young Iraqi from the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, identified challenges related to the quality and availability of cattle feed in the region. Practitioners engaged in cattle feed farming faced several hurdles, including restricted access to water, excessive water usage, soil salinity, slow production due to the specific seasonal requirements for feed cultivation and inefficient distribution channels for the cattle. To solve these problems, Jamal and a youth skilled in artificial intelligence (AI), named Raghad Ahmed came up with Haqlna, a project that introduced innovative cabins designed for accelerated and healthier cattle feed growth. This approach empowered farmers to obtain 7kg of cattle feed in 7 days, using only 1kg of seeds. AI played a pivotal role in this, creating an optimal environment for high-quality and efficient cattle feed production.

The project's contribution extends beyond the reduction of water

consumption, as these innovative solutions not only addressed the challenges faced by cattle feed farmers but also provided wholesome feed for cattle, who form an integral part of our ecosystem.

### The Rihanna Project

Husam Falih, a young Iraqi from Baghdad, dedicated to addressing the challenge of water wastage in the production of vegetables and fruits across Iraq, developed an innovative solution involving vertical farming techniques powered by solar cells, resulting in the year-round cultivation of vegetables and strawberries. This approach utilizes 70% less water compared to traditional methods, eliminating the need for chemical products. Significantly, this sustainable approach not only yields high-quality and flavorful produce but also integrates artificial intelligence for disease detection and treatment of the plant.

Husam is supported by Mustafa Nafea, a skilled youth in AI, and Mohammed Khalid, a practitioner specializing in solar cell technology.

By Hoda El Nahrawy, UNDP Communication Associate

## In Iraq's Sinjar district, improved water infrastructure is helping build a more sustainable future for 1000s of people returning after years of conflict

**Sinjar, 25 August 2023** - Following years of conflict in Iraq, water supply services have been significantly affected – including from damage and neglect to critical infrastructure. In the remote and mountainous Sinjar district, in the Ninewa Governorate of northern Iraq, this problem is compounded by a lack of surface water that makes accessing water for everyday use even more challenging. For villages in this area, tapped groundwater is the only available source of water supply.

To support people returning to their communities in Sinjar, a UNOPS-implemented project worked to rehabilitate damaged water facilities and associated infrastructure. Funded by the government of Italy through the Italian Agency of Development Cooperation (AICS), the project included drilling two



new wells up to 200 metres deep to reach the potable water aquifers. It also saw the rehabilitation of concrete distribution and collection tanks.

The work helped deliver essential water services to more than 1,000 households in the Nia'aimia'a, Gulat, Garshabak and Hardan Sagheer villages.

## UN-Habitat Iraq marks successful conclusion of EU-funded "Support for Urban Recovery and Peacebuilding in Western Ninewa" Programme

**Erbil, 30 August 2023** – The UN-Habitat Iraq Programme "Support for Urban Recovery and Peacebuilding in Western Ninewa" proudly convened its final Steering Committee Meeting, held today in Erbil. This initiative, funded by the European Union through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the Madad Fund, has achieved substantial accomplishments, significantly enhancing the lives of the people in Western Ninewa, Iraq. Mr. Ali Omar Kheder, Assistant Governor for Organizations and Displaced Persons Affairs, and esteemed members of the Steering Committee including Mr. Wa'El Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq; Mr. Naif Sedo Qasim, Mr. Ahmad Hammad, and Mr. Nashat Sadiq Mohammed, Qaem Maqams of Sinjar, Ba'aj, and Tel Afar respectively, convened to review the program's achievements. Mr. Gerhard Krause, acting as the EU Trust Fund Manager on behalf of the European Union, emphasized the EU's strong support to the initiative.

Commencing in 2020, with a commitment of €10 million, the UN-Habitat Iraq Programme focused its efforts on the districts of Sinjar, Ba'aj, and Tel Afar. This comprehensive undertaking approached three key areas: enhancing living and housing conditions for vulnerable returnees, revitalizing livelihoods, and safeguarding housing, land, and property rights for those returning. Through these endeavors, the program facilitated voluntary and sustainable returns, ultimately helping 235,000 individuals in Western Ninewa.

Over three years, the multifaceted urban recovery program achieved significant milestones:

- Developed comprehensive neighborhood profiles for critical areas in Western Ninewa;
- Constructed 323 in-situ core housing units, offering safe accommodation to returnees;
- Rehabilitated and expanded four primary schools, benefiting over 800 students.
- Restored two football pitches with changing rooms and WASH facilities, benefiting approximately 500 youth;



- Created green spaces and children's playgrounds with WASH facilities, enhancing the lives of around 6,000 returnees;
  - Revived two marketplaces with 24 shops, catering to the needs of approximately 3,000 individuals;
  - Enhanced water accessibility by drilling and rehabilitating seven boreholes and benefiting 3,000 people;
  - Planted over 1,200 trees to contribute to a better and greener environment;
  - Provided vocational training for over 1,200 young individuals;
  - Conducted a COVID-19 awareness campaign that reached more than 30,000 people;
  - Issued 4,000 Occupancy Certificates for households without property documents;
  - Delivered legal support to 1,050 returnees for compensation claims;
  - Organized awareness-raising sessions on housing, land, and property rights for 2,227 returnees;
  - Trained 183 local government staff in managing housing, land, and property rights.
- Highlighting the European Union's long-lasting commitment to support all those impacted by the Syrian and Iraqi crises, Mr. Gerhard Krause remarked, "The European Union is pleased to have provided support for this crucial initiative, which has led to enduring returns, urban revitalization, and the advancement of peace in Western Ninewa. These accomplishments stand as a testament of the fruitful collaboration among the Iraqi government, the

European Union and UN-Habitat." Mr. Wa'El Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, reiterated the organization's mission to foster inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable communities. He welcomed the committee members support for this mission, reflecting on UN-Habitat's legacy of partnering for over 25 years to realize long-term solutions, transitioning from humanitarian assistance to development.

While internal displacement continues to challenge Iraq, the collaborative efforts of the EU, UN-Habitat, and the Steering Committee members have made remarkable strides toward sustainable returns, urban recovery, and peacebuilding in Western Ninewa. Mr. Ali Omar Kheder, Ninewa Deputy Governor, praised the holistic approach of the program and its positive impact on the region. He expressed hope for more projects and development by EU and UN-Habitat to support the government of Iraq's commitment to its people's well-being and developmental goals.

The conclusion of the "Support for Urban Recovery and Peacebuilding in Western Ninewa" Programme marks a significant milestone in the pursuit of improved urban environments for conflict-affected communities. Through unwavering cooperation, UN-Habitat Iraq and the European Union have brought Iraq closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on ensuring access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and improving degraded areas.

## A delegation from the Ninewa Governorate recently visited the UN Compound in Erbil

**Erbil, 06 September 2023** - A delegation from the Ninewa Governorate recently visited the UN Compound in Erbil, aiming to address pressing challenges faced by the region while further solidifying the enduring partnership with UN-Habitat Iraq.

Led by Mr. Raad Al-Hadidi, Head of the Ninewa Municipalities Directorate, the delegation represented areas including Sinjar, Baaj, and Tel Afar. The UN-Habitat Iraq team warmly received the delegation at the UN Compound in Erbil. The meeting served as a platform to discuss the most critical needs of the region and to fortify the pre-existing collaboration between the entities.

UN-Habitat is significantly involved in a range of projects within the region. Presently, supported by esteemed donors such as KOICA, European Union and the Government of Japan, our initiatives are directed towards developing the region.

Our investments encompass various sectors, including housing, public infrastructure, public spaces, HLP

rights, and capacity development related to job creation and climate change among other ongoing endeavors.

The success achieved thus far is attributed to a harmonious synergy: the technical proficiency of UN-Habitat, the steadfast commitment of donors, and the cooperative and dedicated approach of local authorities.

Over the years, these collective efforts have culminated in a gradual improvement quality of life for the region's residents, promoting sustainable returns for both those who were facing displacement condition.

This collaborative approach underscores our dedication to fostering a better urban and human future to all people.



## UN-Habitat holds the Second Steering Committee Meeting for the KOICA-funded project titled "Promoting Peace and Stability in Iraq by Facilitating Sustainable Returns"

**Baghdad, 14 September 2023** - Today, UN-Habitat held the Second Steering Committee Meeting for the KOICA-funded project titled "Promoting Peace and Stability in Iraq by Facilitating Sustainable Returns". This project aims to support internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in Sinjar through a three-pronged approach: mapping and registering HLP rights claims for 4,000 families and issuing Land Occupancy Certificates for 4,000 households; rehabilitating 200 damaged or destroyed houses; and rehabilitating non-functional water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) facilities, aiming to reach over 24,800 beneficiaries.

In the Second Steering Committee Meeting, project updates were shared with key stakeholders from local authorities and KOICA. The lively discussion included talk of the current status of the project, upcoming activities, emerging challenges to implementation and potential solutions, and opportunities for further collaboration.

Looking forward, UN-Habitat will begin the third and final phase of



rehabilitation for the remaining 153 houses across four villages, as well as initiating work to improve water and sewage networks throughout Sinjar. The local authorities reiterated their willingness to support UN-Habitat on implementation of project activities, contributing to sustainable returns.

Registering HLP rights claims, rehabilitating houses, and improving access to basic WASH services are essential to promote sustainable returns for the IDPs and returnees of Sinjar, ensuring that no one is left behind as we build back better after the conflict.

## UN-Habitat supports the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works to organize the first national housing conference



**Baghdad, 15 September 2023** - With the support of the European Union, UN-Habitat was glad to support the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works to organize the first national housing conference under the slogan “The Government Program and Solution to the Housing Crisis,” which shed light on the challenges of the housing sector and aimed to adopt the ministerial approach by modernizing the policy to address the housing needs for the population in Iraq.

The conference was opened by the Minister Mr. Benkin Rikani, who emphasized the challenges facing the housing sector in Iraq, including the public land management issue. His excellency highlighted also that “the population has almost doubled since 2003, and the number of residents in urban areas exceeded that of rural areas by 70 percent, which led to pressure on cities and the emergence of slums, which are an uncivilized

phenomenon.

Given the priority of the government on the housing sector, the ministry has completed the designs for 20 new residential cities, where 5 of them were announced for investment in Baghdad, Karbala, Ramadi, Babylon, and Nineveh, explaining the adoption of a new, different policy in building residential cities.

Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation at the European Delegation in Iraq, expressed the European Union's readiness to support the efforts of the Iraqi government and the Ministry of Construction and Housing to find practical solutions to address the housing crisis in Iraq. Mrs. Barbara announced a new upcoming project, funded by the European Union which will be implemented in the partnership with United Nations organizations UN-Habitat, International Trade Center (ITC) and International Labor Organization (ILO), which aims to enhance decent

work opportunities by improving the housing sector, build capacity and providing affordable housing in Iraq.

The Head of UN-Habitat Programme, Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab highlighted the future challenges related to urbanization which is estimated to continue to climb at an annual increase of 2.91 percent between 2020 and 2025, which will continue to put increasing pressure on cities to supply ample land, housing stock, basic services, and infrastructure to inbound populations. Further, Mr. Al-Ashhab indicated that to address the housing shortage and undergo reconstruction efforts, approximately USD \$17.4 billion is needed.

Since 2017, UN-Habitat rehabilitated more than 6,000 houses, supported the Ministry drafting the Housing Reconstruction Strategy and National Data Platform for Construction and Development. Further, with the support of the European Union, UN-Habitat is partnering with the Ministry of Planning and other relevant government counterparts, to address the issue of the informal settlements and submitted the Informal Settlement Law to the Parliament in October 2019. Modernizing the Iraqi Housing Policy is key priority and the way forward for UN-Habitat by aiming to set up the required methodology and mechanisms, including building capacity on affordable housing (planning, standards, finance and program development and implementation, environmental design, green building codes and energy performance) to local and national government.

## Prime Minister Al-Sudani meets UNDP Administrator Steiner

**New York, 19 September 2023** - Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani met with Mr. Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in New York during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly.



## UNDP hosts discussion on New York Arbitration Convention to boost foreign investment in Iraq



**Baghdad, 20 September 2023**—The United Nations Development Programme recently hosted a high-level discussion on the New York Arbitration Convention. The event brought together distinguished guests and honorable judges, to shed light on matters that directly impact Iraq's potential to attract foreign investment. The Government of Iraq (GoI) has taken significant steps to promote the use of arbitration, demonstrating its commitment to facilitating a favorable climate, that is attractive to foreign investors.

"UNDP recognizes the crucial role that foreign investment plays in reducing Iraq's dependence on oil and diversifying its economy, which is why we emphasize the need for a robust environment that facilitates the flow of foreign capital," said Auke Lootsma, UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative. Within the framework of the EU-funded Anti-Corruption and Arbitration (ACAI) Project, UNDP is

actively supporting the Government of Iraq in drafting a modern Law on Arbitration. Additionally, UNDP is committed to providing the necessary support to enhance institutional and professional capacity among lawyers, arbitrators, and students in the field of arbitration.

The Importance of fostering Arbitration to Iraq's Economic Development

A key aspect of such an environment is the presence of a trusted and efficient forum for resolving disputes that may arise between investors and local private or public entities. International arbitration and mediation offer precisely this, providing both parties with a neutral and efficient system for managing and resolving disputes. Consequently, the development of arbitration and mediation frameworks becomes a catalyst for increased investments.

Arbitration cannot function effectively without the support of courts. The support and limited intervention of

courts play a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of the arbitration process.

### Significance of the New York Arbitration Convention

The New York Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards of 1958 is the backbone of international arbitration system. It aims to ensure the enforceability of arbitration agreements and arbitration awards across the 172 states signatories to the Convention. The Convention entered into force for Iraq in February 2022 and it is now in the hands of Iraqi judges to interpret and apply it. UNDP emphasized the importance of collaboration with the Supreme Judicial Council, aiming to foster strong partnership, through hosting discussions, such as this, and with the Judicial Institute to develop specialized courses for prospective judges. Once the Law on Arbitration is adopted, UNDP will also develop a comprehensive guide on arbitration for the benefit of the wider legal community.

Having Iraq develop a robust, arbitration-friendly ecosystem is crucial for Iraq's economic growth as it helps attract foreign investment, fosters international cooperation and strengthens the rule of law. Together, this plays a vital role in supporting Iraq's current engagement with the global community, contributing to both its economical and political development.

## Iraqi parliamentarians catch-up with the WTO accession process

**Baghdad, 22 September 2023** – (ITC News) 57 Iraqi parliamentarians recently attended a briefing session that focused on various aspects of the World Trade Organization (WTO) accession process and related key agreements.

Held at the Parliamentary Development Institute (PDI) in Baghdad, the 'Introduction to WTO Accession' session aimed not only at updating the participants on the status of the accession but also at improving their understanding of the process.

With their constitutional role, parliamentarians play an important part in the domestic reform process that accompanies the WTO Accession process. In turn, they have a role in ensuring the maintenance of a transparent multilateral trading system.



An open discussion on WTO Accession and the importance of chalking-out long-term development plans to guide the accession process was also held.

The participants appreciated the efforts of the ministries of Trade, Planning, Agriculture and Finance for the

accession process and acknowledged the support from the International Trade Centre (ITC).

This awareness raising session comes as part of a series organized by the ITC through the European Union (EU) funded "Strengthening the Agriculture

## Iraqi parliamentarians catch-up with the WTO accession process *(continued)*

and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy in Iraq" (SAAVI) project.

Since November 2020, ITC has undertaken capacity building session on matters related to WTO Accession for stakeholders including Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, State Council, National Committee on WTO Accession, Committee on Trade in Goods and Committee on Trade in

Services.

The efforts have enabled regular inter-ministerial coordination and active engagement of all stakeholders.

The support for strengthening trade policy through SAAVI, will help Iraq navigate through the accession process by making strategic decisions on issues related to international trade on goods and services, and investments.

Advisory support will also be provided to adjust the current policy and

legal/regulatory frameworks to be more conducive for Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) development, and to attract investments into the country for strategic sectors.

EU-funded SAAVI is contributing to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth, by improving Iraq's agriculture competitiveness and supporting trade development.

## UN Country Team in Iraq concludes its annual retreat with participation of senior government advisors to discuss national priorities and preparations and planning for its next five-year Cooperation Framework

**Baghdad, 22 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai: "After two days of intense deliberation, the UN Country Team in Iraq just concluded its annual retreat with participation of senior government advisors to discuss national priorities and preparations and planning for its next five-year Cooperation Framework".



## UN-Habitat receives generous support from the Government of the Netherlands to initiate policy dialogue on the Land Legal Framework Reform and secure tenure rights for Internally Displaced Iraqis

**Baghdad, 25 September 2023** - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) welcomes a contribution of USD 1.9 million from the Government of The Netherlands through the LAND-at-scale programme (<http://rvo.nl/landatscale>) to reform land legal framework, build local capacity on housing, land, and property (HLP) rights, and contribute to increasing the security of tenure for all Iraqis, including vulnerable internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in conflict-affected governorates.

On 25 September 2023, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, the DSRSG/RC/HC and Ms. Rania Hedeya, the Regional Representative of UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States and Mr. Ahmed Jamal Mohammed, the Head of Foreign Relations Department, Ministry of Justice, visited the Embassy of the Netherlands and signed a Contribution Agreement to initiate policy dialogue on



the reform of the land legal framework to enhance land governance and resolve land claims for vulnerable IDPs and returnees in Iraq.

The project will directly support the Government of Iraq on the policy dialogue on land legal framework, benefit 1,600 IDP and returnee households by providing legal support and counselling services to restore or obtain HLP documentation, and file compensation claims for destroyed or damaged property.

Through this project, UN-Habitat will work in close collaboration with Iraqi government counterparts on the land legal framework. With the generous support of the Government of Netherlands, the project aims to bolster the Government of Iraq's land management system.

HLP rights management is one of the key challenges for those rendered vulnerable through displacement in Iraq. The legal reform on land is set to address issues of

## UN-Habitat receives generous support from the Government of the Netherlands to initiate policy dialogue... *(continued)*

inadequate land management and insecure tenure, which not only poses risks for IDPs and returnees, but also restricts the potential for overall economic and social development in Iraq.

Mr. Jacob Wiersma, Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands Embassy in Baghdad highlighted the importance of housing, land and property (HLP) rights for all Iraqis, including vulnerable people, as access to these rights contributes to peoples' security, reintegration and wellbeing. With this new programme the Netherlands, in

cooperation UN-Habitat, will be supporting the Government of Iraq in improving land governance and processing land claims by its citizens.

Mr. Ghulam Isaccai emphasised that the commitment of the Government of the Netherlands to support UN-Habitat in its efforts to ensure the land legal framework plays a significant role, contributing and improving land governance, while strengthening the security of tenure and protection of HLP rights for all Iraqis.

Mr. Mohammed emphasized that Ministry of Justice welcomes this

initiative and happy to see that the project will contribute to improve the legal framework on land and also support IDPs and contribute to strengthen the security of tenure.

Ms. Rania Hedeya, Regional Representative of UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States, reiterated UN-Habitat's commitment to continue supporting the Government of Iraq, IDPs and returnees, highlighting that the improvement of land governance will contribute and promote the safe and sustainable returns of IDPs to their area of origin.

## UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) introductory workshop launched in Baghdad

Baghdad, 25 September 2023 -

Today, we are thrilled to launch the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) introductory workshop with the Government of Iraq. A strategic conversation begins about how the UN can best help Iraq's development in 2025-29, linking UN capacities with government priorities. Together, we envision a brighter future!



## Regional Representative of the UN-Habitat Regional Office for the Arab States meets with Iraq's Minister of Justice

Baghdad, 26 September 2023 - While visiting the UN-Habitat Country Office in Baghdad, Ms. Rania Hedeya, Regional Representative of the UN-Habitat Regional Office for the Arab States, met with Iraq's Minister of Justice, Dr. Khaled Shwani.

During the meeting, discussions centred around the coordination of strategic agendas and future collaborations on initiatives for policy dialogue on land legal framework and land governance. This included the recently established partnership between UN-Habitat Iraq and LAND-at-Scale/Netherlands Enterprise and Development Agency (ROV) for the policy dialogue on land legislative reform.

This effort has served the important purpose of assuring donors and partners, who invest their resources and trust in UN-Habitat Iraq, that their efforts are well-aligned with the government's priorities, meeting the needs of the people, and contributing to national sovereignty.

Iraq is currently transitioning from a humanitarian context to development and



lasting solution-oriented path. It is crucial to ensure that our mandate aligns with the government's priority spheres of

program. Fostering a constructive dialogue between the parties involved is the most effective approach.

## Ms. Rania Hedeya, UN-Habitat Region Representative for the Regional Office of Arab States, concludes visit to Iraq



**Baghdad, 29 September 2023** - During a 5-day mission to Iraq, Ms. Rania Hedeya, UN-Habitat Region Representative for the Regional Office of Arab States, observed the work of Iraq Programme, being the largest UN-Habitat programme in the world. In Baghdad, she met with the Minister of Justice of Iraq (وزارة العدل العراقية), key project donors such as the European Union and the Embassies of Japan and the Netherlands. Ms. Hedeya met with the European Union delegation in Iraq, led by Mr. Thomas Sailer, EU Ambassador /Head of EU Delegation to Iraq, Mr. Jacob Wiersma, Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands Embassy in Baghdad and the Government of Japan delegation, visiting Minister Masamoto Kenichi at the Embassy of Japan (@JapanInIraq) and Mr. Gen Yoneda from the Japan International Cooperation Agency. UN-Habitat's mission is to create inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities

and communities. As Regional Representative, Ms. Hedeya plays a crucial role in policy-making, advocacy, and resource mobilisation.

In a significant moment, UN-Iraq Deputy Special Representative Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, Mr. Ahmed Jamal Mohammed, the Head of Foreign Relations Department, Ministry of Justice, and Ms Rania, participated in the Contribution Agreement Signing



Ceremony with the Government of The Netherlands, marking the launch of the new UN-Habitat Iraq Project: "Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance and Secure Tenure Rights by Registering and Resolving Land Claims for vulnerable IDPs in Iraq". This initiative aims to reform land governance and secure tenure rights for vulnerable IDPs. The significant dialogue and close collaboration with national authorities are crucial for the success of the project, a dynamic well nurtured by

Iraq's Country Office team.

During her visit to Erbil's office, Ms. Hedeya visited two major projects - Al Yarmouk Park and Bab Sinjar housing Complex - funded by the EU and Government of Japan respectively, established to rejuvenate urban spaces and enhance living conditions in Mosul for residents, particularly IDPs and returnees.

She also had the opportunity to interact with female staff at the park, took part in a tree-planting activity, learned about the community hall's solar system, and connected with vulnerable returnees at Bab Sinjar housing units. Together, these efforts are regenerating urban communities and creating brighter futures for Iraqis. It was a great honour to host UN-Habitat's Regional Representative in Iraq, share in-house expertise, and hopefully inspire other places through our good practices



## 5 ways UNDP is supporting Iraq's stabilization

**Baghdad, 04 October 2023** - Iraq suffered immense devastation from the ISIL conflict, with widespread destruction of infrastructure and countless lives affected. The years of conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) left a trail of destruction in Iraq. Entire communities were uprooted, infrastructure turned to rubble, tearing apart the very fabric of Iraqi society. UNDP and the Government of Iraq go way back and have been partners since 1976. Post conflict, since 2015, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been working with the Government of Iraq and international partners to provide much-needed support from humanitarian aid to rehabilitation efforts to capacity-building projects. Efforts to rehabilitate Iraq and strengthen its peace and stability continue almost a decade after the conflict.



UNDP remains committed to Iraq as it transitions towards stability and peace. There can be no development without peace and there can be no peace without development. These are two foundations that are mutually inclusive. Rallying together with the people of Iraq as they reclaim and rebuild their lives, UNDP in partnership with the Government of Iraq, through the support of international partners, continues to drive Iraq's stabilisation and

transformative development projects. Here are five ways UNDP, through its flagship programme Funding Facility for Stabilisation (FFS), supports Iraq's path to long-term peace and stability.

### 1. Rebuilding critical infrastructure

UNDP has completed over 3,600 projects across Iraq, improving the lives of 8.3 million people and supporting the return of 4.9 million displaced Iraqis. UNDP has been instrumental in rehabilitating Iraq's infrastructure,

## 5 ways UNDP is supporting Iraq's stabilization *(continued)*



including schools, health systems, electrical grids, water supplies, road networks, and homes. These projects not only improve the quality of life for millions of Iraqis but also create jobs and stimulate economic growth. By restoring these essential infrastructure and services, UNDP with its partners have created a sense of normalcy that is vital for stability and encourages displaced families to return home, because they have something to go home to.

### 2. Diversifying livelihoods

Creating job opportunities is essential in rebuilding Iraq's economy.

One of the key pillars of fostering security and stability is economic recovery. To help improve and stabilise Iraq's economy, UNDP works to diversify livelihoods by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and providing skills training and job opportunities. Diversifying livelihoods and creating new job opportunities empower Iraqis to become more self-reliant and regain economic independence.

### 3. Empowering vulnerable groups

Inclusive development is at the core of UNDP's strategy. In Iraq, UNDP

champions for the active participation of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in building back a better, stronger nation.

UNDP places a strong emphasis on empowering women, youth, people with disabilities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and advocating for their rights. To ensure that no one is left behind, UNDP actively engages communities in implementing its projects. UNDP also provides training and economic opportunities for vulnerable groups to give them the tools they need to secure stable income and improve their lives.

### 4. Strengthening peace and governance

As Iraq rises from its tumultuous past, peace and good governance will be its foundations to sustain stability.

Peace and good governance are both crucial for stability. UNDP works with the Government of Iraq to build effective and accountable institutions, promote the rule of law, and enhance local governance capacities. UNDP offers tailored training programmes and technical assistance to Iraqi ministries, institutions, and local directorates to improve their abilities to provide essential public services effectively. UNDP also works at the

grassroots level and empowers local peace leaders with the skills and expertise to peacefully mediate and resolve disputes.

### 5. Promoting environmental sustainability

With Iraq as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, UNDP implements projects that build resilience and promote responsible resource management.

UNDP is actively contributing to Iraq's efforts to address environmental challenges. UNDP invests in renewable energy like solar power to reduce Iraq's dependence on fossil fuels. With water scarcity remaining a pressing issue in Iraq, UNDP helps manage and conserve water resources through the restoration of water treatment plants and the introduction of climate-resilient and sustainable farming techniques, which also help boost food security.

### About

Through the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), UNDP has mobilized over US\$1.5 billion from 30 international partners, which include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

FFS works in 31 locations across the five liberated governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din, and in nine major sectors – electricity, health, water, education, sewerage, livelihoods, municipalities, roads and bridges, and social cohesion.

## UNDP has completed over 47 water pipelines and network projects since 2015, funded by USAID, throughout Iraq

**Baghdad, 5 October 2023** - UNDP have completed over 47 water pipelines and network projects since 2015, funded by USAID throughout Iraq. This provided over 2,000,000 people with access to clean drinking water. Essential services like this have encouraged IDPs to return to their areas with confidence that water quality and quantity was taken care of. Al-Bu Juwari village is one of these areas where water transport pipes were rehabilitated, extending for about 7,000

m (7 km), which helped about 20,000 people, of which half are women living

in this village, and its surrounding areas, to obtain clean drinking water.



The ISIL conflict damaged many of Iraq's vital infrastructure, including water transmission pipelines. Since 2015, USAID has supported the restoration of over 47

## Bringing life's most essential resource to Sinjar: clean water flows!

**Sinjar, 11 October 2023** - UN-Habitat Iraq is delighted to announce a significant achievement: the successful completion of the Potable Water Network in Sinjar.

Thanks to the generous funding from the Government of Japan and close collaboration with local authorities, including the Sinjar Water Directorate, Mr Mahdi Qasim, over 15,000 residents in the area now enjoy consistent and reliable access to clean and safe water.

In line with our ongoing mission to support returnees in Iraq and foster socio-economic stabilization through a holistic approach, the project also focused on rehabilitating 50 damaged



houses and the Al-Til Co-education school, construction of marketplaces, vocational trainings, and public outreach campaigns considering climate change as well as food security.

Additionally, it involved the reconstruction of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, along with support for socio-economic activities.

## UNDP in Iraq conducts a groundbreaking workshop on Digital Financial Inclusion

**Baghdad, 12 October 2023** - Under the patronage of H.E. the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Iraq and with the unwavering support of USAID Middle East, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq conducted a groundbreaking workshop on Digital Financial Inclusion.

This workshop united key stakeholders, including the Office of the Iraqi Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance, public and private banks, e-payment companies, and international organisations. Together, we explored opportunities to bolster Iraq's digital ecosystem by enhancing e-payment solutions.

The Government of Iraq has made economic reform a top priority, focusing on developing the banking sector with

an emphasis on digital innovations, e-payments, and improved access to finance. UNDP and USAID Middle East are proud to stand by the Central

Bank of Iraq in its mission to transition to digital financing. Together, we're shaping a brighter future for Iraq's economy.



### Sustainable Development Goals

## 2023 SDG Summit [18-19 September 2023]

**Baghdad, 03 September 2023** - The 2023 SDG Summit will take place on 18-19 September 2023 in New York. It will mark the beginning of a new phase of accelerated progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals with high-level political guidance on transformative and accelerated actions leading up to 2030. Convened by the President of the General Assembly, the Summit will mark the half-way point to the deadline set for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be the centerpiece of the High-level Week of the General Assembly. It will respond

to the impact of multiple and interlocking crises facing the world and is expected to reignite a sense of hope, optimism, and enthusiasm for the 2030 Agenda.

Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, DSRSG, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian coordinator for Iraq: "The SDG Summit is an opportunity to renew our pledge towards the Sustainable Development Goals and mobilize accelerated action to deliver on the vision of the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind, from tackling the climate crisis to reducing inequalities and advancing the rights of women and

girls and empowering the most vulnerable. UNCT Iraq will continue to support and assist Iraq in achieving its SDGs, in line with its Vision 2030."



**Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai**  
Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations  
Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and  
Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq

“The SDG Summit is an opportunity to renew our pledge towards the Sustainable Development Goals and mobilize accelerated action to deliver on the vision of the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind, from tackling the climate crisis to reducing inequalities and advancing the rights of women and girls and empowering the most vulnerable. UNCT Iraq will continue to support and assist Iraq in achieving its SDGs, in line with its Vision 2030.”

## UN General Assembly adopts declaration to accelerate SDGs

**New York, 18 September 2023** - Now is the time for a global plan to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are woefully off-track halfway towards their 2030 deadline, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said on Monday in New York. Mr. Guterres was speaking at the opening of a high-level forum at UN Headquarters where world leaders adopted a political declaration to accelerate action to achieve the 17 goals, which aim to drive economic prosperity and well-being for all people while protecting the environment. "The SDGs aren't just a list of goals. They carry the hopes, dreams, rights and expectations of people everywhere," he said.

### Concerted, ambitious action

World leaders adopted the SDGs in 2015, promising to leave no one behind. The goals include ending extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation, as well as green energy, and providing quality universal education and lifelong learning opportunities.

UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis noted that despite commitments, 1.2 billion people were still living in poverty as of 2022, and roughly eight per cent of the global population, or 680 million people, will still be facing hunger by the end of the decade. The international community cannot accept these numbers, he said.

"With concerted, ambitious action, it is still possible that, by 2030, we could lift 124 million additional people out of poverty and ensure that some 113 million fewer people are malnourished," he said.

### Going backwards

Each of the 17 goals contains targets, with 169 overall, but the Secretary-General warned that currently only 15 per cent are on track, while many are going in reverse.

The political declaration "can be a game-changer in accelerating SDG progress," he said.

It includes a commitment to financing for developing countries and clear support for his proposal for an SDG Stimulus of at least \$500 billion annually, as well as an effective debt-relief mechanism.

It further calls for changing the business model of multilateral development banks to offer private finance at more affordable rates for developing countries, and endorses reform of the international finance architecture which he has labelled "outdated, dysfunctional and unfair."

### Millions still starving

The UN chief highlighted the need for action in six critical areas, starting with addressing hunger, which he called "a shocking stain on humanity, and an epic human rights violation."

"It is an indictment of every one of us that millions of people are starving in this day and age," he added.

The Secretary-General said the transition to renewable energy isn't happening fast enough, while the benefits and opportunities of digitalization are not being spread widely enough.

### Education cannot wait

At the same time, too many children and young people worldwide are

victims of poor quality education, or no education at all, he continued, before shining a spotlight on the need for decent work and social protection.

Finally, he called for an end to the war on nature and "the triple planetary crisis" characterized by climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

### Ensure gender equality

"Cutting across all of these transitions is the need to ensure full gender equality," he said. "It's long past time to end discrimination, ensure a place at every table for women and girls, and to end the scourge of gender-based violence."

Mr. Guterres highlighted UN response to each area, including initiatives to transform global food systems so everyone can have access to a healthy diet.

Other efforts focus on boosting investment in the renewable energy transition, promoting internet access for all, creating 400 million new "decent jobs", and extending social protection to over four million people.

### Testament to commitment

The President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Paula Narváez, was heartened by the adoption of the declaration, calling it a testament to leaders' unwavering commitment towards implementing the SDGs.

ECOSOC is at the core of the UN system's work on all three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental - and provides a platform for follow-up and review of the goals.

The two-day SDG Summit is the centrepiece of the UN General Assembly's high-level week, the annual gathering of Heads of State and Government, and Ms. Narváez also pointed to two other events on the agenda.

### Seize the moment

She said the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development will address the need for an international financial architecture that can respond to current needs and emerging challenges. Meanwhile, the Climate Ambition Summit presents an opportunity for decisive progress on climate action and to raise the bar for more timely and targeted efforts.

"This week should serve as a turning point to rescue the SDGs," she said. "We must not let this moment slip away."



## Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani attends UN Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in New York



**New York, 20 September 2023** – Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani participated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in New York, USA, on Tuesday.

In his speech at the UN Sustainable Development Goals Summit, Prime Minister Al-Sudani emphasized Iraq's commitment to the action plan of the International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in 2015 and the corresponding international plan. This commitment underscores Iraq's dedication to developing comprehensive national financing frameworks to complement sustainable development strategies. Iraq warmly welcomes the summit's adoption of the political declaration, emphasizing the pressing need to accelerate the implementation of development goals. This underscores Iraq's commitment to achieving these

goals as a key priority.

□ We remain resolute in our commitment to achieving the sustainable development goals, even in the face of formidable challenges.

□ We applaud the summit's adoption of the political declaration, emphasizing the need for more efforts to expedite SDG implementation, particularly in securing and mobilizing financial resources, as outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Program.

□ Our government is vigorously striving to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, and we have made considerable strides. Collaborating with all partners is crucial to further advance our progress.

□ Iraq submitted two Voluntary National Reviews on our SDG achievements, and our national government's program aligns seamlessly with these goals.

□ Realizing the Sustainable

Development Goals is both a national responsibility and a humanitarian duty. Iraq addresses all these goals with equal dedication.

□ Given Iraq's severe drought, prioritizing the implementation of the sixth goal related to water is crucial. We call for the comprehensive realization of this goal, recognizing its far-reaching economic and social implications.

□ Iraq enthusiastically welcomes the United Nations Water Conference in March 2023 and eagerly anticipates its outcomes.

□ On the sixth goal, Iraq has undertaken several national initiatives, encompassing infrastructure maintenance, the expansion of clean water networks, the adoption of modern agricultural irrigation methods, and the upkeep of irrigation channels.

□ Iraq faces financial challenges in funding the Sustainable Development Goals, partly stemming from losses incurred during its battle against ISIS terrorist gangs.

□ Given its vulnerability to climate change, Iraq places paramount importance on financing climate action.

□ Iraq has initiated the implementation of nationally determined contributions, focusing on investments in associated gas for clean energy production, with the aim of achieving Zero Routine Flaring by 2030.

By the Media Office of the Prime Minister.

### Agriculture

## An ITC delegation met with the Minister of Agriculture to discuss the progress of the implementation of the SAAVI programme

**Baghdad, 29 August 2023** - An International Trade Center (ITC) delegation met with the Minister of Agriculture, H.E Abbas Jebur Al-Ali Al-Malki to discuss the progress of the implementation of the SAAVI programme (Strengthening Value Chains for Agriculture and Agri-food). Was explored the necessary steps Iraq must take to become a member of the World Trade Organization, enabling the country to access new and expanded markets for agricultural crops. Additionally, was underscored the importance of establishing agricultural alliances among individual farmers and between farmers and large companies.



## With support from BMZ, WFP set up a lab on aquaponics and hydroponics at Basra University

**Basra, 23 August 2023** - The World Food Programme (WFP) supports Basra University to prepare the agronomy and agriculture engineering students on new techniques and practical learning. A lab on aquaponics and hydroponics was set up with the support of the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ). This innovation will open new opportunities for the youth in Iraq. By engaging the private sector in building capacity for utilization of smart agriculture technologies, WFP also helps confront environmental challenges in Iraq such as: drought, water scarcity, salinity.



## UN Resident Coordinator visits FAO-EU project sites, witnessing empowerment of rural and peri-urban women and youth returnees



**Bartella, 28 August 2023** - Today, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, UN Deputy Special Representative Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, led a comprehensive visit to various locations across Ninawa, where diverse UN agencies have executed impactful projects.

This field visit encompassed FAO project sites, effectively showcasing the accomplishments of the "Enhancing Livelihoods for Returning Farmers in Rural and Semi-Urban Areas of Ninawa Province" initiative. Funded by the European Union (EU) and executed in close partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, this initiative has notably uplifted the livelihoods of returning women and youth in Ninawa. Accompanied by a delegation from UN offices in Baghdad, Erbil, and Mosul, in addition to Dr. Rabee Yousif Suran, Director of Agriculture in Ninawa, extension officers, and FAO representatives, Mr. Isaczai closely observed the tangible impact of FAO's efforts in Hamdaniya and Bartella.

During the delegation's first visit, Nariman and Maryam, two young women from Hamdaniya, shared their inspiring journey, which left a profound impression on all present.

Listening to their story, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai learned that these two resilient individuals had been twice displaced due to conflicts. Each time they were uprooted from their homes and lands, they faced the distressing loss of all their belongings. Despite these setbacks, they partnered with FAO to rebuild their lives and their dairy small business. Empowered by FAO's provisions of equipment and comprehensive training, they gained invaluable skills.

Through the adoption of modern milk processing equipment and sustainable feeding practices, their livestock thrived on nutritious green fodder – a transformative innovation. Nariman and Maryam's determination propelled them to reclaim arable land, cultivating abundant green fodder. This move significantly elevated milk quality and animal health, leading to substantial

increases in milk yields.

Furthermore, with the project's support, their small dairy venture expanded significantly. The number of their cows grew from three to 12, and they even rented nearby land to cultivate additional fodder. This expansion not only secured their families' livelihoods but also showcased the potential for sustainable growth within the broader community.

Dr. Fayrouz Mohammed Ahmed, an extension officer at the Ministry of Agriculture who directly oversees the implementation of the project among beneficiaries in Hamdaniya, highlighted the remarkable success of those who have benefited from the initiative. The demonstrable impact has led to a surge in demand, leading her to advocate for the project's expansion to reach a wider range of beneficiaries. Given Ninawa's pivotal role as Iraq's livestock hub, she emphasised that the project's expansion has the potential not only to empower returning women and youth, but also to revitalise small and medium-sized dairy enterprises.

Continuing the journey, the delegation proceeded to visit Khalid Elias, accompanied by his wife and sister, whose evolution from modest milk



## UN Resident Coordinator visits FAO-EU project sites... *(continued)*

collectors to proficient custodians of quality stands as an inspiring testament. Guided by FAO's support, they now harvest over two tons of milk daily. This abundant milk is transformed into high-quality dairy products, enhancing both product value and marketing opportunities, reaching various cities across Iraq.

Dr. Chedly Kayouli, FAO's International Livestock Expert, succinctly captured the essence of this transformation: "The trainings delivered on the utilization of modern and high-quality equipment provided, alongside innovative fodder cultivation techniques, stand as pivotal cornerstones in nurturing the development of beneficiaries' activities."

Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, UN Deputy Special Representative, was

enthusiastic about the project's impact: "During my visit, I witnessed first-hand the transformative impact FAO's support is having on local communities through its Livelihoods for Ninewa Returnees project. This initiative goes beyond reconstruction, sparking a wave of innovative ventures that are creating employment opportunities for many families and providing practical and sustainable solutions that resonate throughout conflict-affected communities."

Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO's representative in Iraq, underscored the vital role of partnerships, saying, "The synergy between the European Union, FAO, and the Iraqi government is at the heart of this success. It's more than an investment – it's a testament to collaborative efforts that drive employment creation and sustainable

livelihoods. The development of the value chain is the backbone of this transformation, as seen through the creation of about 200 women groups dedicated to dairy production. This initiative doesn't just secure livelihoods; it paves the way for economic growth and lasting change, especially for women and youth, in the Iraqi dairy sector."

This visit underscores the transformative power of sustainable initiatives, highlighting how collaborative efforts, such as those between FAO and the European Union, are driving positive change in challenging contexts, contributing in particular to the UN Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5, and 8, aimed at eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, and fostering inclusive economic growth.

## FAO takes part in a coordination meeting aimed at assisting buffalo breeders impacted by climate change effects in southern Iraq



**Baghdad, 03 September 2023** - In light of the Iraqi government's commitment to allocate 5 billion IQD for the implementation of Ministry of

Agriculture - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Iraq initiative, aimed at assisting buffalo breeders impacted by climate change effects in southern Iraq, a coordination meeting was recently convened by the technical deputy minister. The objective of this meeting was to establish a well-defined roadmap for the successful utilization of the allocated funds. Dr. Mithaq Al-Khafaji, the Technical Deputy Minister, chaired the meeting, which was

attended by a team from the ministry's directors, as well as a delegation of experts from FAO Iraq, led by Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Country Representative for Iraq.

The roadmap encompasses various forms of support for buffalo breeders, including providing inputs to enhance livestock feeding practices by supporting them with wheat bran and molasses. Additionally, it involves training on optimal use of these inputs and cultivation methods.

## FAO improves animal health services and disease surveillance in Iraq

**Baghdad, 03 September 2023** - In a significant step towards improving animal health services and animal disease diagnosis in Iraq, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources-KRI (MoAWR-KRI), has launched the "Laboratory techniques training workshop" in Iraq. This initiative marks a pivotal partnership that underscores the commitment of FAO and governmental bodies to addressing crucial challenges. The project entitled "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq" is funded by the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).



Held at the Central Veterinary Laboratory/Veterinary Directorate in Baghdad from August 25 to September 1, 2023, the workshop gathered twenty-two participants from Baghdad, Erbil, Duhok, Ninawa, Muthanna, Basra, Anbar, and Wassit veterinary laboratories.

The training aimed to enhance participants' competencies and skills in laboratory techniques for the diagnosis of priority animal diseases, while deepening their understanding of various diagnostic methods. The workshop delved into various diagnostic techniques for viral,

## FAO improves animal health services and disease surveillance in Iraq (continued)

bacterial, and parasitic animal diseases, the training encompassed sample collection, serological, and molecular methodologies. Short summaries for some priority animal diseases were presented and discussed and practical sessions demonstrated the application of these techniques in real-world scenarios.

During the closing session, FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, stressed that, "The rapid and accurate diagnosis of animal

diseases can be ensured in fully equipped laboratories that have a range of standardized diagnostic reagents, experienced staff and a sufficient throughput of diagnostic specimens to maintain expertise. Building and maintaining the technical capacity of laboratory staff is a key element in this process. Equipping veterinary laboratory personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge, will better prepare them to diagnose animal diseases diagnosis and protect

the human and animal health" through the One Health approach.

By harnessing expertise from different regions, the workshop underscores the spirit of cooperation between FAO and Iraqi government agencies in strengthening animal health services and surveillance. The comprehensive approach of this project is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

## WFP in Iraq supports Agromet Iraq

**Baghdad, 10 September 2023** - The World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq supports Agromet Iraq in:

- Upgrading Automatic Agro-climatic weather stations,
- Training staff on data logging, communication for effective production of agro-climatic forecast products and anticipatory outlooks for timely climate information and early warning to farmers.



## ILO PROSPECTS financial inclusion initiative supports young Iraqi farmer to expand his business

**Baghdad, 11 September 2023** - "Rain is scarce in this area. I like to water my farm each day, and check on the water system and the trees," says 21-year-old Najim on his farm in Mosul, where he grows wheat, onion, sesame and olives trees.

Ensuring his land gets sufficient water is critical for his livelihoods, especially in the summer months when temperatures across Iraq soar.

Najim hopes to cultivate more of his land in the area of Mosul, as part of his plan to develop his business. He is being supported by a financial inclusion initiative being implemented by the ILO under the PROSPECTS Partnership - funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

Through this initiative Najim recently completed a financial education training which aims to enhance the financial knowledge and skills of young people and entrepreneurs to better manage their finances and prepare them to access financial services.

Najim has also been referred to a bank so he can access a loan that will allow him expand his business further, improve his livelihoods and cultivate more land.



The ILO is collaborating with different partners to enhance the functioning of the private sector while addressing the barriers to decent self-employment for host community members and forcibly displaced persons. This includes facilitating their access to affordable loans through financial service providers so they can re-start or grow

their businesses, while also improving their financial and business management knowledge.

"I would like to get sprinklers and drip irrigation," says Najim.

"There is a lot of land here that could be used for farming, but it is not being used. So, I will make use of this and cultivate all of it."

## FAO continues transforming dairy sector in Ninewa, Iraq with MoA and EU support



**Ninewa, 13 September 2023** - FAO Iraq, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and with funding from the European Union (EU), continues to support and develop the dairy value chain, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening the livestock and dairy sector in Iraq. On the 10th of September, the FAO Iraq team, led by Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative, conducted a mission to Bashiqa, Ninewa Governorate. This visit is part of the efforts made by the organization and its partners within a comprehensive approach to support the development and strengthening of the livestock and dairy sectors in the region. During this mission, three core activities were undertaken:

### 1. Distribution of High-Quality Equipment - Empowering Dairy Stakeholders

FAO hosted a distribution ceremony at the Bashiqa Agricultural Directorate to distribute a transformative set of high-quality stainless steel milk transport and processing equipment. This initiative represents a groundbreaking milestone, marking the first time that this state-of-the-art equipment has been widely introduced in Iraq.

In presence of the Director of Bashiqa District, M. Ghazouan Daoudi who praised FAO's work in the region and expressed the Directorate's unwavering support, the FAO Representative in Iraq, expressed his deep appreciation for the partnership between FAO and the MoA, recognizing the success of the model implemented in Ninewa, which has played a key role in the return of residents to their villages. He also highlighted FAO's comprehensive approach to supporting the entire dairy value chain, from feed production to milk processing and marketing and praised the hard work of farmers and dairy producers in restoring confidence in Iraqi products.

During the distribution event, 3,500 of

the 7,000 stainless steel units were delivered. Approximately 5,000 milk producers, collectors and processors from different areas of the governorate will benefit from this initiative. These units will facilitate the collection and distribution of an astounding 250 tons of milk per day, ensuring impeccable hygiene standards, unrivalled quality and prevention of spoilage. This transformational leap is expected to improve the quality of dairy products, positioning them as premium competitors to imported alternatives.

Dr Chedly Kayouli, FAO International Livestock Specialist, highlighted the critical importance of stainless-steel equipment in maintaining milk hygiene and quality during transport. He also provided comprehensive guidance on how to use the equipment, encouraging beneficiaries to maximize its potential for business growth.

### 2. Peer-to-Peer Training – Building capacities and Knowledge Sharing in Action

Under FAO strategy to build capacities of national partners, FAO is progressing in the Peer to peer training initiative, a dedicated team of extension officers from southern governorates (Basra, Thi Qar and Missan) who embarked on a week-long immersive training with the MoA

extension officers of Ninewa region. This peer-to-peer training initiative, part of FAO's collaboration with the MoA and the EU, serves as a platform for these extension officers to gain insights and best practices from their counterparts.

During their week-long stay, the extension officers will participate in extensive training sessions, farmer field schools and field visits. These experiences will immerse them in the implementation mechanisms developed by FAO in the Ninewa EU funded project - a project that has achieved unprecedented success in Iraq and has been recognized by senior Iraqi authorities. Skilled with this knowledge, these officers will be well equipped to replicate these practices in implementing the other projects in their respective governorates.

Dr Chedly Kayouli explained that the main objective of this training is to equip MOA extension staff from the southern governorates with the expertise gained through peer-to-peer training. At the end of this training, these extension staff will be duly recognized as trainers of trainers (TOT) and facilitators of farmer field schools (FFS).

### 3. Dairy Marketing Centers - Strengthening

The mission concluded with a visit to one of the 11 new dairy marketing centers under rehabilitation by the project. These centers are pivotal in enabling regional dairy producers to store, market and sell their diverse products.

This comprehensive approach aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).



## In the heart of Iraq, a tale of resilience and renewal unfolds

**Baghdad, 15 September 2023** - In the heart of Iraq, a tale of resilience and renewal unfolds. Thanks to the World Food Programme (WFP) transformative project, Huda, Taha, and Omer's lives were forever changed. From displacement to prosperity, their

journey inspires us all. Cucumber, cowpea, watermelon, eggplant, and sunflower – symbols of rebirth and resilience in Salahaldin. With the new water irrigation techniques provided by the World Food Programme, their families defied the odds.



## A joint delegation from FAO in Iraq and the Iraq Ministry of Agriculture participates in the regional workshop on the implementation of the “One Country, One Priority Product” initiative in Cairo



**Cairo, Egypt, 20 September 2023** - A joint delegation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq and the Iraq Ministry of Agriculture participated in the regional workshop and event on the implementation of the “One Country, One Priority Product” initiative organized by the FAO in Near East and

North Africa office and held in Cairo last week.

The workshop was attended by representatives of 15 countries and was an occasion to review the progress of the implementation of the “One Country, One Priority Product” initiative and exchange best practices and lessons learned. Date palm expert,

Dr. Abdulbasit and Iraq Ministry of Agriculture representative, Dr. Hadi Hashem, Director General of Horticulture Department, highlighted the selection of date palm as a priority product in Iraq. The delegation gave a detailed presentation on the current status of date palm Production and the action plan being implemented to develop the sector. Iraq used to be a leading producer of date palm, but this sector has been significantly affected by the wars the country has experienced. Under the “One Country, One Priority Product” initiative, FAO Iraq and the Iraq Ministry of Agriculture are collaborating to develop the date palm sector, improving crop quality and productivity, and fostering marketing opportunities.

## Addressing food loss and waste for a sustainable Iraq

**Baghdad, 29 September 2023** - On the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (IDAFLW), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) come together with a renewed commitment to tackle a pressing global challenge: food loss and waste. In a world marked by climate change, conflicts, and economic uncertainties, this collective mission has never been more critical.

The 2023 report of the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World has unveiled a stark reality: between 691 and 783 million people faced hunger in 2022, an increase of 122 million people since 2019, before the pandemic. WFP's hunger monitoring systems indicate that 33 million in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region do not have sufficient food consumption.

Globally, about 13% of all the food produced is lost in the supply chain, and another 17% is discarded by



households, restaurants, and stores. These losses represent not only a missed opportunity to alleviate hunger but also a significant strain on our environment and resources.

Responsible for a third of total greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to biodiversity loss, global agri-food systems are under threat. As the world's population continues to grow, we face the daunting reality that by 2050 we will need nearly three Earth-sized planets to sustain current lifestyles. It is imperative that we transform our food systems to be more

efficient, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

In our joint commitment to address food loss and waste for a sustainable Iraq, we support the efforts of the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to develop and implement national targets and strategies aligned with SDG 12.3. This includes fostering supply chain collaboration to reduce food waste at every stage, from production to processing and storage. Equally important is encouraging new habits and attitudes to change and decrease

## Addressing food loss and waste for a sustainable Iraq *(continued)*

the amount of food people throw away. We encourage the private sector to actively engage in supporting sustainable food supply chains and promoting responsible consumption. Businesses should invest in the modernization of food supply chains and the adoption of sustainable practices. Recognizing the vital role of mobile-based business-to-business supply platforms in enhancing

efficiency, we emphasize their importance.

We highlight the benefits of reducing food waste and provide practical tips for consumers. We call on individuals to make conscious choices that reduce food waste within their homes. Additionally, we encourage consumers to actively participate in public-private partnerships aimed at reducing food loss and waste.

As we mark IDAFLW in 2023, FAO and WFP reaffirm our commitment to addressing food loss and waste in Iraq. Given the alarming statistics of undernourishment and environmental costs, urgent action is needed. Together, we envision a future where no one in Iraq goes to bed hungry, where food is valued and not wasted, and where our agrifood systems are efficient, sustainable, and resilient.

## FAO Iraq team was happy to take part in the #WorldFoodDay23 commemoration in Brussels

**Brussels, 16 October 2023** - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Iraq team was happy to take part in the #WorldFoodDay23 commemoration in Brussels organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Liaison Office in Brussels. FAO Country Representative for Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan and European Union partners highlighted FAO's commitment to supporting Southern Iraq through jointly implemented project and their contribution in tackling climate and water challenges and supporting households.



## FAO strengthens commitment to Iraq in addressing environmental and agricultural challenges

**Baghdad, 13 October 2023** - Following up the meeting between the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Dr QU Dongyu, and His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq, Abdul Latif Rashid, during the UN 2023 Water Conference which underscored Iraq's commitment to finding sustainable solutions to the country's multiple environmental and agricultural challenges, a dedicated team from the organization's headquarters successfully concluded a mission to the Republic of Iraq from 10 to 12 October.

Led by Mr LI Lifeng, Director of the Land and Water division (NSL), and accompanied by Ms Fidaa Haddad, Forestry Officer of Forestry division, Mr Jacopo Monzini, Senior Natural Resources Management Officer of Investment Centre and Mr Feras Ziadat, NSL officer, the working group closely assessed Iraq's diverse environmental and agricultural challenges and potential solutions, including water harvesting and

storage, modern irrigation, combatting sand and dust storms, afforestation, wastewater treatment and re-use, drought tolerant crops.

Accompanied by FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, and his team, the mission participated in important meetings with key Iraqi high-level officials including a Grand Audience with the President of the Republic, productive discussions with the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee, collaborative dialogues

with His Excellency the Minister of Water Resources, Mr. Awn Dhiab Abdullah, their Excellencies the Technical Deputy of the Ministry of Environment, Dr. Jasim Abdul Aziz Hamadi, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Bilateral Relations, Ambassador Mohammed Bahar Al-Ulum, and the Technical Deputy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Mithaq Al-Khafaji.

In addition to these significant meetings, the delegation convened with



## FAO strengthens commitment to Iraq... (continued)

members of the UN Country Team Priority Working Group promoting Natural Resource and Disaster Risk Management, and Climate Change Resilience (PWG4). This meeting, which was also attended by a representative of the office of the Deputy Special Representative of the United National Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG), provided a comprehensive overview of the climate-related challenges in Iraq and showcased the collaborative efforts of various United Nations agencies in addressing these challenges.

The team also had the opportunity to closely witness FAO Iraq programs and strong collaboration with key Iraqi ministries, underscoring FAO's commitment to supporting Iraq's sustainable development efforts and fostering impactful partnerships. Iraqi officials expressed their deep

appreciation for FAO's work and cooperation. They acknowledged FAO's critical role in addressing environmental and agricultural challenges, further strengthening the enduring partnership between Iraq and FAO.

Mr. Li emphasized the vital role of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposal, currently under review by the Fund, in addressing these climate-related challenges and advised to maximize the resources of GCF and Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to enhance its resilience against the impacts of climate change and land degradation. The mission's objectives align closely with leveraging the GCF to support Iraq's environmental and agricultural priorities, all of which are geared towards addressing climate impacts, environmental challenges, improving food security, and ensuring a

sustainable future for Iraq.

Dr. El Hajj Hassan stated "Our role in Iraq is a testament to FAO's unwavering commitment to addressing the country's agricultural and climate challenges. We are committed to working hand in hand with the Government of Iraq to bring about transformative solutions. FAO will continue to provide support to strengthen Iraq's resilience to the impacts of climate change."

The FAO mission to Iraq represents an important step towards addressing Iraq's agricultural and climate challenges priorities. The collaboration between FAO and Iraq's esteemed partners is expected to create transformative solutions that will help sustainable resources management, strengthen the bastions of food security and build the nation's resilience in the face of adversity.

## FAO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Najaf Directorate of Agriculture, will jointly implement in pilot sites Integrated Pest Management programs

**Najaf, 30 October 2023** - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Najaf Directorate of Agriculture, will jointly implement in pilot sites Integrated Pest Management programs within the date palm value chain development and desert rehabilitation using climate-smart and innovative techniques.



## Implementing smart agricultural practices in central and southern governorates

**Baghdad, 31 October 2023** - Implementing smart agricultural practices in central and southern governorates, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, Ministry of Agriculture and partner farmers team is following up with field observations to implement full package of smart agricultural practices used in Babel and Najaf thanks to FAO project implemented with Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources, and Ministry of Environment. Among these practices, the delegation followed the implementation of the use of integrated soil and water management techniques to prepare land for wheat cultivation



for the 2023-2024 winter season. Thanks to FAO donor partners [SIDA, Government of Canada], FAO is

supporting Iraq's agricultural sector and addressing the challenges of climate change.

## Iraqi President, addresses World Food Forum (WFF), calls for international, or bilateral agreements ensuring adequate and fair water rations for everybody

**Rome, Italy, 16 October 2023** - The President of the Republic of Iraq, Abdullatif Jamal Rashid attended the World Food Forum (WFF) being held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Rome, Italian Capital, under the theme: "Agrifood systems transformation accelerates climate action."



## Iraq's President, UN World Food Programme's Executive Director discuss food security, water and agricultural challenges

**Rome, Italy, 16 October 2023** - The President of the Republic of Iraq, Abdullatif Jamal Rashid met with the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), Cindy McCain, on the sidelines of the World Food Forum (WFF), at FAO headquarters in Rome, the Italian capital.

During the meeting, President Rashid affirmed that Iraq has good capabilities to achieve food security since Iraq's cities are marked by security and stability and this has rather significant impacts on promoting sustainable development, improving services provided to citizens, and rehabilitating infrastructure.



## President Rashid, meeting Director-General of FAO, says that security, stability are essential pillars for sustainable development agenda



**Rome, Italy, 16 October 2023** - As part of the World Food Forum (WFF), being held in the Italian capital, Rome,

the President of the Republic of Iraq, Abdullatif Jamal Rashid met with Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

According to President Rashid, establishing security and stability is a fundamental pillar and starting point to the achievement of the goals of the Food and Agriculture Organization program in promoting sustainable development in the country, providing essential services including health, education, and agricultural and irrigation methods, as well as providing necessary services. Furthermore, His Excellency reiterated Iraq's commitment to maintaining and revitalizing its relations with all international organizations and institutions, for the sake of creating a stable and safe environment for everyone.

## ILO and constituents - government, employer, and worker representatives - and Members of Parliament are reviewing the draft Trade Union law for Federal Iraq to ensure its alignment with International Labour Standards

**Baghdad, 14 September 2023** - The ILO and constituents - government, employer, and worker representatives - and Members of Parliament from the parliamentary labour committee, are reviewing the draft trade union law for Federal Iraq to ensure its alignment with International Labour Standards. The discussions aim to find an alternative to the Trade Union Law in Iraq No. 52 of 1987, with the aim to ensure provisions that allow workers' organizations to organize their elections, develop their bylaws, administrative and organizational structures, and manage their activities freely without restrictions, in line with International Labour Standards, in particular Freedom of Association and



Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) - both

fundamental ILO Conventions which have been ratified by Iraq. This activity is supported by the European Union Delegation in Iraq.

## WFP in Iraq, in partnership with Erbil Polytechnic University, is celebrating the graduation of 140 students from Jousour Programme

**Erbil, 28 September 2023** - The World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq, in partnership with Erbil Polytechnic University is celebrating the graduation of 140 students from Jousour Programme funded by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ). As they enter Iraq's job market, WFP invites businesses and non-profits to join in to empower the youth by offering opportunities. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in Iraq joined the World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq and Erbil Polytechnic University for a job fair hosted for the conclusion of Jousour program. 140 program graduates -

including IDPs, refugees, and people from host communities - were connected with potential employers. The UNV highlighted volunteering opportunities available through its

Unified Volunteering Platform, as part of the UNV ongoing talent outreach efforts : <http://app.unv.org/?country=IRQ>



## ILO and partners discuss progress made in promoting labour governance, inspection and working condition in Iraq

**Baghdad, 28 September 2023** - (ILO News) The ILO and partners implementing a European Union funded project in Iraq to enhance labour governance, inspection and working conditions met in Baghdad on Thursday (September 28) to discuss progress made in the project's activities and some of the lessons learnt along the way. The event marked the end of the two-and-a-half-year project, which was implemented closely with tripartite

constituents, namely the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and employer and worker organizations. It brought together 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, as well as representatives

from banks in Iraq, and universities. Participants examined various interventions that were undertaken during the project's life-cycle, which addressed some of the pressing issues facing Iraq's labour market. In line with national priorities and the Decent Work Country Programme for Iraq, the project has worked closely with tripartite constituents to enhance the labour inspection system and improve Occupational Safety and Health in line with International

## ILO and partners discuss progress made in promoting labour governance, inspection and working condition in Iraq (continued)



Labour Standards.

This led to the development of policies, programmes and profiles on labour inspection and Occupational Safety and Health, as well as capacity building activities for labour inspectors, officials and various stakeholders to ensure they are better placed to respond to the emerging and changing needs of the labour market, including its working environment.

A new training centre was established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Baghdad to build the capacity of labour and social security inspectors and other professionals from across governorates on the principles and functions of labour inspection, occupational health and safety and

social security.

In addition, the project supplied the National Centre for Occupational Safety and Health (NCOSH) with portable tools and equipment for monitoring workplace environmental hazards during inspection visits, allowing the centre to expand its services and enhance its role in preventing and inspecting occupational accidents and illnesses more effectively. Farm-level interventions

With an emphasis on the agricultural sector, the project has introduced and adapted several of ILO's global packages that promote business development and entrepreneurship, such as "GETAhead", which is a global training package that seeks to develop

entrepreneurial skills, particularly among women of low income; as well as Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB), one of ILO's flagship business management training programmes.

It has also introduced ILO's Think.Coop and Start.Coop global learning tools, designed to promote cooperative development in various sectors, as well as career guidance and employment service tools to job-seekers and youth.

Hundreds of workers, farm owners, cooperative members, union members and community leaders were trained on Decent Work Principles, including Occupational Safety and Health and International Labour Standards.

These field-level interventions have reached over 6,000 individuals, building their capacities in various areas and professions.

The project has incorporated a significant number of Training of Trainers programmes to enhance the level of sustainability and facilitate the implementation of future capacity building activities.

Farm-level interventions were carried out with a number of local implementing partners, including The Swedish Development Aid Organization (SWEDO), Al-Meameen Humanitarian Foundation (MHF), Peace and Freedom Organization (PFO), Lotus Cultural Women's League and Al Khair.

## ILO supports private sector development and decent job creation in Southern Iraq

**Basra, 30 September 2023** - A meeting was held with young entrepreneurs in Basra to discuss the nature of their small businesses - from the generation of their business ideas to the launch of their businesses, and some of the challenges faced on the way.

It became evident during the discussions that many of the businesses were developed based on local market depend, which has contributed to their success.

The meeting was also an opportunity to introduce the young women and men to the newly launched "Towards more and better employment through enhanced support to private sectors in southern Iraq – with a focus on green business" project, implemented by the ILO, with the support of Italy through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

(AICS).

The project will implement activities to support private sector development and

decent job creation in Southern Iraq, with a focus on promoting sustainable green businesses.



## ILO capacity building

**Turin, Italy, 04 October 2023** - ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Maha Kattaa, was among Country Office Directors from across the ILO who took part in a training programme in ILO's International Training Centre in Turin aimed at enhancing their abilities to lead the work of the ILO in countries

around the world.

The programme aims to foster greater awareness and understanding of management, financial and operational accountabilities, and strengthen relationships between the Directors and their key counterparts at headquarters.



## The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the ILO meet to discuss the proposed instructions related to the recruitment and employment of migrant workers in Iraq



**Baghdad, 09 October 2023** - The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the ILO held a meeting on Monday (October 9) to discuss the proposed instructions related to the recruitment and employment of migrant workers in Iraq as part of efforts to revise and modernise the Iraqi Labour Law No. 37

of 2015.

The draft proposal, prepared by the Department of Labour and Vocational Training, was reviewed by participants including the Ministry's Legal Department, Department for Social Security and members of the National Centre for Occupational Health and

Safety.

In addition, the ILO provided its review, in accordance with International Labour Standards, and in line with the ILO general principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment, as well as the code of conduct for fair recruitment in the Republic of Iraq, which was developed in 2022 by the ILO and social partners. Participants also commented on the proposed instructions articles based on the provisions of the Iraq labour code and practices related to the recruitment and employment of migrant workers observed in the labour market in Iraq. With the support of European Union in Iraq **بعثة الاتحاد الاوروبي في العراق** the ILO has been working with its national partners in the review and update of labour legislation through technical support, to ensure it responds to the emerging needs of the country's labour market. It is also supporting the Government and tripartite partners to strengthen their capacity to implement legislation.

## The ILO meets with representatives of the Parliamentary Labour Committee to discuss the development of a strategy to address and prevent inequalities in the world of work for Iraq

**Baghdad, 10 October 2023** - The ILO met with representatives of the Parliamentary Labour Committee to discuss the development of a strategy to address and prevent inequalities in the world of work for Iraq.

The meeting forms part of a series of consultative meetings the ILO is holding with partners including tripartite constituents, UN and other development partners to ensure a strategy is developed, which addresses the needs of Iraq's labour market and its workers.

The strategy for Iraq aims to cover a range of strategic pillars, roadmap for policy areas, and measures to ensure an integrated impact, and that capitalises on synergies with other relevant development actors and their operations.



In 2022, the ILO adopted a comprehensive and integrated ILO strategy to prevent and reduce inequalities in the world of work, which includes working with ILO constituents to develop comprehensive and integrated

policy frameworks to reduce and prevent inequalities in their respective countries. Iraq was one of the countries selected to design a context-specific strategy to prevent and reduce inequalities in its world of work.

## International Day of Police Cooperation [7 September] commemorated in Iraq

**Baghdad, 07 September 2023** - International Day of Police Cooperation [7 September] is a reminder of the importance of partnerships in maintaining peace and security. At IOM, we put the community at the centre of all our programming, including when it comes to policing and safety.

UNDP, in partnership with Ministry of Interior, is transforming police stations into citizen-responsive and service-

oriented hubs thanks to the generous funding of Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands.

"The principles that underpin police cooperation – accountability, transparency and respect for diversity – are essential to renewing a social contract anchored in human rights" – António Guterres, UN Secretary-General on today's first-ever International Day of Police Cooperation.



## Everyone should have a voice in shaping their community's wellbeing!

**Baghdad, 07 September 2023** - Recently, IOM Iraq organized a Community Policing (CP) Training of Trainers for 22 women CP officers. Strengthening safety, fostering leadership - these women will go on to share their expertise for the benefit of their own communities and others.



## Increasing the security of the trade supply chain at Baghdad International Airport

**Baghdad, 10 September 2023** - Today, Iraq took a significant stride in bolstering trade supply chain security – concurrently targeting high-risk air cargo while facilitating the smooth flow of legitimate trade. In pursuit of this crucial objective, Iraqi authorities have joined forces with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to implement the Passenger and Cargo Border Team (PCBT) Container Control Programme (CCP) in close cooperation with the World Customs Organizations (WCO).

This partnership resulted in the establishment of an Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) at Baghdad International Airport (BIA). Under the auspices of the Border Ports Commission, the official inauguration of ACCU occurred on 10 September 2023, within the cargo area of BIA.

In the Presence of Mr. Qasim Ala'raji, Iraq's National Security Advisor, launched by the Chairman of the Border Ports Commission, Major General Dr. Omar Al Waeli, the ceremony was attended by H.E. Ms. Alina L. Romanowski, the United States Ambassador to Iraq, whose country is funding PCBT in Iraq. Longstanding supporters of the PCBT, such as Australia, represented by H.E.

Ms. Paula Ganly, Ambassador of Australia to Iraq and senior representatives of Canada, Germany and the United Nations, were also in attendance. The Director General of Iraqi Customs, Mr. Hassan Hassani and senior representatives of the Civil Aviation Authority, the Ministry of Interior, the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, and Iraqi Airways, whose respective administrations are key partners to PCBT, attended the official inauguration of the ACCU and expressed unwavering support to the programme.

Through the establishment of the ACCU, the PCBT empowers Iraq in its fight against illicit trafficking at border crossings. The ACCU will be composed of officers from various agencies operating within the cargo area of BIA that have been trained by the PCBT on risk analysis, profiling, targeting, and inspecting suspicious cargo. These officers will continue to receive ongoing training and support. Moreover, in adherence to global best practices, liaison officers from all relevant law enforcement agencies involved in cargo control at the airport can be incorporated into the ACCU at a later stage.

UNODC's Head of Iraq Office

emphasized that "we stand shoulder to shoulder with Iraq to tackle the complex challenges of organized crime through an expanding program of support including on border control". Mr. Wolfgang Aigner, UNODC PCBT Regional Coordinator for the MENA region, emphasized that while the project is technical in nature, the establishment of the ACCU and its efforts to institute transparent and secure customs and cargo control procedures sends a strong message of dedication and engagement to the international community.

UNODC extends its gratitude to Iraqi partners and the donor countries of the United States of America, Norway, Germany, and Australia, for their support in the region and congratulates all parties involved for their contribution to this vital step towards deterring organized crime within the global supply chain.



## A new era for Iraqi customs in trade facilitation, with UNCTAD technical support



**Baghdad, 04 October 2023** – The ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) was formally launched this week in the Cargo Customs office at Baghdad International Airport under the auspices of the Government of Iraq and with technical support from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), under the signed agreements entitled “Automation & Modernization of Customs” with the Ministry of Finance.

The Iraqi General Commission for Customs, under the Ministry of Finance, has announced in a statement that Customs Declaration No. 1 in air cargo was handled under the ASYCUDA automation system on 01 October, followed by 130 more. Mr. Nizar Ammary, ASYCUDA-UNCTAD Representative in Iraq, thanked H.E. the Finance Minister, Ms. Taif Sami, and the Director-General, Mr. Hassan Al Ukaily, for

their support, and commended the professionalism of staff at the Finance Ministry and the General Commission for Customs in making the launch of ASYCUDA e-government system a great success.

Mr. Ammary added: “These 100 percent paperless operations, together with full automation, simplify and digitalize procedures, allow electronic payment, and enable the Customs Commission through up-to-date international standards to support Iraq’s leap into the future of world trade.”

During the coming months, all efforts will be focused on deploying the system in all Iraqi customs offices and on installing new functionalities based on the latest technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, etc.) to improve customs control and facilitate trade.

The pilot project ASYCUDAWorld, UNCTAD’s largest Technical Assistance Programme in Trade Facilitation, was test launched in September.

## A series of discussions on the role of security sector actors in addressing the impact of climate risks, environmental degradation, and disasters kickstarts in Baghdad

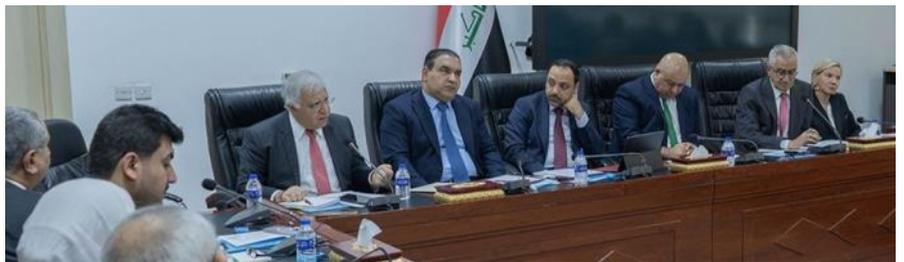
**Baghdad, 24 September 2023** - UNDP supports Iraq's Office of the National Security Advisor in kickstarting a series of discussions on the role of security sector actors in addressing the impact of climate risks, environmental degradation, and disasters.

The dialogues sharpen an understanding of roles and collaboration opportunities among security sector actors, other relevant ministries, and civil actors, and lead to concrete recommendations feeding into

security sector policy planning.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Al-Nahrain Center for Strategic Studies, and DCAF - Geneva

Centre for Security Sector Governance are supporting the discussions with additional Iraqi and international expertise.



## IOM Iraq has donated four mobile border processing units for the Iraqi border guards command

**Baghdad, 12 October 2023** - IOM Iraq has donated four mobile border processing units for the Iraqi border guards command to help improve border control and security efforts, for a safer future for all.

This project was supported by the German Foreign Ministry.



## Ninewa police station back in action thanks to support from UNDP and Italy

**Baghdad, 25 October 2023** – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Interior of Iraq today reopened the Hatra police station, aiming to enhance law enforcement efforts and safety in communities located in eastern Ninewa.

The two-story 450 square meter Hatra police station was reduced to rubble during the ISIL conflict after being hit by an airstrike. Today, it is fully rehabilitated and furnished with new rooms and office equipment, made possible through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) with support from the Government of Italy.

"A functional police station is not just a building. It is a symbol of safety, security, and trust in the community, this is one of the critical pillars needed to ensure transformative development. There cannot be development without peace and vice versa. It will play an important role in improving security and restoring stability to the lives of the 20,000 people it serves. We are proud to have supported the rehabilitation of this facility," says Auke Lootsma, UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq.

"This project aligns with our broader efforts to bolster the rule of law,



enhance security, and support local governance structures, which are integral components of Iraq's transformation towards stability. As Iraq continues its path towards sustainable development, UNDP remains committed to providing support to help the people of Iraq rebuild better and look forward to a brighter future," he adds.

Italy's Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency, Mr. Maurizio Greganti, says, "Police stations are the bedrock of security and safety in communities. By restoring the Hatra police station, we enable law enforcement officers to fulfill their critical duties effectively and bring back essential services to foster a peaceful environment in

eastern Ninewa."

The inauguration of the police station was attended by representatives of the Iraqi government, UNDP.

As of September 2023, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization has rehabilitated 57 police stations across Iraq's liberated governorates, serving 3.4 million people. More than 40 of these police stations are in Ninewa.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), has been supporting Iraq's stabilization since 2015. Their generous contribution to FFS has funded 143 critical projects to restore Iraq's education, health, water, and electrical sector.

### Mine Action

## DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq Isaczai visits UNMAS project in Tel Kaif

**Mosul, 28 August 2023** - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, visited UNMAS project in Tel Kaif, witnessing UN Iraq, International (DCA) and IHSCO's collaboration on land clearance and its impact on local communities. He praised their joint efforts and emphasized supporting local efforts in mine action. "I was impressed by the capabilities of Iraqi NGOs engaged in Demining activities close to Mosul. Half of the deminers are women who are

working hand and hand with the men with UN support to make this semi

residential and agricultural land safe for use again", noted the DSRSG/RC/HC.



## UNMAS Iraq is committed to support an Iraq free from landmines and explosive remnants of war

**Mosul, 08 September 2023** - "Can you imagine being in a prison when you are innocent? We were dying every day for years." Omar said.

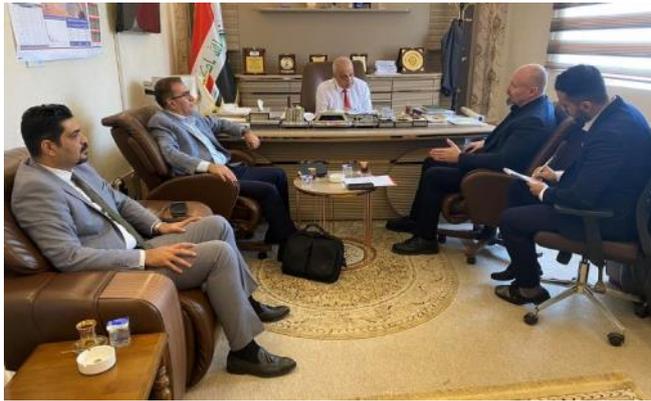
Omar is an Iraqi man who lived in fear for many years while Mosul was under the terrible rule of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Omar was forced to quit

his job as a consequence of the conflict and overall insecurity. In late 2018, through UNMAS Iraq clearance efforts, safety was eventually restored for Omar and his family. Omar could go back to work again and once again financially support his family.

Supporting the Government of Iraq and

all affected Iraqi communities is the core motivation of UNMAS. UNMAS Iraq is committed to support an Iraq free from landmines and explosive remnants of war, where the Iraqi people can enjoy safe lives under stable and dignified conditions.





**Baghdad, 10 September 2023** - Today, the Director General of DMA, **Engineer Shawkat Tayeh Masoud**, met **Pehr Lodhammar**, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, and discussed with him the various activities of mine action.



**Erbil, 13 September 2023** - **Pehr Lodhammar**, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme met with **Mr. Jabbar Mustafa**, Head of IKMAA, in Erbil to discuss joint coordination, current and future efforts and challenges of the mine action sector.

## During the period from 2016 until 2023 UNMAS Iraq delivered Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and lifesaving messages for 1,542,774 Iraqis

**Baghdad, 11 September 2023** - During the period from 2016 until 2023 UNMAS Iraq delivered Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and lifesaving messages for 1,542,774 Iraqis in areas contaminated with Explosive Ordnance across the areas liberated from ISIL and in southern Iraq. This was achieved through excellent collaboration with international and national organizations and the national mine action authorities, and an innovative approach to EORE with use of face to face messaging by dedicated teams, training of school teachers and religious leaders, the use of social media, films (even a TV series) radio, talk shows, school books, billboards, virtual reality goggles, text messages, megaphones during the Covid



pandemic, and, during the liberation of Mosul, handing out bottles with cold water labelled with life saving messages and during ramadan packages with dates with EORE messaging. In Mosul and elsewhere cash for work staff removing the debris left after the

conflict were provided with working gloves with messages printer on them reminding them of the hazards from explosive ordnance. The examples of how these messages have saved Iraqis are plentiful and we will never know exactly how many lives that were saved through these interventions.

## The Netherlands has, through UNMAS Iraq, contributed over USD 7.2 million to mine action activities in Iraq

**Baghdad, 13 September 2023** - Since the inception of the UNMAS Iraq programme in 2016, the Government of Netherlands has been a long standing supporter of mine action in Iraq. The Netherlands has, through UNMAS Iraq, contributed over USD 7.2 million to mine action activities in Iraq. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, recently met with Mr. Hans Sandee, the Dutch Ambassador to Iraq, and discussed UNMAS operations including sustainability of mine action, gender mainstreaming, and continued cooperation with the Government of Iraq mine action authorities. His

Excellency Ambassador Sandee and Lodhammar fully agreed on the importance of localized mine action responses through national Iraqi organizations.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Government of the Netherlands for the generous support towards mine action activities in Iraq and look forward to continued collaboration.



## UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme visits IHSCO who is clearing explosive ordnance placed and left behind by ISIL, north of Mosul, Iraq

**Mosul, 18 September 2023** - Today I visited IHSCO who, in close collaboration with DCA, under the UNMAS partnership model, are clearing explosive ordnance placed and left behind by ISIL, north of Mosul, Iraq.

After almost seven years in Iraq, Iraqi resilience and relentlessness always strikes me. These are features that really stands out amongst the Iraq people.

In the minefield we visited today, brave, Iraqi women and men are working side by side ridding a large swath of land from explosive ordnance under a scorching Iraqi sun and very

harsh conditions. They do this so that the land once again can be used for agricultural purposes, grazing, and so that local communities, once again, can walk the land in safety. I always leave these visits impressed and taken aback from the impressions and conversations

I've had.

Thank you to Shareteah, IHSCO, Danish Church Aid and FSD (Fondation Suisse de déminage) for the collaboration and joint efforts to localize and nationalize Iraqi mineaction!



## Chief Mine Action Program for UNMAS Iraq meets with representatives of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

**Erbil, 13 September 2023** - Pehr Lodhammar, Chief Mine Action Program for UNMAS Iraq, met with representatives of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Erbil to brief on UNMAS Iraq activities and discuss sectoral challenges and future cooperation.



## UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme meets with the newly appointed Director-General of the Directorate for Mine Action

**Baghdad, 21 September 2023** - UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar, recently met with the newly appointed Director-General of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), Mr. Shawkat Al-Anbagi, under the Ministry of Environment. Lodhammar congratulated Mr. Al-Anbagi for his new assignment and briefed on the most updated UNMAS Iraq operations and activities. Lodhammar and Mr. Al-Anbagi discussed the priorities of mine action

responses in Iraq, as well as challenges that the humanitarian sector has been facing. Mr. Al-Anbagi thanked Lodhammar for UNMAS Iraq's continued support to DMA and the Government of Iraq mine action entities. Both agreed to maintain close communication, discussing further about the priorities and challenges of mine action related issues in the country, which is indispensable for making Iraq free from the contamination of explosive ordnance

items.



## UNMAS Iraq held a Donor Briefing in Amman, Jordan

**Amman, Jordan, 24 September 2023** - UNMAS Iraq held a Donor Briefing in Amman, Jordan. Eight diplomats from seven different countries were in attendance. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, chaired the meeting and delivered a presentation on the previous and current operations of UNMAS Iraq.

Lodhammar highlighted the activities

and achievements, and discussed the various mine action challenges in the country. The meeting included an active discussion covering UNMAS Iraq's continued support to National Mine Action Authorities in Iraq, with a strong focus on sustainable national mine action capacity, inclusive of national authorities and national operators.

UNMAS would like to thank the donor

community for actively having participating in the meeting and for their continued support of the Iraqi mine action sector.



## Belgium has, through UNMAS Iraq, contributed over EUR 5.5 million to mine action activities in Iraq

**Baghdad, 02 October 2023** - The Government of Belgium has been a long-standing reliable supporter of the UNMAS programme in Iraq. Belgium has, through UNMAS Iraq, contributed over EUR 5.5 million to mine action activities in Iraq.

Following the UNMAS Iraq donor briefing session in Amman on 24 September, Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, met with His Excellency Serge Dickschen, the Ambassador of the

Kingdom of Belgium to Jordan, to brief on recent UNMAS operations and discuss the needs and challenges faced by the mine action sector in Iraq.

Belgium's annual-based and unearmarked contributions allows UNMAS Iraq to develop effective and well-planned clearance operations. Lodhammar would like to thank the Government of Belgium for the generous support towards mine action activities in Iraq and look forward to continued collaboration.



## The Government of Sweden extends its support to explosive hazards management activities in Iraq



**Baghdad, 02 October 2023** - The Government of Sweden contributed an additional 10 million Swedish Krona (SEK) (USD 898,133.84) to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in support of the humanitarian mine action sector endeavors to reduce the risks of explosive ordnance contamination and protect the lives of vulnerable communities in Iraq.

Since UNMAS programme inception in 2015, the Government of Sweden, through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), has contributed SEK 135 million (over USD 14 million) to address the needs of explosive ordnance affected populations and support humanitarian and stabilization efforts in Iraq.

Iraq is one of the most explosive

ordnance contaminated countries in the world. The national mine action authorities estimate that there is more than 2.942 million square kilometers of explosive ordnance contamination including conventional landmines and victim operated improvised explosive devices, cluster munitions and other types of explosive remnants of war in Iraq. Explosive ordnance threatens public safety, hinders the safe return of displaced communities and prevents access to infrastructure and livelihood activities.

With this additional funding, UNMAS will survey and clear explosive hazards left from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) war, which includes improvised explosive devices scattered on agricultural land and in residential communities and will deliver explosive ordnance risk education to communities in Ninewa governorate. Clearance of explosive contamination will enable the safe and dignified return of Internally Displaced Persons and enable reconstruction, and rehabilitation projects. UNMAS will also be able to continue to provide support for national mine action NGOs to enable them to autonomously lead

and manage the humanitarian mine action response.

"UNMAS work in Iraq has been crucial for re-integration, social security and livelihood support and is an integrated part of sustainable development after years of contamination of explosives. The support is also aiming to strengthen the national capacity to enable the work in agriculture, water and safe returns to high explosive risk areas," says Swedish Ambassador to Iraq, Her Excellency Ms. Jessica Svärdström.

"UNMAS Iraq greatly appreciates the additional contribution from the Government of Sweden. This timely contribution will be used to continue implementing life-saving activities through the removal of explosive weapons and this will facilitate the safe use of the land and enable the safe and dignified return of displaced populations. The fact that we will be able to continue strengthening the national mine action capacity is also critical to ensure a sustained national and localised mine action response in Iraq," stated Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme.

## Throughout the summer of 2023, more than 232,079 m<sup>2</sup> of land was cleared in Ninewa

**Ninewa, 04 October 2023** - In mine action, weather conditions are one of the main factors affecting land release operations. Extreme heat or cold can exhaust deminers and affect technology and can have an impact on the deminers ability to work and safety during operations. Iraq is one of the world's countries the most vulnerable to climate change, faced with scorching

heat waves, sand and dust storms, and other extreme natural events.

With the passing of summer 2023, UNMAS Iraq appreciates the efforts and dedication of the teams of its partners in Tel Kaif and Makhmour districts in Ninewa governorate. To complete the tasks and clear explosive threats, the teams have adapted to the site conditions and had to start working

in the early mornings to avoid the peak temperature hours.

Throughout the Summer, more than 232,079 m<sup>2</sup> of land was cleared in Ninewa including agricultural and housing areas to save lives, recover from war damages and resume normal life.



## The second meeting of the Local Mine Action Support Group (LMASG) was held in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 03 October 2023** -

Following the first meeting of the Local Mine Action Support Group (LMASG) in May, the second LMASG meeting was held in Baghdad in September 2023. The meeting was attended by Mr. Shawkat Al-Anbagi, Director-General of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), and 15 diplomats from 13 countries, including Her Excellency, Ms. Anu Saarela, the Finnish Ambassador to Iraq.

The LMASG format is a new engagement mechanism established by UNMAS Iraq to ensure sustainable mine action response in the country. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, chaired the meeting and delivered a presentation on UNMAS Iraq previous and current operations and activities, main



achievements, as well as various mine action challenges.

DMA delivered a presentation on contamination levels, international mine action treaties that Iraq has committed to, and expectations on UNMAS and the diplomatic community in Iraq. The presentations lead to

active discussions and a Q&A sessions among the participants. It was agreed to organize the next and third LMASG later this year.

UNMAS would like to thank the donor community for having actively participated and the DMA for its participation.

## UNMAS Iraq supports children's safe return to schools



**Baghdad, 04 October 2023** - UNMAS Iraq supports children's safe return to schools through provision of explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) sessions and materials through its

implementing partners, Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD) working in partnership with Shareteah Humanitarian Organization (SHO) in Makhmur town, Ninewa. The EORE programmes encourage children and their families to adopt safe behaviors to mitigate the risks from explosive ordnance.

Sometimes, in the past and due to cultural restrictions, women and girls could not receive the EORE messages in the towns and villages. Nowadays, having teams with women and men

deminers is helping the EORE messages reach all community target groups, including mothers. Within two and a half years, women's engagement in humanitarian mine action operations has increased by 30.3 percent.

UNMAS Iraq gender mainstreaming efforts have been supported by the Government of Canada. UNMAS Iraq would like to thank Canada for contributing to this remarkable achievement and its engagement in the mine action as a whole in Iraq.

## UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, visits the operations site in Qara Kharab village

**Mosul, 05 October 2023** - Qara Kharab village, Tel Kaif, located approximately 16 km northwest of the Mosul city, is one of the villages that were liberated from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The majority of residents work in agriculture and with livestock. This peaceful village was occupied by ISIL in



2014 and eventually liberated in 2017, but the villagers and returnees soon found that improvised explosive ordnance (IEDs) had been placed extensively in the surroundings of the village. UNMAS Iraq, with support from multi-donor contributions, has operated in Tel Kaif since 2018 removing thousands of IEDs.

Recently, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar, visited the operations site in Qara Kharab village to monitor the situations and interact with the field operators. The operation is carried out by UNMAS Iraq partner organization, DanChurchAid (DCA) who has been working with their Iraqi national partner NGO, Health and Social Care Organization in Iraq (IHSCO). The implementation model where international NGOs are working

together with local NGOs to support capacity building, has been labeled the 'Partnership model' and was introduced by UNMAS Iraq in 2021.

Lodhammar met with the local teams, including women deminers, and discussed achievements and challenges on the ground. Lodhammar was very impressed by their motivation, commitment and professionalism of Iraqi operators, and is now fully confident in going forward with the next stage of the partnership model, the 'Direct grant model', where the national organizations will autonomously operate without support from international NGO.

Lodhammar would like to thank all donor countries for their generous and continued contributions that have supported vulnerable Iraqi people through the UNMAS Iraq programme..

## In an interview with Al Jazeera, UNMAS raises some of the challenges faced by the Iraqi mine action sector

**Baghdad, 05 October 2023** - UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar, was interviewed by Al Jazeera Arabic news channel. During the interview, Lodhammar raised some of the challenges faced by the Iraqi mine action sector, with a focus on sustained financing and the

need for governmental funding to meet the deadlines of the various conventions Iraq has subscribed to. “Significant, sustained multiyear Iraqi government funding is crucial to ensure an Iraq free from explosive remnants of war by 2028,” stated Lodhammar.



## UNMAS and MoI critical efforts enhance public safety and allow for internally displaced families to return safely and dignified to their homes

**Baghdad, 06 October 2023** - For the last seven years, UNMAS Iraq has worked closely with the Government of Iraq Ministry of Interior (MoI) to train, mentor, and prepare explosive ordnance disposal and improvised explosive device disposal (EOD/IEDD) operators for the challenges faced in clearing the explosive ordnance left by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The skills developed during this intensive process, at the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Explosive

Control Directorate are used daily by the national MoI operators to locate and destroy explosive devices in roadways, houses, and public areas. UNMAS Iraq has delivered a total of 105 training courses covering various methods and techniques for more than 1,800 men and women from the MoI. These critical efforts enhance public safety and allow for internally displaced families to return safely and dignified to their homes.



## UNMAS Iraq New Zealand supports UNMAS efforts to nationalize the mine action sector in Iraq



**Baghdad, 7 October 2023** - The presence of explosive ordnance items in

areas retaken from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to endanger the lives of women, men, boys, and girls and hinder the return of displaced communities.

UNMAS Iraq ensures the optimum and sustainable support to the Government of Iraq, mainly through the focus of its assistance to sustainable national capacity inclusive of national authorities and national operators.

The Government of New Zealand, generously providing multi-year contributions covering the three years

from 2023 to 2025, is an essential contributor to the UNMAS Iraq programme. Multi-year and earmarked contributions, such as the New Zealand contribution, enable UNMAS Iraq to develop well-designed and cost-effective activities. New Zealand is especially supportive of UNMAS efforts to nationalize the mine action sector in the country.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Government of New Zealand for supporting a consistent and sustained mine action response in Iraq.

## EORE messages reach all community target groups, including mothers

**Baghdad, 07 October 2023** - UNMAS Iraq supports children’s safe return to schools through provision of explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) sessions and materials through its implementing partners, Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD) working in partnership with Shareteah Humanitarian Organization (SHO) in Makhmur town, Ninewa. The EORE programmes encourage children and their families to adopt safe behaviors to mitigate the risks from explosive

ordnance.

Sometimes, in the past and due to cultural restrictions, women and girls could not receive the EORE messages in the towns and villages. Nowadays, having teams with women and men deminers is helping the EORE messages reach all community target groups, including mothers. Within two and a half years, women's engagement in humanitarian mine action operations has increased by 30.3 percent.

UNMAS Iraq gender mainstreaming efforts have been supported by the Government of Canada. UNMAS Iraq would like to thank Canada for contributing to this remarkable achievement and its engagement in the mine action as a whole in Iraq.



## WHO conducts workshops in Baghdad and Erbil on using mass gathering risk assessment tools



**Baghdad, 25 August 2023** - To ensure robust health measures for Arbaeen

2023 in Iraq, the World Health Organization (WHO), in partnership with Federal and Kurdistan Ministries of Health, conducted workshops in Baghdad and Erbil on using mass gathering risk assessment tools, targeting 77 health professionals involved in the mass gathering planning and response.

Dr. Wael Hatahit, Acting World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Iraq: "Pleased to visit one of the Arbaeen health service points in Baghdad, where I witnessed firsthand

the concerted efforts of the Iraq Red Crescent Society (IRCS) dedicated community volunteers to spread public health messages and ensure the safety of visitors".

In addition, to limit the spread of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) during the upcoming Arbaeen walk, the World Health Organization (WHO) has provided more than 11,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to groups involved in livestock slaughtering and food handling, including butchers and event caterers.

## Continuity in instability: IOM health care in Amiriyat Al-Fallujah (AAF) Camp

**Baghdad, 28 August 2023** - A lot has changed for Asmaa and her family. Life in displacement can be unstable, unpredictable and taxing.

"We were displaced from Rawa district, Anbar Governorate, in 2014 – my husband, children and I. Our journey was difficult and dangerous. We paid a lot of money to get to a safe place," she says. In 2016, the family eventually made it to Amiriyat al-Fallujah (AAF) camp, where they settled for a difficult couple of years.

"We lived on the aid that came from organizations working in the camp – we got health care through IOM Iraq's clinic." Operating in AAF from 2016 until the camp's closure, the IOM clinic provided primary health care services, including access to vaccinations, family planning and medical consultations.

Not long after their arrival at AAF, Asmaa's husband passed away, leaving her pregnant and alone, taking care of their five other children. In all the uncertainty they faced, IOM health support has been one of the few constants for Asmaa and her family.

"At the time, I was in the early stages of my pregnancy with my daughter, Najla, who is now 6 years old. I received health care, including follow ups on my health status, medicines and natural birth counseling all the way until Najla came into this world of ours."

When Najla was born with congenital heart disease, she was able to get care via IOM's AAF health clinic.

"The doctors in the clinic have followed up regularly on my daughter's health condition and provided her treatment where necessary, up until this very moment," Asmaa smiles, Najla playing beside her.



Living in displacement means living in flux, including when it comes to health care. Continuity of care is important for health and well-being, and IOM works to maintain that continuity from the moment a patient comes under our care.

"When we decided to return, we got a pre-return medical examination – a comprehensive examination that is expensive to do in private clinics. I also received a paper with all our important medical information to help us during visits to clinics and hospitals in the area we come from and have now returned to," Asmaa explains.

IOM Iraq's fit-to-travel health assessments– medical examinations undergone by IDPs registered for voluntary return before they leave the camp – aims to ensure that returnees will not face health issues during their return journey. Returnees are also provided with a map of health institutions in their areas of origin that they can access for care.

"We insist that every individual returning to their area undergo a comprehensive medical examination and further analyses for those who

need it. For those with acute diseases, we prescribe and provide a week's worth of medications and treatment, and for those with chronic diseases we provide two months' worth of medication and treatment. They also have recommendations written in the medical examination form about their medical history. Altogether, this is sufficient to last them until they return to the nearest health centre in their area of origin and continue to receive treatment," Dr. Amr al-Fayadh, head of IOM Iraq's clinic at AAF camp.

Since clearing their fit-to-travel health assessment and returning home to Rawa district, Asmaa and her family connected to local health care providers, helping them to rebuild their lives in good health.

"We are so happy to be back," says Asmaa.

This support was made possible by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the Government of Germany.

By Rafal Abdulateef, Senior Public Information Assistant, IOM

## WHO on X—Trachoma eliminated as a public health problem in Iraq

**Baghdad, 28 August 2023** - Dr. Wael Hatahit, Acting Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq: "Pleased to join the Minister of Health, Dr Salih Al-Hasnawi, in marking the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in Iraq. It was a pleasure to see the Iraqi Ministry of Health honouring eye healthcare professionals for their role in achieving this historic public health milestone".

## IOM Iraq is coordinating with the Ministry of Health to support the national CCHF response

**Baghdad 06 September 2023** - Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) cases are increasing in Iraq. CCHF is a serious and deadly disease, and taking the right precautions minimizes your risk. IOM Iraq is coordinating with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to support

the national CCHF response, including through risk communication and awareness raising among communities across different governorates, as well as through MoH staff trainings, and equipment and supplies donations so that people can protect themselves and their families from the virus.



## Enhancing Iraq's emergency care system through Basic Emergency Care training

**Erbil, 10 September 2023** - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), today concluded the Basic Emergency Care training organized to equip frontline healthcare providers with the essential skills required to manage acute illnesses and injuries in resource-limited settings. The training focused on improving the outcomes of emergency conditions by providing over 30 participants with the knowledge and skills needed to implement a systematic approach to initial assessments and managing time-sensitive conditions, ultimately saving lives. "As WHO and national health authorities in Iraq continue collaborating in multiple health areas, we remain committed to strengthening emergency care systems and building capacity within the healthcare workforce," said Dr. Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq. "Through initiatives like this training, we aim to improve the quality of emergency care, reduce mortality and morbidity, and ultimately contribute to the well-being of communities across Iraq," he added.



The five-day training workshop comprised theoretical sessions, practical skill lab sessions, group discussions, and pre-post training tests involving 35 emergency healthcare providers from Erbil, Ninawa, Suleimaniya, and Duhok governorates. The outcome is 35 certified provisional and master trainers capable of cascading the Basic Emergency Care Courses for healthcare providers working in emergency care wards nationwide. Emerging from its consideration of the role emergency capacity building plays in ensuring accessible life-saving services to

all Iraqis and in implementing Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Iraq, WHO, in collaboration with the International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC), developed this course to be applicable to all local healthcare providers, including students, trainees, nurses, physicians, and pre-hospital or inpatient care providers. The World Health Organization would like to thank the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) for their invaluable support in making this training possible.

## Workshop in Baghdad focuses on formulating the national nutrition strategy

**Baghdad, 17 September 2023** - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Iraq Ministry of Health and other related stakeholders, recently conducted a 3-day workshop in Baghdad focused on formulating the national nutrition strategy. The strategy aims to strengthen action on nutrition to achieve food security, end all forms of malnutrition and improve nutrition throughout the life course by 2030.



## DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq Isaczai tours Al-Mansour Primary Health Centre/Centre of Excellence in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 18 September 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, today toured Al-Mansour Primary Health Centre/Centre of Excellence in Baghdad, supported by UNFPA Iraq, funded by the Government of the United Kingdom. "Insightful discussions with service providers highlighted its pivotal role in women's



## UNFPA aims to make the Public Law No.89 of 1981 a powerful tool for promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and improving the quality of reproductive health services in Kurdistan

**Erbil, 20 September 2023** - The Kurdistan Regional Government is taking a significant step towards progress by amending the Public Health Law No. 89 of 1981. The new draft law is more than just a legal update; it's an opportunity to advance multiple services within reproductive health services.

This amended law will address maternity care, family planning, and education. UNFPA with the support of Italian Agency for Development

Cooperation in Jordan - AICS AMMAN, aim to make this law a powerful tool for promoting gender equality, women's

empowerment, and improving the quality of reproductive health services in Kurdistan.



## WHO in Iraq and the Iraq Ministry of Health conclude the second round of the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005

**Baghdad, 21 September 2023** - Today, the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq and the Iraq Ministry of Health concluded in Baghdad the

second round of the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005, bringing together over 110 participants

from different sectors to evaluate the Iraq's capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to public health risks.

## WHO medical supplies arrive at Mosul to aid national health response to Al-Hamdaniya tragedy

**Baghdad, 28 September 2023** - WHO in Iraq expresses profound sorrow over the loss of numerous innocent lives in Al-Hamdaniya District, Nineveh Governorate, Iraq. The devastating incident unfolded on the evening of Tuesday 26 September 2023 at a local banquet hall, resulting in 93 deaths and more than 100 people injured.

In response to this tragic crisis, WHO has taken immediate action to support efforts by Iraq's Ministry of Health to provide critical medical assistance to the injured. Urgent medical supplies, including comprehensive hospital supply kits, have been allocated to Al-

Hamdaniya General Hospital, Al-Jamhoury Hospital and the Mosul Specialized Centre for Burns and Constructive Surgery to ensure that sufficient essential resources are available.

Furthermore, WHO has collaborated with national efforts to swiftly mobilize additional first-line response resources for the transportation and treatment of the injured in Mosul and Erbil hospitals. This collaborative effort aimed to assist local health authorities in delivering vital medical care with the utmost urgency.

Dr Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative and Head of Mission in

Iraq, extended the Organization's heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of all those affected by the tragic incident in Al-Hamdaniya. "WHO in Iraq commends the Ministry of Health's tireless efforts and stands ready to provide the necessary assistance to save lives and alleviate the suffering of the injured," he said.

WHO's response to this tragic event has been marked by swift technical and logistical coordination with national health authorities to speed up the recovery of the affected community in Al-Hamdaniya during this difficult period.

## UNFPA with funding from the British Embassy Iraq provides interactive training on adolescent’s health

**Kirkuk, 07 October 2023** - During a recent training in Kirkuk, 20 dedicated healthcare providers learned about different vital topics related to adolescent’s health.

- Understanding adolescents' characteristics & needs.
- Providing care for their health challenges.

□ Strengthening healthcare providers' capacity.

UNFPA with funding from the British Embassy Iraq, provides interactive training to equip and prepare health providers to address the diverse needs of adolescents and provide them with the support and care they require.



## WHO and UNHCR train refugee volunteers to tackle infectious diseases in Iraq

**Erbil, 8 October 2023** – In an effort to combat the spread of communicable diseases across Iraq, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) conducted a training session for 40 refugee volunteers who play a pivotal role in sharing critical information within communities of refugees and internally displaced people in Erbil.

The training, done in collaboration with the Kurdistan Regional Government and its Ministry of Health, equipped the refugees with in-depth knowledge about common infectious diseases such as cholera and haemorrhagic fever. The volunteers can now better inform and empower their communities on how to prevent, identify and control these diseases, ultimately contributing to public health and safety across Iraq.

Dr Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq, emphasized the importance of community involvement in this initiative. “The success of this training session demonstrates the commitment and dedication of our community volunteers,” he said. “By giving them the right information and resources, we not only protect individuals but also strengthen the collective resilience of these communities against communicable diseases.”



The training session is a timely response to the ongoing health challenges faced by displaced populations in Iraq and the Kurdistan region of Iraq, especially those living in camps with poor water and sanitation conditions and limited access to health care.

“Empowering refugees alongside local communities to be the first line of defence in keeping their respective communities safe from communicable diseases is paramount to keep everyone safe,” said Mr Jean-Nicolas Beuze, UNHCR Representative in Iraq.

The joint WHO–UNHCR training taught volunteers about disease identification and prevention strategies to recognize the signs and symptoms of

common infectious diseases and offer information on hygiene practices, vaccination campaigns and health-promoting behaviours.

WHO and UNHCR believe that by acquiring these new resources, the community outreach volunteers are empowered to serve as a critical bridge between health care providers and their patients. This disease awareness and prevention approach is essential in ensuring the well-being of displaced and other vulnerable communities.

The joint training session is a testament to both agencies’ commitment to safeguarding the health and well-being of displaced populations in Iraq and the Kurdistan region, to ensure that no one is left behind.

## WHO Iraq enhances healthcare for IDPs, refugees and for host community in Duhok

**Duhok, 12 October 2023** - With a generous contribution from USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and The Republic of Germany, a vital shipment of medical supplies arrived at Duhok. This is part of our ongoing efforts by WHO Iraq to enhance healthcare for IDPs, refugees and for host community in Duhok.



## Doctors in the spotlight: Saving lives and reviving Iraq's health system

*Iraqi doctors share their experiences in rebuilding a devastated health sector and their vision for their country.*

**Baghdad, 18 October 2023** - In the aftermath of the ISIL conflict, Iraq's health sector continues to face immense challenges, but doctors, nurses, and health workers are the beacons of hope, a group of unsung heroes who work tirelessly, providing essential medical services to the people of Iraq.

We spoke to some of the doctors working to rebuild Iraq's healthcare system. These vignettes will give you a deeper understanding as they share their stories during the siege and after the liberation from ISIL.

### Dr. Muhannad's story

Dr. Muhannad Shaker Al Fahdawi started as a young resident doctor at Ramadi Teaching Hospital for Women and Children. In 2005, he joined the hospital, eager to make a difference in the lives of Anbar's children. After more than three years in the hospital, he relocated to Baghdad to pursue further studies in pediatric surgery at the Medical City. Focus amidst the distress

During the tumultuous period of ISIL occupation, Dr. Muhannad, kept his head down and studied diligently, with the end goal of preparing himself to better serve his community. In 2016, he returned to Ramadi as a full-fledged pediatric surgeon, but the hospital he served was not spared by ISIL.

"The hospital halls and doctors' houses were severely damaged and burnt. The walls were peppered with bullets. Medical equipment, tools, and supplies were stolen. The hospital was in dire need of rehabilitation, staff, and equipment," Dr. Muhannad shares.

The state of the buildings and infrastructure were a daily reminder of the danger and trauma these medical professionals had gone through. Despite the massive damage and lack of resources, Ramadi Hospital staff, including Dr. Muhannad, reopened the facility in 2016 to provide vital services to families returning to Anbar. Still, the hospital required extensive rehabilitation.

"It was not easy to resume work after Iraq's liberation. At that time,



hospitals provided very limited services, but we did everything we could to treat and serve our people."

A new hope emerges.

Today, Ramadi Teaching Hospital for Women and Children has upgraded operating theatres, labor wards, 260-bed patient wards, laboratories, teaching halls, and staff accommodation. It also has modern medical equipment for maternal and natal care, testing, complex surgeries, and screening.

"The hospital had a big transformation, thanks to UNDP's support. With operating rooms and equipment for maternal and pediatric surgeries, we are able to perform life-saving surgeries and provide a wide range of services for women and children," Dr. Muhannad says.

### Dr. Omar's story

Like Dr. Muhannad, Dr. Omar Abdelkader has been a part of the medical community in Ramadi for over a decade. Dr. Omar began his career at Ramadi Teaching Hospital for Women and Children in 2010, shortly after earning his medical degree from its Faculty of Medicine. During ISIL, Dr. Omar fled to Baghdad. Seeing the overwhelming need for healthcare services, he returned to Ramadi Hospital right after liberation. "The hospital was out of operation for a long time. When we came back, 80 to 90 percent of the hospital was destroyed."

Despite the setbacks, Dr. Omar and his colleagues pressed on, determined to slowly bring the hospital back to serve those who need treatment most. Now a pediatric surgeon with a focus on treating congenital deformities and an assistant professor at the UNDP-rehabilitated Ramadi Teaching Hospital, Dr. Omar plays a

crucial role in bringing quality healthcare services to Anbari children.

As one of the few hospitals specializing in maternal and natal care in Iraq, Ramadi Hospital treats hundreds of patients every month, with the Department of Pediatric Surgery alone receiving 10-15 consultations daily.

"Pediatric surgery is relatively new in Iraq. Because of its complexity, pediatric surgery requires a lot of precision, innovation, and collaboration. Some operations require multiple surgeons and last for up to seven hours," Dr. Omar says.

Need for more Iraqi pediatric surgeons.

Ramadi Hospital has seen an incredible improvement. But, Dr. Muhannad and Dr. Omar say that the hospital and the entire country are in need of more specialists who possess skills to handle children and have the proper training to care for young patients.

"With more doctors trained in pediatric surgery, our department can provide holistic care and reduce our reliance on other specialities. Specialized care for children is crucial for their successful treatment and recovery," Dr. Omar adds.

### Dr. Mustafa's story

A specialist in ear, nose, throat, head, and neck surgery, Dr. Mustafa AbdulKareem Hussain embodies a relentless passion for his profession. Working at Fallujah Teaching Hospital for over three years, he has been contributing his expertise to transforming the hospital into a center of excellence for health and medical education.

Heavily bombed and damaged during the ISIL conflict, Fallujah Teaching

## Doctors in the spotlight ... (continued)



Hospital stands today as one of the district's largest and most well-equipped hospitals after being rehabilitated by UNDP. At least 20 major surgeries are performed at this hospital every month.

"My goal is to help transform Fallujah Hospital into a renowned teaching centre that attracts top-tier talent and pioneers innovative research and advancements in medical care. By doing this, we will elevate the standard of care and ensure better health services for the people of Fallujah," Dr. Mustafa says.

Dr. Ammar's story

With 25 years of experience in the field of cardiac surgery, Dr. Ammar Abdel Salam Hamed has witnessed the triumphs and trials of Iraq's healthcare system. A man with a mission, Dr. Ammar remains committed to providing the best medical care possible to the people of Mosul.

Dr. Ammar has been overseeing Al Salam Hospital's Department of Cardiac Surgery since its establishment in 2020. Although relatively new, the facility has become a vital hub for cardiac care in the region.

"The cardiac centre provides much-needed care to those with heart conditions in a city where such

facilities are scarce. There is no other hospital in the health directorate that is equipped to handle the complex procedures we do. This centre fills that void and gives hope to those in need," Dr. Ammar says.

Dr. Ammar and his team perform an average of 20-22 surgeries per month. With more families returning home and the prevalence of heart disease increasing, there is a growing demand for these cardiac services. To meet this growing need, Dr. Ammar envisions the establishment of more cardiac centres like Al Salam's, ensuring that every Iraqi has access to this specialized service.

With two inpatient wards with eight beds each, two fully equipped operation theaters, a recovery room, and an intensive care unit built through UNDP's support, Al Salam's cardiac centre is able to perform complex open and close heart surgeries and provide treatment for people with heart diseases. Photo: UNDP Iraq

A shared vision for Iraq

Driven by their passion for medicine and desire to serve the people of Iraq, Dr. Muhannad, Dr. Omar, Dr. Mustafa, and Dr. Ammar serve as leaders in Iraq's healthcare system. With aspirations that go beyond the walls of the hospitals they work at,

all four of them have the power to reshape Iraq's health sector.

Dr. Muhannad, Dr. Omar, Dr. Mustafa, and Dr. Ammar believe that for the Iraqi health sector to thrive, more investments have to be made in modernising health facilities, constructing new ones in underserved areas, training healthcare professionals, strengthening primary healthcare, and fostering partnerships among government-run and private health institutions.

"Iraq should invest in developing a strong and robust health sector to ensure that every Iraqi has access to quality, affordable healthcare. When people are healthy, they are able to work, learn, and participate in rebuilding our nation more effectively," Dr. Omar says.

About

Since 2015, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization has completed more than 500 health-related projects. These include the rehabilitation of 19 hospitals and 154 primary health care centres, benefitting over 5.63 million people.

Fallujah Teaching Hospital, which was rehabilitated through support from the Government of Netherlands and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided through KFW Development Bank, serves more than 750,000 people.

The rehabilitation of Ramadi Teaching Hospital for Women and Children was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided through KFW Development Bank. It serves more than 400,000 people.

The Cardiac Centre at Al Salam Hospital was established with generous support from the European Union, Netherlands, and Norway. It serves over 30,000 people in Ninewa.

## WHO on X

**Baghdad, 24 October 2023** - On World Polio Day, we celebrate Iraq's polio-free status since 2014, thanks to the Ministry of Health, WHO, and partners.

But the fight is not over. We must vaccinate every child, strengthening surveillance, and prevent any polio resurgence. Let's unite to protect our children and #EndPolio for good.



**Erbil, 25 October 2023** - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq delivered more than 6 tonnes of medical supplies to the Kurdistan Region Government Ministry of Health. This new shipment will support the health needs of refugees, IDPs and host communities in the region. thanks to the generous contraption of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid.



## Eyes Like A Shutter, Mind Like A Lens



**Baghdad, 09 October 2023** - A 50-year-old mother bakes traditional “klecha” Iraqi sweets for her family inside their tent. Coming together as a family to bake and share sweets provides comfort and strengthens family bonds. Photograph was taken by her daughter, a 20-year-old camp resident and mother of two kids in HSU3, Ninewa, Iraq.

On World Mental Health Day, catch a glimpse of the hopes and dreams through the eyes of internally displaced persons in Iraq.

A parental act of service. The safe space of a friend’s embrace. The sense of respite from scribbling one’s thoughts into a journal. The strategies and symbols of comfort around maintaining mental health are universal, even in the challenging setting of a camp for internally displaced persons.

When residents of Iraq’s Hassan Sham

U3 (HSU3) camp were asked to capture what mental health means to them in a photography workshop delivered by IOM Iraq, the results showed exactly this: Mental health is universal, as is the right to enjoy it.

Equipped with digital cameras, participants took snapshots of their daily life. Photos of meaningful scenes — an important person, a happy moment, a safe space, a positive message, a precious object — highlight how mental wellbeing is a key element in their lives, despite and because of the harsh living conditions of protracted displacement.

This ignites hope for the future and the potential beyond the boundaries of the camp. Photograph was taken by 29-year-old photography workshop participant and community focal point in HSU3, Ninewa, Iraq.

“Mental health is a universal human right” — this year’s theme for World

Mental Health Day is perfectly encapsulated in the efforts of IOM Iraq’s Mental Health and Psychosocial Support team. The team has supported 2,465 camp residents in HSU3 with counseling and peer support groups to strengthen social support networks and upskill residents through livelihoods trainings to promote mental wellbeing since Oct 2022. This in turn promotes their resilience upon their return home, which is integral to supporting durable solutions.

Prior to the photography workshop, participants took part in a computer skills workshop where they learned the basics of photo editing. This sparked their interest in learning more about photography, which led to the development and design of the photography workshops. Both workshops were led by a camp resident and a leader within the community; an IOM social worker facilitated discussions on mental health topics chosen by the participants.

The team has delivered two photography workshops thus far and hopes to replicate this approach in other parts of Iraq, particularly in areas of return, and to create photo albums and exhibitions to showcase the talent of local communities.

By Megan Giovannetti, IOM

## Finding joy and peace through art

**Duhok, 10 October 2023** - In the camps of Khanke and Sharya, in northern Iraq, a remarkable transformation has begun among a group of internally displaced Yezidi women and girls. These young individuals, whose lives have been disrupted by conflict and displacement over seven years ago, have found solace and hope in the world of art through an IOM course on art therapy. Their drawings, paintings and stories are a testament to the power of creativity and resilience.

“Initially, drawing was just my hobby,” shares 16-year-old Nadia\* from Sharya camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), “but that was before I learned about the art therapy course”. Nadia, with dreams of capturing the beauty of seascapes, is one of the first participants of IOM’s pilot course on art therapy for vulnerable populations in the IDP camps of northern Iraq. She explored the world of art through shadows, light, facial features, and the harmonious blending of colors. This newfound understanding helped her

convey the depths of her emotions through art.

“Gradually, my drawing style developed, and I learned the correct method and steps,” she shares after the two-week course. “I didn’t know how to draw a face at all, where to start, and where to end”. Many others in the course have similar stories and yearn for more time to nurture their artistic talents. One of them is Nadia’s friend, Nisreen\*.

“As I learned how to blend colors, I also learned about expressing my emotions through art,” shares Nisreen, inspired by Frida Kahlo’s emotional artistry, and aspires to follow in her footsteps. She is now on a journey of self-discovery through her art, one that she hopes to share with the world someday as an artist and an art teacher.

Behind these stories and new interest in art, is a concerted effort by IOM Iraq to provide positive coping mechanisms and healthy outlets for emotional wellbeing in complex and protracted displacement settings. Interspersed with color theory, shapes, lines and



forms; the course encourages participants to express their emotions through paintings and drawings, while providing a safe space for discussions and learning.

Some participants found the activity a welcome distraction; while others have found a new skill to explore and communicate their feelings. For Sama\*, 23, the course gave her a new perspective, connecting art to mathematics via Cubism.

“I am now teaching my younger brothers how to draw eyes through geometric shapes and angles,” Nisreen shares. “Together, we played with light and shadow on still life objects. It was a fun bonding experience.”

IOM Iraq provides protection services such as specialized case management,

## Finding joy and peace through art *(continued)*

awareness-raising sessions and recreational activities within the safe spaces in both camps in Duhok. In 2023, IOM has provided over 450 protection services, including recreational activities to 118 individuals. The provision of recreational activities, such as the

course on art therapy plays a role in reducing stress, boosting self-esteem, and encouraging emotional expression. They also create safe spaces for individuals to connect and build networks within their community, and act as non-stigmatized and safe access points to other protection services.

These activities were supported with the contribution of USAID - Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance under the 'Integrated humanitarian multi-sector assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Iraq' project.

By Daniah Alsadoon, IOM

## WHO on X

Baghdad, 10 October 2023 – World Mental Health Day is an opportunity to spread awareness about the importance of mental health and emphasize the needs and rights of those suffering from mental illness.

Mental Health is a state of balance and happiness that enables us to adapt to difficult situations, be creative at work, and interact with community.

## Environment

### The dialogue workshop to discuss integration of environmental management into legal, planning, and monitoring processes in Iraq starts in Beirut

**Beirut, Lebanon, 11 September 2023** - In Beirut, the dialogue workshop to discuss integration of environmental management into legal, planning, and monitoring processes in Iraq, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) West Asia office and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), kicks off with the participation of Iraqi MPs and representatives from the Ministry of Environment.



### UNAMI third hackathon in Mosul yields ten youth initiatives on climate change action

**Mosul, 16 September 2023** - Iraqi youth supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized the Third Climate Change Action Hackathon in Ninewa - Mosul University from 14 – 16 September, gathering more than 30 young women and men from nine provinces of Iraq (Maysan, Thi Qar, Najaf, Baghdad, Mosul, Anbar, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah, and Dohuk). Out of 80 proposals, 10 initiatives put forward by young individuals were chosen to participate in a two-day process of brainstorming and project development, with guidance from specialized experts.

In his opening remarks, the Director of the Office of Political Affairs and Analysis, Manoj Mathew, reiterated UNAMI's commitment to support Iraqi youth to become drivers of positive social change, to take initiatives within their communities including on climate change, noting that the Hackathon is part of a broader effort to strengthen youth political engagement and participation.



During the workshop, ten youth groups presented their initiatives on how they aim to address climate change and reduce its side effects in Iraq, to a panel of experts consisting of representatives from Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ninewa Agriculture Directorate, Ninewa Water Resources Directorate. These initiatives on climate change covered several areas

such water treatment, waste recycling, environmental protection, recycling of carbon dioxide, eco-friendly cooling system, hydroponics, and cultivation. The panel of experts provided the youth with practical recommendations and advice to support the implementation of these initiatives.

Addressing the closing session (online),

## UNAMI third hackathon in Mosul yields ten youth initiatives on climate change action *(continued)*

the Prime Minister's Adviser for Youth and Sports, Dr Shahba Al-Azawi commended youth role and initiatives encouraging them to continue down this path and expressed readiness to look further into how to support the different initiatives.

To ensure sustainability, participants from last year's Hackathon 2022 have

been enrolled in trainings to design and implement the 2023 pre-hackathon activities and they were also invited to engage in this year's Hackathon as mentors to provide support and facilitation for the new participants of Hackathon 2023. After the Hackathon, UNAMI will continue to provide support to the youth participants through

engaging them with other UN agencies/programs, sharing their database with the Prime Minister office and other relevant government institutions for possible future collaborations and through establishing communication channels between the youth and the Iraqi leadership.

## UNICEF has implemented a 3-day training program for young individuals centered on clean energy

**Baghdad, 17 September 2023** - With funding from the European Union - Directorate-General for International Partnerships, and as part of ADAP/WASH cross-sectoral collaboration, UNICEF has implemented a 3-day training program for young individuals centered on clean energy- Solar Panels System Installation to enable a greener future #ForEveryChild and young person in Iraq.



## UNDP supports Iraq's Office of the National Security Advisor in kickstarting a series of discussions on the role of security sector actors in addressing the impact of climate risks, environmental degradation, and disasters



**Baghdad, 24 September 2023** - UNDP supports Iraq's Office of the

National Security Advisor in kickstarting a series of discussions on

the role of security sector actors in addressing the impact of climate risks, environmental degradation, and disasters.

The dialogues sharpen an understanding of roles and collaboration opportunities among security sector actors, other relevant ministries, and civil actors, and lead to concrete recommendations feeding into security sector policy planning.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Al-Nahrain Center for Strategic Studies, and DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance are supporting the discussions with additional Iraqi and international expertise.

## Rudaw: Climate change impacts everyone in Iraq—UNDP

**Erbil, 16 October 2023** - The UN Development Programme's (UNDP) special representative in Iraq told Rudaw earlier this month that Iraq is severely affected by the impacts of climate change, mainly due to a decrease in water levels, and that the UN is working to assist the Iraqi government to increase water flow into

the country.

"If you look at it across the board, everyone in Iraq is actually affected by climate change, we see that now very profoundly in the lack of water in the rivers," Auke Lootsma, the UNDP resident representative to Iraq, said in an interview with Rudaw's Nma Nabaz. Full interview is available at

<https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/161020231>



## UN Iraq aims for 30 percent less water consumption under UNAMI-UNICEF conservation project



**Baghdad, 11 October 2023** - Freshwater scarcity is an ever-growing global concern, casting a shadow over environmental and societal well-being. Iraq, much like its neighbours, grapples with severe water management issues. Rising temperatures exacerbate the shrinking flow of the country's two major rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, and untreated wastewater discharge jeopardizes freshwater quality.

In addition to supporting the government in addressing the climate change effects, including water scarcity, through various activities and proposals for mitigation, the United Nations in Iraq also is doing its part, taking steps to reduce its environmental footprint in response to these challenges.

The collaboration between the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and UNICEF is bringing about a significant transformation in wastewater treatment facilities across four UN compounds in Iraq. This groundbreaking initiative promises a cascade of positive changes, impacting freshwater conservation and safeguarding water sources.

The primary goal of the initiative is to implement advanced wastewater treatment technology, processing all generated wastewater for purposes like irrigation, car washing, solar PV panel

cleaning, and other technical uses. Although the precise cost is USD 1,160,000.00, the project is poised to mitigate environmental contamination and reduce overall costs. Furthermore, it aims to raise awareness about the judicious use of resources and enhance climate resilience among UN staff in Iraq. This comprehensive approach underscores a commitment to sustainable practices and environmental responsibility in the region.

In tandem, UNAMI is actively executing a comprehensive water conservation strategy, aiming to significantly decrease the demand for freshwater sources. Embracing sustainable practices, the Mission is shifting from manual watering methods to automated drip and sprinkler irrigation systems, optimizing the use of treated wastewater. Practical steps include replacing water fixtures in kitchens and bathrooms with low-flow, water-efficient alternatives, accompanied by awareness campaigns to educate staff on responsible water usage. The introduction of smart water meters for real-time consumption monitoring and leak detection further enhances these efforts. Together, these initiatives share a common objective of substantially improving water efficiency and minimizing wastage across UN compounds, aligning

seamlessly with broader sustainability goals.

"We are absolutely thrilled to join hands with our UNICEF colleagues in this transformative step towards water conservation", said UNAMI Chief of Mission Support Harish Joshi. "Every drop reclaimed is a victory for sustainability and a powerful contribution to addressing Iraq's water crisis as 'One UN'. Together, we're making a lasting impact."

"This partnership between UNICEF and UNAMI enabled us to work on the Sustainable Development Goals, especially on the climate change agenda", said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. "This plant will contribute to water irrigation and plant fertilization. It will not only provide a green environment for the UN living in this compound and other compounds in the country, but it will secure great benefits for children in the future."

With the project slated for completion by the end of 2023, UNAMI aims to achieve a remarkable 30% reduction in its current freshwater demand, conserving a total of 43 million liters of freshwater annually. This achievement will set a high bar for environmentally responsible practices within the UN system.

By tackling water and wastewater management issues head-on, the United Nations in Iraq not only enhances its own environmental sustainability but also contributes to Iraq's ongoing efforts to combat water scarcity.

As freshwater scarcity continues to threaten communities worldwide, the efforts of UNAMI and UNICEF in water conservation stand as a testament to what can be achieved in addressing critical environmental issues. The impact of this initiative will extend beyond the walls of the UN compounds, and it is hoped it could inspire others to act in the battle to safeguard our planet's most precious resource: water.

## FAO and WFP joint call on World Food Day 2023 to tackle climate change, water scarcity, and food insecurity in Iraq

**Baghdad, 16 October 2023** - On World Food Day, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) stand together to face the urgent challenges caused by climate change, water scarcity, and

food insecurity in Iraq. Ranked as the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, Iraq faces growing environmental challenges, including heat waves, sandstorms, rising temperatures, water scarcity and droughts.

FAO's theme for this year's World Food Day underlines the profound importance of water: "Water is life, water is food. Leave no one behind". FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, emphasized the importance of water in the Iraqi

## FAO and WFP joint call on World Food Day 2023 to tackle climate change, water scarcity, and food insecurity in Iraq *(continued)*

context: "In Iraq, where agriculture is vital to the economy and the well-being of the population, water is essential for food production. Our challenge is clear: we must produce more food with less water, while ensuring fair distribution, preserving our vital ecosystems and leaving no one behind".

FAO Iraq actively promotes sustainable water management through innovative interventions such as climate smart agriculture practices, establishing and empowering water user associations, use of Remote Sensing and GIS tools for monitoring water use and management, rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure projects (canals, pumps etc. ), supporting farmers with modern irrigation systems, capacity development and Farmer Field Schools (FFS), introducing sustainable energy sources for irrigation and introducing animal fodder crop varieties drought and salt tolerant in addition to participatory approach in the implementation and partnership with Iraqi ministries of agriculture, environment, water resources in addition to other international, national and local partners to help Iraqi farmers build resilience to climate change and secure their livelihoods.

FAO is also working closely with the government to enhance sustainable resource management.

To help Iraqi farmers adapt to the climate crisis, WFP has implemented a series of projects, focusing on increasing the availability of water, improving irrigation systems, and strengthening the ability of local communities to adapt to the devastating effects of climate change. WFP's work includes afforestation and



agricultural conservation to combat desertification as well as the promotion of modern irrigation methods to increase crop yields and optimize water use. WFP supports the improvement of climate-information services through the rehabilitation of modern automatic weather stations and training of Agro-Met staff at the Ministry of Agriculture.

WFP continues supporting the government and smallholder farmers to promote sustainable agriculture techniques while improving food security in Iraq. Ally-Raza Qureshi, WFP's Country Director and Representative in Iraq stressed: "We are pioneering innovative solutions to combat climate change in Iraq, safeguarding water resources and enhancing food security. Working alongside with FAO, we support the Government of Iraq putting in place projects to help Iraqi communities become more sustainable and resilient." In the spirit of cooperation, WFP and FAO emphasize the importance of government-led, evidence-based policies that embrace data, innovation and

cross-sectoral coordination. These policies should be complemented by increased investment, strengthened legislation, technology adoption and capacity-building.

We invite all stakeholders, including national authorities, civil society and the private sector, to unite in our common mission. Taking water for granted is no longer sustainable, and our consumption and production choices have a direct impact on water resources. We advocate choosing local, seasonal and fresh food, reducing food waste and exploring safe water reuse methods while preventing pollution as effective tools for positive change.

This joint initiative by FAO and WFP in Iraq demonstrates a commitment to several of the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 13 (Climate Action) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) will be advanced in the quest for a more sustainable, resilient and food secure Iraq. Ensuring that no one is left behind on the path to a more promising future is the overarching goal of this

## ILO holds discussions with partners and youth in Iraq's Al Muthana Governorate on ways to develop the private sector's green economy, with the support of Italy

**Al Muthana, 17 October 2023** - (ILO News) The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) is funding a project implemented by the ILO in Iraq's Governorate of Al Muthana to enhance support for private sector development and decent work creation, with a focus on supporting young people to pursue sustainable green businesses and start-ups in Southern Iraq. The ILO held meetings with partners in Al Muthana

to discuss collaboration on this project. ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Maha Kattaa met with the Deputy Governor of Al Muthana, as well as representatives of the Labour Directorate, the Youth and Sports Directorate, University of Al Muthana, among others. A meeting was also held with the Presidents of Al Muthana Chamber of Industry and the Businessmen Union in Al Muthana, as well as the Directors of Al Muthana

Chamber of Commerce and the Dhar Centre for Development.

Discussions focused on how to work together to support private sector development in the area, especially for young people who want to pursue green careers. This includes training young entrepreneurs on how to start, grow, and expand their businesses, and helping them get access to financial services.

"We welcome the ILO delegation to our

## ILO holds discussions with partners and youth in Iraq's Al Muthana Governorate... (continued)



governorate and express our full support of their projects in Al Muthana. We will work with them as one team to serve the people of the governorate and provide them with all assistance needed to achieve their objectives under these programmes in the area," said Adel Al-Yasiri, Second Deputy Governor of Al Muthana.

"We discussed the project that the ILO will be implementing soon in the governorate which will involve training hundreds of young graduates who are entrepreneurs. It was a successful meeting, and we appreciate these steps which will serve the young women and men of Al Muthana in promoting entrepreneurship and improving the standard of living for people," said Faleh Al-Hatimi, President of Al Muthana Chamber of Industry.

Under the Italian-funded project, the ILO will work with partners to train youth and small business owners looking to grow or develop their businesses on its flagship method "Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)" and Financial Education programmes. SIYB is designed to respond to the progressive stages of business development, while the Financial Education programme equips small-scale entrepreneurs with financial knowledge and management skills.

The ILO will train and certify trainers on these knowledge and skills, including training on green businesses, so that the trainers can deliver the training to potential entrepreneurs. The ILO will also work with banks and microfinance institutions to design products and services that support the needs of their clients. This includes providing financial institutions with practical guidance on integrating "Just Transition"—a strategy to address pressing environmental challenges—into their strategies and operations.

ILO Country Coordinator Kattaa highlighted the importance of working with stakeholders in Al Muthana, to address challenges of unemployment, particularly among youth. "Our work seeks to empower young people so they can pursue the establishment of sustainable businesses which promote the green economy," said Kattaa. "These efforts involve working closely with the Government of Iraq and the private sector at the national and local level and utilising ILO's well-established tools which support entrepreneurship while ensuring that interventions are tailored to the needs of young people in the area."

In efforts to better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities of entrepreneurship in the local labour market, a discussion was held with 35

young people, including entrepreneurs, those with start-up ideas and jobseekers at the Youth and Sports Directorate. The discussion also highlighted working within the green economy, opportunities available and ways to potentially pursue them.

Huda, one of the participants from Al Muthana, explained how she has previous training and experience in solar panels and is currently seeking ways to train and raise the awareness of youth in similar fields. She is also looking to obtain financial support that can allow her to set up her own small business.

Hussein shared his experience of setting up a small business in planting palm seedlings and the challenges faced because of water salinity in the area, which he says has recently increased due to worsening environmental conditions. He hopes that he and other young people like him will be supported to set up further projects.

As a first step, awareness-raising activities for youth will be developed, using ILO's "How to Work in the Green Economy" approach, which covers a wide range of topics aimed at helping individuals contribute to a greener economy, including information on ways to build their professional goals plan or create their own job in a sustainable entrepreneurship approach. This corresponds to AICS priorities for development cooperation in Iraq in the framework of the Team Europe Initiative TAEUFIQ.

The project is part of broader efforts under the Iraq Decent Work Country Programme signed by the Government, employers' and workers' organizations and the ILO to promote employment opportunities and decent work. It is in line with the government's "Riyada" initiative for development and employment, which was launched by the Prime Minister in March 2023.

## UN Water Taskforce discusses the National Policy Dialogue to address the water crisis in Iraq

**Baghdad, 24 October 2023** - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai, today chaired a meeting of the UN Water Taskforce with the participation of representatives of the Government of Iraq and the international community

to discuss the National Policy Dialogue to address the water crisis in Iraq. Let's

work together to secure our precious resources.



## FAO Iraq, CRC, and Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture collaborate to address desert locust challenge

**Baghdad, 18 October 2023** - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in partnership with the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) and the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, launched a desert locust management training programme to ensure a rapid and effective response to locust outbreaks. Desert locusts, known as one of the world's most devastating agricultural pests, pose a serious threat to crops and pastures, driven by climate change, land degradation, and regional conflicts.

At the opening ceremony, FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, said: "This training programme is a reflection of FAO's commitment to support member countries in addressing critical agriculture and food security issues. We are equipping Iraq with the necessary tools to effectively combat the growing threat of the desert locust". From October 15th to 19th, 2023, FAO experts, including the Executive Secretary of the CRC, Mr. Mamoun Al Alawi, will lead a comprehensive training course aimed at equipping the Ministry of Agriculture staff with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage desert locusts. The program covers key aspects, including biology and ecology, survey and monitoring methods, control methods including chemical, biological and environment health and safety standard, and outbreak preparedness and response.

The 22 participants include government officials responsible for desert locust management, plant protection officers, and other

stakeholders committed to combating this challenge.

This hands-on training, designed in collaboration with the CRC, combines theory and practice, giving participants the opportunity to learn from field experts. Upon course completion, participants will be equipped to identify and monitor desert locust populations with precision, implement effective control measures tailored to Iraq's specific needs, and develop and implement outbreak preparedness and response plans to minimize damage. Assessment will involve written assignments, practical evaluations and field simulation, culminating in a certificate of completion for successful participants.

The training program fosters networking among stakeholders, promoting cooperation and coordination.

Mr. Al Alawi stated: "As the Executive Secretary of the CRC, I am proud to

play a pivotal role in this collaboration. The CRC serves as a regional platform dedicated to coordinating efforts to combat desert locust infestations. By working hand-in-hand with FAO 's representation in Iraq and the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, we aim to bolster Iraq's capacity to protect its agricultural resources and food security, ensuring a more resilient and sustainable future."

This collaborative effort not only addresses the pressing issue of desert locust infestations but also aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 2: Zero Hunger, Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being, and Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals. By equipping Iraq with the knowledge and tools to manage this agricultural challenge, we move one step closer to achieving these vital SDGs and securing a sustainable and food-secure future for the region.



## A coordinated effort to strengthen climate information management, unify climate data, and support informed decision-making in Iraq

**Erbil, 26 October 2023** - With the Iraq Ministry of Environment, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq hosted the 2nd Inter-ministerial Technical Climate Information Workshop in Erbil in a coordinated effort to strengthen climate information management, unify climate data, and support informed decision-making in Iraq.



## UNESCO team is reinstalling the fourth and last bell of Al Saa'a Conventual Church

**Mosul, 22 August 2023** - In an atmosphere brimming with hope and prayers for the city's security and stability, UNESCO team is reinstalling the fourth and last bell of Al Saa'a Conventual Church – called Mary.

UNESCO in partnership with the UAE is rehabilitating this religious monument.

The bell's installation not only signifies an important milestone in the reconstruction efforts but also infuses the community with a renewed sense of optimism.

Recognized for their melodious tones,



resonating across the city, the bells of Al Saa'a church stand now as a symbol

of unity and resilience in challenging times.



**Mosul, 12 September 2023** - UNESCO Representative to Iraq, **Paolo Fontani**, met with Head of the Sunni Endowment, **Dr. Mishaan Al-Khazraji**, to discuss the ongoing reconstruction efforts for Al-Nouri Mosque in Mosul.



**Mosul, 04 October 2023** - UNESCO welcomed the visit of U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission, **David Burger**, to Al-Nouri Mosque, he witnessed firsthand the remarkable progress that is taking place within the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul Initiative, implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the UAE.

## UNESCO's “Guidelines for Architectural Interventions on Historical Houses in the Old City of Mosul” were presented to project stakeholders and Mosul authorities

**Mosul, 17 September 2023** - One of the activities carried out by UNESCO in the framework of the Project “Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities” funded by the European Union, was to draw up a set of guidelines for the preservation of Mosul’s built heritage and historical urban fabric.

The “Guidelines for Architectural Interventions on Historical Houses in the Old City of Mosul” were presented to project stakeholders and Mosul authorities on September 17, 2023.

The aim of the guidelines is to offer practitioners and authorities – the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and the Planning Department of the Municipality -- a methodology articulated into a series of flexible rules governing architectural interventions to ensure that the integrity and authenticity of heritage buildings are preserved or enhanced, and the



historical urban context respected. The Guidelines were very positively welcomed by representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Mosul Municipality, and other participants.

Accordingly, UNESCO will continue its technical support towards its finalization and endorsement, and application in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

## UNESCO in partnership with Goethe-Institut Iraq, launches the Mosul Music Heritage Festival



**Mosul, 18 September 2023** - After the devastating destruction of historic homes in Mosul, music is making a

triumphant return today at the Mosul Music Heritage Festival organized by Goethe-Institut Irak in partnership

with UNESCO. It's filling the alleyways with hope in the 124 homes lovingly restored by UNESCO, thanks to generous financial support from the European Union.

As the enchanting melodies echo through these newly revitalized houses, they breathe new life into the city, reminding us all of the rich cultural heritage that lies within these ancient walls.

Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, and Ms. Anais Boelicke, Director of Goethe-Institut Iraq, were present at the launch of the Mosul Music Heritage Festival.

## Successful completion of the consultative workshop aimed at revitalizing the Erbil Citadel World Heritage Site



graced by the presence of esteemed

**Erbil, 21 September 2023** - UNESCO is delighted to announce the successful completion of the consultative workshop aimed at revitalizing the Erbil Citadel World Heritage Site through Public-Private Partnerships. This event was organized in collaboration with the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR) and was graced by the presence of esteemed representatives of the Prime Minister's

Office, Dr. Sarbaz Najeeb; the Deputy Governor, Mr. Hemin Qader; the Head of HCECR, Mr. Nihad Qoja; UNESCO's Chief of Culture, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali; and influential representatives from private sector companies operating in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and across Iraq. This collective effort marks a significant milestone in the ongoing preservation and enhancement of the Erbil Citadel.

## 24 international participants complete ICCROM-UNESCO-Fondazione Santagata post-conflict recovery summer programme and web platform launch

**Mosul, 04 October 2023** - UNESCO-ICCROM Summer School Post-Conflict ICCROM, UNESCO, and Fondazione Santagata's joint capacity-building efforts in post-conflict contexts have led to 24 international participants graduating from the Post-Conflict Recovery Summer School. The summer programme aims to enable heritage and disaster risk management professionals, public institutions, NGOs and donor organizations to engage effectively in planning and implementing heritage recovery projects following armed conflicts.

Organized under the project, in the framework of the Revive the Spirit of Mosul Initiative and in collaboration with Fondazione Santagata, it addresses the specific case study of Mosul, a city profoundly affected by conflict and cultural heritage devastation.

The comprehensive programme



comprises two phases. The first is an online lecture series that delves into key themes related to cultural heritage recovery. This equips participants with a solid theoretical foundation, setting the stage for practical application. The second phase entails an in-person workshop held in Rome, Italy, where participants examine the Mosul case. They actively contribute their expertise and share their unique experiences,

creating a collaborative learning environment that fosters growth and knowledge exchange. By combining theoretical insights with practical experiences and addressing the specific challenges faced in Mosul, the Summer School helps prepare participants to be catalysts of positive change in the challenging landscape of post-war recovery.

UNESCO-ICCROM Summer School

## 24 international participants complete ICCROM-UNESCO-Fondazione Santagata post-conflict recovery ... (continued)

Post-ConflictThe collaboration between ICCROM, UNESCO and Fondazione Santagata underscores the importance of international cooperation in building a more resilient and culturally rich future for regions recovering from conflict. Graduates of the Post-Conflict Recovery Summer School emerge as

champions of cultural heritage preservation and advocates for holistic, sustainable and resilient recovery in post-conflict contexts.

The Summer School graduation ceremony also marked the launch of a web platform. The digital platform features comprehensive learning

materials from ICCROM and UNESCO's collaborative project for Mosul's recovery. It is a repository of knowledge that offers insights gained from the program's curriculum, with the broader goal of sharing valuable experiences and lessons for application in similar contexts.

## UNESCO and ILO are working with the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage in Dohuk to improve Charesteen's cave site

**Dohuk, 09 October 2023** - UNESCO and ILO are working with the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage in Dohuk to improve Charesteen's cave site as part of the project "Supporting livelihoods through the development of cultural heritage" in partnership with the European Union.

The Charesteen site improvement project is one of the important archaeological projects in the center of Duhok Governorate implemented by the German Wadi Organization with the support of Duhok Governorate and the General Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage in the Kurdistan Region under the monitoring and supervision of the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage of Dohuk.

Currently, hard work continues to carry out civil, electrical and architectural works on the site, where the limestone is checked to be suitable



for the site environment, the construction of the site's electrical room

and the delivery of water through pipes to the top of the mountain.”



**Mosul, 10 October 2023** - A significant milestone in cultural heritage preservation achieved! Thanks to UNESCO's diligent restoration efforts with the generous support from the European Union and the United Arab Emirates, we have successfully handed over to the Sunni Endowment of Iraq all 16 historic houses under their custody, including 7 houses near the Al-Nouri Mosque. An invaluable step towards safeguarding heritage of Historic Mosul in close cooperation with our partners.



**Nineveh, 24 October 2023** - Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, joins the opening ceremony of the Archaeological Park of ancient Nineveh with Mr. Adnan Ibrahim, Advisor to the Iraqi President, Mr. Najm Al-Jbouri, Governor of Nineveh, Mr. Maurizio Griganti, Ambassador of Italy, Dr. Laith Hussein, Head of the Department of Antiquities in Iraq, Mr. Khair Aldin Naser, Head of the Department of Antiquities in Mosul, Dr. Alia Attar, President of the Northern Technical University, and Professor Nicolò Marchetti, University of Bologna.

## UNESCO Iraq office organizes a workshop on the Iraqi visual archive

**Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 10 October 2023** - At the Rotterdam Arab Film Conference in the Netherlands, UNESCO Iraq office organized a workshop on the Iraqi visual archive. Arab and Dutch directors, along with Qasim, the general supervisor of the Iraqi film archive, attended the event. Representatives from the Dutch Foreign Ministry and the Royal Scholarship Fund screened a documentary on rescuing the Iraqi archive, dating back to 1917. This was followed by a presentation outlining UNESCO's efforts since 2018 to preserve and digitize the archive. Dhea

Subhee, UNESCO Iraq's CI Officer, detailed the organization's initiatives to secure international grants. Artists from Egypt, Morocco, and Palestine

also participated, highlighting UNESCO's Audio-Visual Heritage Program, which aims to preserve and digitize national archives worldwide.



## Education



**Baghdad, 01 September 2023** - UNESCO Representative to Iraq **Mr. Paolo Fontani**, addressed the Members of Education International at the 14th Regional Meeting of the Arab Countries in Baghdad highlighting the “very important role of Teachers for quality of learning to realize SDG 4 Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for all”.



**Baghdad, 12 September 2023** - UNESCO Representative to Iraq meets with **H.E. Minister of Education** and MoE leadership to discuss the ongoing cooperation and future support to Iraq to strengthen MoE capacities for evidence based policy planning, teachers training and educational technologies for quality of education for Iraqi students.

## A promising partnership: UNDP and AUIB join hands for Iraq's future

**Baghdad, 13 September 2023** — The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the American University of Iraq-Baghdad (AUIB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today, solidifying their joint commitment to fight corruption, promote integrity, enhance knowledge on arbitration law, and crucially, to promote innovation and youth employment, boost the renewable energies sector, foster environmental sustainability, and mitigate climate change. Addressing these critical issues is important for Iraq's future, creating a conducive business environment that wins investors' trust and at the same

time promotes sustainable and equitable economic development, and by extension, social stability. All these are essential to the country's advancement.

“This partnership is a milestone, as we journey towards Iraq's economic

diversification and social development. Together with AUIB, we aim to harness the collective power of academia and international organizations to address key issues that are impeding the country's development. It is my hope that, together, we will be able to



## A promising partnership: UNDP and AUIB join hands for Iraq's future *(continued)*

rebuild investor trust, contribute to economic diversification and move towards the brighter, sustainable future that awaits the people of Iraq," said Auke Lootsma, UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative.

Contributing to Iraq's future development

This partnership contributes to SDG 8: promoting economic growth and sustainable development, as it seeks to empower women, promote e-governance, digital transformation, and environmental sustainability, including

climate resilience, green growth, and sustainable energy transition—unlocking the full potential of Iraqi society as we hit the halfway point of fulfillment of SDG 2030.

"AUIB is pleased to be the other half of transformative partnership with UNDP, making the first stride towards a more hopeful future, where knowledge, integrity, and innovation illuminate the path to a sustainable Iraq for all. Through the combined efforts of universities, the UNDP, and all stakeholders involved, it sets the

stage for a prosperous future for Iraq," said Dr. Michael Mulnix, President of AUIB.

UNDP is committed to working with partners worldwide to advance sustainable development, eradicate poverty, and promote good governance. AUIB, a prestigious academic institution fostering intellectual growth, innovation, and critical thinking, is equally dedicated to preparing graduates to effectively confront Iraq's economic and social challenges.

## The commitment of both public and private universities to embrace the Bologna Process reaffirmed at a conference in Baghdad



**Baghdad, 20 September 2023** - With the support of his Excellency Dr. Naeem Al-Aboudi, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and in collaboration with the European Union Delegation, UNESCO Iraq Office held a conference under the title "Bologna Process in Iraq Technical Universities: Lessons Learnt". The conference focused on the valuable insights from the alignment of programs with the Bologna Process in Iraq's technical universities. Esteemed guests included representatives from the European Union, UNESCO, as well as Dr. Hamid Khalaf, the Prime Minister's Advisor, alongside a diverse assembly comprising agents, advisors, university presidents, directors-general, and a select group of academics.

His excellency the Minister Dr. Al-Aboudi reaffirmed the commitment of both public and private universities to embrace the Bologna Process. They stand ready to fulfill the requisites for its deployment across more than six hundred departments within the faculties of engineering and science, commencing in the academic year of 2023/2024.

Dr. Hamid Khalaf, Advisor to the Prime Minister, commended the prudent choice of adopting the Bologna Process in Iraq, characterizing it as a responsible and forward-looking decision geared toward the enhancement of educational systems. This move aligns with the institutions' needs for competency-based programs, fostering quality learning environments, and upholding international academic standards. Meanwhile, Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of the Cooperation Department at the European Union Delegation, extended her gratitude to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and its universities for their remarkable collaboration and synchronization in executing programs and attaining a benchmark of educational excellence. She welcomed the Ministry's decision to embrace the Bologna Process, emphasizing its major role in steering educational reform in Iraq.

In concurrence, Mr. Tim Mizen, UNESCO Senior Advisor for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Reform, expressed support for Minister Dr. Naeem Al-Aboudi's visionary move to embrace the Bologna Process within

universities. He underscored the significance of this decision in the successful implementation of the project, clarifying how the Bologna Process can have a positive impact on the academic programs, institutional efficiency, and the overarching education system.

The technical universities, pioneers in adopting the Bologna Process, presented a comprehensive overview of the steps undertaken in refining their academic programs and ensuring improved institutional quality assurance.

At the end of the conference, a panel consisting of advisors and presidents of universities discussed the advantages of embracing Bologna Process and the challenges the technical universities faced. Moreover, strategies to overcome these challenges were also discussed, and the importance to initiate the implementation of this paradigm across all Iraqi universities was underscored. Additionally, the Ministry's ongoing and planned initiatives aimed at revitalizing the higher education system were thoroughly examined.



## A big step forwards by the MoE in establishing international levels of Quality Assurance in Iraq's Vocational schools

**Baghdad, 25 September 2023** - UNESCO in cooperation with the EU is working to turn 5 Vocational schools in Iraq into "Centres of Vocational Excellence". One part of this process is to introduce Quality Assurance and Enhancement in these schools. Over the last 2 years the 5 schools have been assessing themselves against a set of 70 quality standards. The schools have been able to progress from an achievement level of 47 % of the standards to the current levels of 67%. In order to help the schools achieve

even higher levels of conformance with the standards two workshops were held in Baghdad, 10 - 14 September. These workshops focused on Record Keeping in the schools and Inclusivity - both standards currently not being achieved. The Ministry of education has now approved these 70 standards to be the formal quality assurance system for all Vocational schools in Iraq. This is a big step forwards by the MoE in establishing international levels of Quality Assurance in Iraq's Vocational schools.



## From adversity to triumph: Abdel-Malik Walid Khalil is no ordinary student

**Baghdad, 26 September 2023** - Abdel-Malik Walid Khalil, originally from Jurf al-Sakhr, is not your ordinary student. Aside from being among the top students in Iraq, he has risen from a camp of displaced Iraqis, overcoming challenges in pursuit of his dream. Abdel-Malik, his parents and seven siblings became displaced in 2014. To date, they have not been able to return home.

"I studied in a tent in very difficult conditions: cold weather, hot weather, power cuts. But I was able to achieve the impossible, to pass my final exams with a top grade of 99.57 per cent", he said.

The 19-year-old's story, as explained by Abdel-Malik and his father, is a microcosm of modern Iraq - where ordinary citizens from all walks of life are struggling to improve their lives against the odds, buoyed by nascent

stability after decades of conflict. Young Iraqis like Abdel-Malik inspire hope in the future of this country.

Abdel-Malik now has a new goal: to study medicine. He received encouragement at a meeting in Baghdad with the Special

Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. "Your resilience is impressive. Don't give up. A young man with such excellent qualifications deserves all the support", the SRSG said.



## From displacement to determination: Hala's educational odyssey in Baharka Camp

**Erbil, 28 September 2023** - In the heart of the Baharka camp for internally displaced people, where hope and resilience flourish amidst challenges, a remarkable initiative is shaping the future of young minds. Most residents of the camp hail from Ninewa and Salah al-Din Governorates and the City of Anbar, regions affected by conflict and upheaval.

Against this backdrop, the Barzani Namr School stands as a beacon of opportunity, offering a transformative experience through summer catch-up and remedial classes.

During the summer months, the Barzani Namr School throbs with

vitality, as it opens its doors to primary students from grades one through six. These catch-up lessons, aimed at bridging educational gaps, provide essential remedial classes covering two core subjects: mathematics and science. Utilizing the official government curriculum, these classes not only rejuvenate academic knowledge but also instill critical life skills such as problem-solving and communication skills, creative thinking and resilience. Omar Muhammed, the school's principal, emphasizes the profound impact of the programme: "This is a useful approach to utilize students' time to advance their scientific and

personal growth. It fosters their integration with their peers and teachers, nurturing positive behaviours and improved interactions with their surroundings." The initiative goes beyond academic development; it shapes well-rounded individuals equipped to face life's challenges with confidence and resilience.

Hala's Story of Learning and Growth  
At the heart of this inspiring narrative is Hala Adam, a sixth-grade student born in 2012. Originally from Al-Ba'aj district in Ninewa Governorate, Hala's journey has been defined by displacement and her pursuit of knowledge. Between two older brothers

## From displacement to determination: Hala's educational odyssey in Baharka Camp *(continued)*



and two younger sisters, she stands as the bridge between generations, embodying the hope and dreams of her family.

Hala's family was among the countless victims of ISIS, fleeing their home and seeking refuge in Syria. Following a two-month stop, they returned to Iraq and resided in Baghdad Governorate for almost two years. Subsequently, they made their way to the Baharka camp in Erbil in 2016. Despite the challenges they faced, Hala's father, a history teacher with a master's degree, ensured that education remained a

cornerstone of their lives. This foundation laid the groundwork for Hala's love for learning.

When Hala thinks about her experience, she says, "The summer classes helped me a lot, especially in mathematics which used to confuse me. Now, I really enjoy solving problems and working with numbers." These catch-up classes have made her really like mathematics and show how these classes can make a big difference in learning.

Beyond academics, Hala's interests encompass her family, drawing, and

playing volleyball. Her experiences have shaped her into a confident advocate for education. She ardently advises her younger sisters to embrace their educational journey, firmly believing that education paves the path to success and self-assurance. Her words resonate deeply: "Completing our education empowers us to achieve our dreams and rely on our own capabilities, as life is not always easy." Supported by Germany through KfW Development Bank, these catch-up lessons do not only teach school core subjects, but it also helps children and young people like Hala build resilient skills to better face life challenges. It also advances young people's analytical and creative thinking and promotes their eagerness to learn. As Hala's story proves, education can change lives. It brings people closer together and equips them with the strength and confidence to face the future with courage.

Note: In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals mentioned in this story, all names have been altered.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF

## UNESCO Iraq successfully concludes Phase 3 of the Quality Assurance training program at Northern Technical University

**Mosul, 30 September 2023** - UNESCO Iraq is pleased to announce the successful completion of the third and final phase of the Quality Assurance Training Program at Northern Technical University (NTU). This significant achievement is a key component of the "Enhancing Youth Employability and Resilience for Peace in Ninewaah" Project generously funded by the Japanese Government.

Prof. Dr. Alyaa Abbas Ali Al-Attar, President of NTU, echoed these sentiments, stating, "Our collaboration with UNESCO Iraq, under the auspices of the Japanese Government, has been transformative in advancing the culture of quality in our university. This training is a testament to our collective efforts to shape a brighter educational future for our students."

This training is continuation of UNESCO's ongoing support to enhancing quality of higher education at the technical universities in Iraq. During the training, educators of the NTU engaged in rigorous theoretical and practical sessions on different aspects of the application of Quality Assurance. Feedback from participants

was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing that they now feel equipped with the requisite knowledge and tools to refine quality assurance processes and drive continuous improvement in their professional domains.

As a testament to the program's hands-on approach, participants undertook a series of practical exercises, including self-evaluations, which will serve as foundational steps towards future accreditation endeavors. Furthermore, they crafted actionable plans aimed at enhancing the educational landscape at NTU. Many voiced their commitment to harnessing the insights gleaned from

this training to spearhead meaningful improvements within the university.

Reflecting on the initiative, Mr. Bilal Al Hamaydah, the Project Officer, remarked, "This training symbolizes our commitment to elevating educational standards in Iraq. It's heartening to see the dedication of each participant, bringing our shared vision to life within the broader framework of project as a part of UNESCO's Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative."

UNESCO Iraq remains steadfast in its commitment to build on the successes of this program to foster educational quality and excellence in Iraq in the future.



## UNDP hosts German diplomats at the Mosul University

**Mosul, 03 October 2023** - UNDP was thrilled to accompany Ms. Kathrin Löber, Counsellor for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Ms. Christine Ringer, First Secretary of the Political Division, at the German Embassy in Baghdad, for a tour around Mosul University.

The university is flourishing again and shaping Iraq's leaders after being rehabilitated by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, with generous support from Germany.

"The Government of Germany is deeply committed to furthering higher education, and we are delighted to witness how our support has improved



the educational experience at Mosul University," Ms. Ringer said during the

meeting with Chancellor Dr. Qusay Kamaladdin Al-Ahmedy.

## New curricula have been developed in Agriculture, Hospitality and Tourism, Construction and IT in a move towards vocational education

**Erbil, 03 October 2023** - UNESCO in cooperation with the Ministries of Education, and funded by the EU, is working to increase the effectiveness of Vocational training in the Ministry's Vocational schools. The overall aim is to enhance the employability of Iraqi Youth. A central focus is to shift Vocational education away from theory to competency based practical training. To achieve this, new curricula have been developed in Agriculture, Hospitality and Tourism, Construction and IT. The Ministry has formally approved these curricula to be used in the Vocational schools from this academic year 2023/24. Workshops have been renovated and practical training equipment required by the new curricula supplied. Erbil Agricultural school was supplied today not only with the tools and materials required for practical agricultural

training but also with live animals including Cows and Chickens.

These are based in the schools in specially created indoor and outdoor facilities and will greatly enhance the reality of the training in animal husbandry as the students will be looking after and working with these

animals on a daily basis. The school Headmaster, Mr. Hazhar Khawda, thanked the EU and UNESCO for the equipment and commented "Today I feel as if Erbil Vocational school is a real Agriculture school. We really look forward to this new academic year and giving our students useful practical skills to take into the Job Market".



## UNESCO holds a session with the aim to raise the awareness of the community to send their children to schools and discussing the main reasons and challenges for dropout and how to mitigate these challenges

**Baghdad, 11 October 2023** - Under the framework of the project "Improving Access to Quality and Inclusive Education with Gender Equality for Out of School Children in Babil and Baghdad Governorates, Iraq" funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, UNESCO in cooperation with the General Directorate of Education in Babil Governorate, conducted a counselling

session in Mustafa Jwad school with the participation of DoEs employees, school teachers and principles and community member.

The session objectives were to raise the awareness of the community to send their children to schools and discussing the main reasons and challenges for dropout and how to mitigate these challenges.



## Seventy-five women and men in Iraq's City of Basra complete a vocational training programme, paving the way for more and better employment opportunities

**Basra, 19 October 2023** - (ILO News) Seventy-five women and men in Basra have successfully completed a vocational training programme in sewing, welding, AC installation and maintenance, and food processing. The training programme seeks to improve their technical skills, paving the way for more and better employment opportunities for themselves and other youth in their area.

A ceremony was held in Basra, where certificates and business toolkits were distributed to help the participants start their own small businesses or become self-employed, using their newly acquired skills.

The ILO, Al-Meameen Humanitarian Foundation, and the Vocational Training Centre in Basra conducted the training sessions jointly. The training sessions are part of the collaboration between ILO and UN-Habitat under

the European Union funded project "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis."

The collaboration ensures youth are provided with the necessary skills, services and tools to access employment or start or grow their businesses.



## Timeline

### UNAMI marks International Translation Day



**Baghdad, 30 September 2023** - International Translation Day is meant as an opportunity to pay tribute to the work of language professionals, which plays an important role in bringing nations together, facilitating dialogue, understanding and cooperation, contributing to development and strengthening world peace and security.

In a video produced by the Strategic Communications and Public Information Office (SCPIO) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) UNAMI leadership elaborates on the importance of translation in the daily work of the mission.

Mark Rutgers, UNAMI Chief of Staff: "As the UN continues expanding its global reach, high-quality translation services are more critical than ever before. With the organization working in hundreds of languages across numerous countries and cultures worldwide, the ability to communicate meaning accurately is paramount. More relevant in Iraq, with its complex linguistic landscape of Arabic dialects, Kurdish, Turkmen and minority languages. Here, skilled UNAMI translators convey the messages critical

for engagement and building partnerships. Without them, crucial initiatives would stall."

Dr. Aamir Arain, Director, UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance, UN Principal Electoral Advisor: "Our interpreters help us communicate effectively. Their translations build a strong and productive working relationship with our national electoral counterparts. Also, their first-hand knowledge of the local language and context enables us to better understand Iraq's complex setting."

Manoj Mathew, Director, UNAMI Office of Political Affairs and Analysis: "Translation helps us to understand and to be understood. Iraq's diversity makes this all too important when our interlocutors prefer to speak in their mother tongue - Arabic or Kurdish. Translators break these language barriers, help us to be informed and enable us to reach out to the wider audience."

Florian Razesberger, UNAMI Senior Human Rights Officer: "In a culturally rich and diverse society like Iraq, the role of translation is manifold in promoting equality, freedom and human dignity. UNAMI translators are the key link to enhance engagement

and communication by the Human Rights Office with Iraqi communities and interlocutors. Another impact is the strengthened bond translation creates between communities and issues they identify with. For example, the translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into nine minority languages in Iraq reinforces the link between universal human rights values and the Iraqi Component groups."

Samir F. Ghattas, Director, Strategic Communications and Public Information Office, Spokesperson: "Translation is about crafting a language that people understand and relate to. Its power goes beyond the words. With it, we seek and share knowledge. Without it, we are lost."

Ricardo Rodriguez, Head of UNAMI Regional Office, Erbil, Kurdistan Region: "The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is particularly challenging in terms of the languages and dialects, which reflects its ethnic and religious diversity. The Kurdish language - with its two very different dialects, the Sorani and Badini- is dominant, however Arabic language is also widely used in official and professional circles. Our competent translators and interpreters help us overcome this multilingual barrier. They are key to supporting the implementation of UNAMI's mandate."

Dina Ramadan, Chief, Translation and Interpretation Unit: "We celebrate International Translation Day every year on 30 September. But in between those celebrations we work every day! On behalf of the UNAMI Translation and Interpretation Unit, we wish all our colleagues:

Happy International Translation Day!"